

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT—YEAR A

Today we begin the Season of Advent and a new liturgical year—Year A. During this liturgical year, we will be mostly reflecting on the Gospel of Mathew. So, most of the Gospel readings for the Sundays of this Year A are taken from the Gospel of Mathew.

Advent is a time of preparation. Anything important needs time for preparation. Realizing that importance, the Church gives us twenty-five days to prepare to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord. In the same way, the Church gives us forty days of Lent to prepare for the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. Advent is also a time of waiting and longing. How many of you like to wait?

There are three things I dislike—cooking, ironing clothes, and waiting. But sometimes we can't help but do the things that we dislike. In my recent pilgrimage to the Holy Land, we had to wait two and half hours in the Church of Nativity to visit the place where Jesus was born. There were a lot of people, and waiting was very stressful. However, when we finally got to the place where Jesus was born, we totally forgot about the stress of waiting and were filled with joy.

There were a lot of people everywhere we visited, and the traffic was terrible. It took forty minutes to travel four miles. However, every time we arrived at the place that we intended to visit, we forgot about the stress of getting there because those were the places where Jesus lived, worked, died, and rose from the dead.

Advent has a two-fold character. It is a time of waiting to celebrate once again the first coming of Christ. The first coming of Christ was prophesied by the prophets of the Old Testament—especially prophet Isaiah. So, we will hear a lot from Isaiah in Advent. We will also light the first candle on the Advent



wreath today—the candle of the prophets who foretold the coming of the light of the world. The second reading of today from Paul's letter to the Romans is a wakeup call—the savior is coming; the salvation is near; the day is at hand. Therefore, prepare yourself. How? Reject the works of darkness—drunkenness, promiscuity, lust, rivalry, jealously, selfishness, and all other evils. Then put on the armor of light. Clothe yourself with virtues of charity, love, kindness, patience, goodness, and forgiveness.

The second character of this Season of Advent is that it reminds us of the second coming of Christ at the end of time to judge the living and the dead. The Gospel reading of today speaks of the second coming of Christ. It warns us not to be lost in the affairs of the world, but to be alert and watchful so that we are not caught off guard and unprepared when He comes. In both cases of waiting, waiting to celebrate again the first coming of Christ and waiting for the second coming, we are called to wait actively and not passively.

Waiting actively is by putting on the armor of light—clothing ourselves with the virtues of charity, love, kindness, and forgiveness. One of the ways to wait actively is by prayer. It should be a prayer that transforms us. Do you know that the Devil encourages us to pray, so long as it has no effect on our lives? Do you know that he encourages us to listen to the word of God, so long as it enters one ear and goes out through the other? The Devil is very cunning. He uses the spiritual tools to deceive us.

Let us learn to pray with our heart and listen to the Word of God with understanding. Practice of virtues together with a habit of transforming prayer is the best way to prepare to celebrate once again the first coming of Christ and to prepare for His second coming.