

Homily for the First Sunday of Advent, 11/9/20

Today we begin the new season of the year called **Advent**, literally **Coming**. I love this time of year as we prepare to celebrate Christmas once again. I particularly love the advent hymns and Christmas carols. Some hymns like O Come O Come Emmanuel can be traced back to the 6th century.

Those who love classical music know the beauty of Handel's epic work entitled: **the Messiah**. In it he captures the longing and the holy desires of this season of Advent. He begins with the words of our first reading from Isaiah: "Comfort, Comfort my people says the Lord." The Lord's exile in Babylon is over so prepare the way of the Lord.

For many this season after Thanksgiving is already the Christmas season but for us as Christians we say wait we have a special season called Advent, literally coming. It is a season of hope. A hope that the Kingdom of God will come in its fulness. This is the same hope we pray each time we recite the Lord's Prayer saying: *Thy Kingdom come.*

Our readings today on this First Sunday of Advent have nothing to do with Christmas, the first coming of Christ, but they have a lot to say about the Second Coming of the Lord at the end of time. Our first reading today begins with a lament or a groan of pain from the unknown author called Third Isaiah. Why is he lamenting? When the people returned from the exile they find their beloved city of Jerusalem in ruins and their sacred Temple destroyed and the people are as unfaithful to God as they always were. Isaiah is standing on a hill looking down at the destruction of his beloved homeland and so cries out to God with one of the great lines of scripture: **"Would that you would rend the clouds and come down, O Lord, and help your people who are desperate."** As Christians we believe that this dream and prayer of Isaiah is fulfilled

with the birth of Jesus, the Son of God. And we believe that the same Jesus will come again at the end of time (Parousia).

Our Gospel reading today is from Mark's Gospel, the Gospel for most of the Year B. Notice the reading is not taken from the beginning of Mark's Gospel but begins with Chapter 13 where Jesus tells us a parable about his Second Coming. Here, we are told to be watchful and wait but not to be idle. In this parable the servant put in charge is told to be found busy when the master returns. In the second reading today St. Paul tells the Corinthians and us as well, how to be ready for this Coming of the Lord: "*Be firm in faith and irreproachable on the day of the Lord.*"

Let us use these four weeks of Advent waiting not only for the Coming of Christ on Christmas 2020 but also the other comings of Christ, namely the coming of Christ on the day of our death and the coming of Christ at the end of time.

This Advent warning to be alert, reminds me of the old Irish story about the woman who has a vision that Jesus is coming to her village church next Sunday. She runs to the pastor saying: "*what shall we do?*" The pastor gets all excited and wonders what the parish should do, so he calls the Pope and the Pope answers very simply: "Look busy!"

That is the message for us today – **Be busy for the Lord is coming!**