

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Watch and Prepare!

By: Fr. Joseph Pellegrino

This week we begin the Season of Advent. Advent is the preparation time for Christmas, but it is also more than that. Advent is the time that we focus on the end of the world, and the end of our own lives. It's the time that we join the Church in preparing the world for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

During Advent we hear the following expressions: *Watch! Stay Awake! Be on Guard! Prepare! The Lord is Coming Prepare to meet him! Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus!*

The Lord is coming. Our nativity scenes recall his coming in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. Since, as St. Peter says in his Second Letter, in the Lord's eyes one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as one day, our celebration of Christmas is a real union with the child in the manger.

The Lord is coming to conclude the work of the Kingdom of God. He is coming at the end of time. We may live to see the end of time, or the end of our own lives will rush us to the end of time.

In the first reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah we heard that without the Lord we wander aimlessly through this life. Without the Lord we manage to get ourselves into all sorts of trouble. But God has molded us and fashioned us. We are the clay. He is the potter. If we just allow him to guide our lives, we will be ready. St. Paul adds in today's second reading that Christ has filled us with every good gift. Why does God do this for us? He wants us to be a sign that he is coming. So we wait. We prepare. We watch.

We watch. We watch for the signs of his presence in our lives. We need the presence of Christ in our lives. Without Christ, we wander. We get into trouble. Without Christ we lose the purpose for our existence. For what is the purpose for living if we can't experience the love of God and share it with those around us? That is why we were created. We were created to love.

So we watch. We watch for the numerous times, more than we could ever imagine, when Christ extends the love of God to us. We watch for the times when we can serve his love by serving others. We watch for the opportunities to make a special sacrifice of prayer and fasting to unite ourselves closer to him. We wait. We watch. We watch for the opportunities to grow. For Advent, the time of watching, is an opportunity for us to grow closer to Christ.

We have to watch. If we don't prepare for Christ's coming, if we don't live our lives in such a way that we are always open to Christ's presence, then we will certainly be caught napping. Perhaps the end of our own personal worlds will come before the end of the universe. It makes no difference. We have to be prepared for Christ. We have to watch.

We need the Lord. We need him in our lives. During this season of longing, we unite ourselves to the longing of the people of past ages, the ancient prophets. We long for his presence. If we deny this, if we deny our need for his presence, if we allow the mundane affairs of preparing for the fluff of Christmas to take precedence over the need we have for the presence of the Lord, if we forget that he is coming to transform us into his love on earth, then we will chance becoming useless shells—Christians on the outside, but not much on the inside.

Advent is a season of hope. The promise of the prophets will be fulfilled. So we wait. We prepare. We watch. To the extent that we do this well, to that extent our lives will be a celebration of the presence of Christ in the world. To the extent that we celebrate Christ's presence in the world, to that extent our entire lives are a celebration of Christmas.

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READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 63:16-19, 64:2-7 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 Mark 13:33-37

November 30, 2014

靈 修 生 活

我 們 必 須 常 常 醒 寤

呂 漁 亭 神 父

「上主啊！願祢把天衝破親自降下，高山在祢面前就會融化。」(讀經一)

「天主必要堅持你們到底，使你們在我們的主耶穌基督再度來臨的日子，無瑕可指。」

「你們要當心，要醒寤，因為你們不知道那日期甚麼時候來臨。」(福音)

今日是「將臨期第一主日」，也是聖經選讀乙年的開始。但頗令人費解的，今日的三段讀經，所指似乎各不相同：讀經一指默西亞降臨，讀經二則指耶穌基督的第二次來臨，至於福音所說的「那日期」，可能指聖殿毀滅日，但也很可能指世界末日。我們之所以如此解釋，因為馬爾谷福音的這段話，實際上是由耶穌基督預言聖殿將遭毀滅所引起的。當時宗徒們曾問祂這事何時發生？耶穌於是借題發揮，以聖殿毀滅提到了世界毀滅，因此祂勸宗徒必須常常醒寤，因為誰也不知道那日子何時來臨。但不管聖殿何日毀滅，或世界末日何時來臨，有一件事確定的，那就是這個物質世界不能永遠生存下去，有一天它必須面臨消滅的命運。

為了勸人對世界末日的來臨必須時時醒寤，耶穌便講了一個家主遠行的故事。有一位家主在離家前，對家僕做了一個清楚的交代就走了。因為他沒有說明何日回家，耶穌就乘機警惕門徒們必須時時醒寤：「所以，你們當醒寤，因為你們不知道家主甚麼時候回來：或傍晚、或夜半、或清晨；免得他忽然來到，遇見你們正在睡覺……」其實，耶穌在這裡已由世界的末日，想到了我們個人的末日。我們當然不知道天主何日來召喚我們：今年？明年？或是十年廿年之後？但日子長短畢竟無關緊要，重要的是人人早晚都必須面對死亡。那時，你若準備妥當，你真是有福的，因為耶穌將對你說：「好！善良的僕人，來享受天國的福樂吧！」但若那時你還沒有準備就緒，當心不要像那些愚蠢的童女一樣，新郎來時竟發現燈油沒有了，於是臨急抱佛腳匆匆上街購油，等你回來跑到新郎家，可惜門已關了，你想進去也不得其門而入了！

其實今日的這三段讀經，在強調基督的第一次來臨也好，第二次降臨也好；或強調世界末日及個人生命之終結也無不可。因為這四者在天父永恆的計劃中均屬同一件事，即如何促成天主造人的最終目的，人若在今生今世善盡己職，來生來世則獲享永生。耶穌誕生既是救世贖世工程的開始，就讓我們虔誠地準備這個佳節吧。

摘自「公教報」

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 十 一 月 三 十 日

依 63:16-19,64:2-7; 格前:1:3-9; 谷 13:33-37