

Commentary on the Readings for December 1, 2019

The First Sunday in Advent

Today we begin the season of **Advent**, a time of preparation and remembrance. Our preparation is for the "King of kings" that we celebrate today, hoping and expecting that He will come into our hearts and homes on Christmas day with all the peace and joy that only a loving God and Savior could bring. The remembrance is of the time He came to earth 2000 years ago as an infant to begin the Christian era with the divine gift of salvation which He holds out to all who are willing to commit themselves to His way of living.

In the **First Reading** from the *Prophet Isaiah (2:1-5)*, we hear the prophet in the early part of the 8th century BC extolling the future blessings of greatness for Jerusalem which was about to be destroyed by the Assyrians. Jerusalem was looked upon by the Jews as the center of the world, and the Lord's seat of presence and power rested there. Now it was about to be destroyed, but a new day would come and it would again shine with eternal light. Isaiah's purpose was to get the people to prepare for that time now, to return to the Lord now, and not wait another minute. We must do the same and for the same reasons.

The **Responsorial Psalm, (122:1-9)** takes up the same theme, but at a time much later when the Israelites were returning from their exile in Babylon. They finally got the message that Isaiah had preached earlier. They were now returning to Jerusalem and were realizing a dream that had eluded them for over 50 years.

The **Second Reading** is from St. Paul's *Letter to the Romans (13:11-14)*. There we hear Paul exhort the early Christians to prepare for the coming of the Lord. This "Letter" was written during a very difficult time for the early Christians, much like the Jews of Isaiah's time. Conditions were much the same except that this time it was the Romans who were about to destroy Jerusalem. Paul counsels the Christians to be ready to suffer, if necessary, for their faith and their God.

In the **Gospel Reading** from the *Gospel of Matthew (24:37-44)*, we hear what is often referred to as the "little apocalypse" or Jesus' prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem 40 years later in 70 AD. Here, as in St. Paul's letter above, the early Christians are counseled to pray and prepare for what will seem to them to be the "end of the world." However, for those who are living according to the teachings of Jesus Christ, the end of this world is only the beginning of heaven.

The readings at the end of Ordinary Time (last Sunday) and the first part of Advent (today) are full of what appears to be gloom and doom; but they are only reminders that this life, this world, is only temporary and we should be looking to the future, to the New Jerusalem in heaven. That doesn't mean that we should not enjoy life here on earth, but it does mean that we should be prepared because "we know not the day or the hour." However, our preparation should take the form of an inventory of our spiritual walk with our God in Jesus Christ. *"Are we walking in His footprints?"* Something to think about during your Prayer Time this week! **MFB**