

Advent 1

2021

I take as my text today from the 13th 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 lit the first candle, signifying the beginning of a new Christian Year, celebrated not with great fanfare but with prayer and the simple act of just lighting a candle.

With the beginning of a new Christian Year, we officially enter 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.

We Christians not just adopted the Latin word *Advent* meaning *arrival* or *coming* but took it over so that it has come to be even secularly recognized as the **Church Season** leading up to Christmas.

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 that 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 beings. 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. I think 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 as we, at the same time, are preparing for the *Second* Coming and life eternal.

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.

St. John expressed this beautifully in the first verses of his Gospel which is frequently read as the *Last Gospel*. Listen to what John says:

IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

St. Paul carries forth that revelation from John saying that for us, putting on the *Armor of Light*, which is Jesus Christ, 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*.

Even today, as so many people live in fear of dying, we, who live in the *Light of Christ*, should have no fear, whether of dying or living. We know that for us, the temporal, life in the physical world, **is** only temporary as we are transients in this world preparing for the world to come.

Indeed, as Christians, we live in this world, but we are not part of it. When we were **Baptized**, *reborn* as *Children of God*, our *dual nature* became a reality. **Advent** gives us pause and reminds us of the reality of this duality as we await the arrival of Jesus Christ — his *First Coming* which we will *celebrate* and his *Second Coming* which we *anticipate*.