

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR C)

November 28, 2021

Jeremiah 33:14–16 • 1 Thessalonians 3:12–4:2 • Luke 21:25–28, 24–36

### I.

On Thanksgiving,  
I was able to see my niece,  
who is in her first year of college.

I asked her how things were going:  
her studies, life in the dorm, and her part-time job.

Everything is going well.

She went on to say that the first year of college has broadened her mind.

She said,

“At the end of high school,  
you think you have a well-rounded education,  
but then you come to college,  
and you realize there’s so much that you don’t know.”

That observation applies to life as well as to academics.

It’s one of the most important lessons in life:

Sometimes, we don’t know what we don’t know;  
there’s more of life out there,  
which exceeds our experience and even our grasp.

### II.

Turning to the spiritual dimension of life,  
this truth underscores the importance of what is called “divine revelation,”  
meaning God’s saving action and presence in the world.

There is relatively little we can know about God on our own.

There's much more we can know about God because he himself has shown us, through his words and actions in history.

Revelation isn't just dry, academic knowledge about God.

It's a portal:

We can enter into a profound relationship with God—communion—because of who he is and what he has accomplished in Christ.

God's plan of salvation—the content of revelation—awaits fulfilment; there is more he will do.

As we profess in the Creed each Sunday,  
Christ “will come again in glory to judge living and the dead.”

This second coming of Christ is called the “Parousia,” which is Greek—the language of the New Testament—for “coming.”

In Latin, “coming” was translated as *adventus*, which is the etymology of our English word “advent.”

Therefore, the liturgical season of Advent, which begins today, focuses on the two comings of Christ.

The first part of Advent focuses on the second coming of Christ—the Parousia—while the second part of Advent focuses on the first coming of Christ—the Incarnation—and then leads into the celebration of the Incarnation at Christmas.

We await the second coming of Christ at the end of time—the Parousia—as we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Christ—the Incarnation.

The reality of the Parousia means that there is still more God will do—for the cosmos as a whole, but also in our individual lives.

Advent teaches us that the proper response to this “coming” of Christ is vigilance and joyful hope.

In today's Gospel,  
Christ urges us to be vigilant:

“Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy  
from carousing or drunkenness  
**and the anxieties of daily life,**  
and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. ...  
Be vigilant at all times.”

It's interesting—and telling—  
that Jesus says that the stress of daily life  
can be as dangerous as grievous moral lapses.

On top of daily anxieties,  
there's the political and social tumult we've been experiencing in recent years,  
coupled with the pandemic that just seems to drag on.

All of these worries, concerns, and stress can take our focus off of God—  
off of what he is doing,  
and off of what he will yet do.

The second reading features St. Paul's exhortation to the Christian community  
in Thessalonica, Greece.

Paul's stirring words capture the time in which the Thessalonians live,  
which is the time in which we live:  
the period in between the first and second comings of Christ.

There is more that God can do,  
which means there's more we're meant to become.

We're meant to flourish even more in holiness,  
as St. Paul says:

“May the Lord make you **increase**  
and **abound** in love for one another and for all...  
to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus...”

We... exhort you... that,  
as you received from us how you should conduct yourselves...

to please God—  
and as you are now conducting yourselves—  
you do so **even more.**”

The Collect or opening prayer for Mass also expresses the theme of Advent, and does so using a vivid image:

“Grant your faithful...  
the resolve to **run forth** to meet your Christ  
with righteous deeds at his **coming**,  
so that, gathered at his right hand,  
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.”

God is coming—  
not in the sense that he is somehow absent—  
but in the sense that there is more he will do.

Our response to this coming is to “wait”—  
not in the sense of being utterly passive—  
but in the sense of actively and joyfully responding to God:

“Running forth” to meet Christ;  
not waiting for him to “show up.”

The active and joyful response to God includes hope and vigilance.

Hope is the expectation that there is more God will do.

Vigilance is weeding out distractions and obstacles to God’s work,  
in order to cooperate with his grace.

Along those lines,  
I’d like to make a recommendation for Advent:  
for each person or household to pray, each day,  
the beautiful prayer called the Angelus.

I sent out copies last week.

The Angelus describes the whole way of life of a reliable Advent guide:  
the Blessed Virgin Mary.

She was hopeful and vigilant—  
ready and eager to respond to God.

Just look at that statue of her in the side chapel:

Mary is ready to act,  
waiting to do what God asks of her.

There is more that God wants to do in the world,  
and for us.

Christ is here, and he's coming.

We can respond to him with our whole lives.