

## Advent 1

Thus, I take as my text today from the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter of St. Paul's Letter to the Church at Rome:

***And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand:***

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight O' Lord my Strength and my Redeemer.”

We have blessed the Advent wreath and lighted the first candle, signifying the beginning of a new Christian Year, not with great fanfare but with the simple act of lighting a candle. With the beginning of a new Christian Year, we officially begin the Season of Advent, analogous to the more solemn Pre-Lenten Season and a period of liturgical preparation for Christmas.

We say liturgical preparation but really, it should also be our spiritual preparation as well and, in the true spirit of Advent, a preparation for the Second Coming at the end of time.

Since the eighth century, Advent has been considered the beginning of the Christian Year with its dual focus on preparation both for the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and His Second Coming to be the Judge of the quick and the dead.

Thus, we see in the four-week period of Advent, the joyful expectation of the birth of Christ and the redemption that comes to us through His Incarnation, while at the same time reflecting in awe on the judgment that still awaits us.

In reflecting on this season of Advent leading up to the fulfilling of God's Promise of a Saviour, we remember the expectation of the early Christian was the immanency of the Second Coming. Yet, St. Paul, perceiving otherwise, sought to refocus on the significance of being prepared, not just in the moment, but rather for a time-to-come, a future event, so that we would not be caught off-guard.

This preparation focuses on our nature as both physical and spiritual. We refer to this dual nature as *Christian Duality*.

*Christian Duality*: while it sounds like something out of Greek philosophy, the concept is directly applicable to us today; it brings home both the duality of Advent, and the duality of the life of a Christian in a secular world.

A mouthful! Yet, when we think about it, Christians constantly strive to maintain a balance between the physical and the spiritual; between the secular and the religious; between here and hereafter. Well, you get the picture, we go through life as if it were a balancing act.

Must it be that way?

If we go back and re-read the Epistle appointed for this First Sunday in Advent, from the 13th chapter of St. Paul's Letter to the Church at Rome, we can see Christian Duality boiled down, reduced to its very basic simplicity. It is a lesson for our entire lives.

Whatever we believe, there is a very basic, stark reality: we do not know the time that we will depart from this earthly life, not the year, much less the day, hour, and minute. It could be right now, or years from now.

Are we prepared for that moment? It is not a material or physical preparation; it's a spiritual preparation that takes into account our dual nature, that is, that we are both physical and spiritual beings.

The balancing act that we go through in life keeps our two natures in accord with each other.

In a sense, the *Season of Advent* clues us in on how to keep our lives in balance.

During Advent, we prepare ourselves spiritually to celebrate two momentous events: the *First Coming* of our Lord, and His *Second Coming*. We celebrate the past and the future.

With the first, we celebrate a loving Saviour and Redeemer; with the second, we celebrate a loving Judge.

Through His *First Coming*, Jesus Christ showed us the way to live a balanced life in this world while, at the same time, preparing for the second.

In the words of St. Paul, simply, “put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.”

By imitating the life of our Saviour, to the best of our ability, we will bring our lives into balance, the balance beam being love.

It is love that keeps us whole in both our natures, the physical and the spiritual.

As we prepare to celebrate the past, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, we will be celebrating the revelation of the *Love of God* to all mankind. Through his Son, God revealed to the world the extent of his love for all his Creation, and to what lengths he would go to reconcile us to him.

This reconciliation was to be different from what mankind could ever imagine: it is based on love and all its attributes, on God's *Gift of Grace*; it is the shedding of a new light on and in the world.

That light shined forth from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to encompass all God's Creation. For us, it is a matter of putting on the *Armor of Light* that will protect us from the world and light our pathway through life itself.

Clothed in the *Armor of Light*, we will be prepared for the Second Coming, the Loving Judgment, that awesome moment when our souls will be required. There will be no fear, for we will be in the *Light*, our duality united.

In darkness there is fear, but love, joy, and eternal bliss abide in the *Light*.

As Christians, we live in this world, but we are not part of it. Advent reminds us of this duality.