

Sunday November 28, 2021

First Week of Advent

Parishioner Reflection

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A God Who Keeps His Promises

Once again, we begin a new church year with the First Sunday of Advent, but this year is different. Our last Christmas was spent isolated from our families and friends and we are living with the specter of another possible lockdown as the Christmas holidays approach. As Catholic Christians we must move forward undaunted because we are a joyful people of faith. We trust in a loving God who keeps His promises!

In the reading from Isaiah, the coming of the Messiah is foretold. Jesus was promised to the nation of Israel and He came humbly and almost unnoticed in a stable. The promise made to the expectant Jewish people was fulfilled and some did not believe because Jesus was not what they wanted or expected. Today, we may struggle too with unbelief because we see disease and disaster around us but, even more tragic, our loss of trust in promises.

Politicians make many promises and constantly break them. This undermines our faith in government and our leaders. Divorce and broken relationships too have harmed our relationship of trust in God because our direct experiences with broken promises and the hurt caused shakes the foundations of our faith. Furthermore, there is strife and division around us between different factions and perspectives on COVID 19, treatments, etc. etc.

Advent is here once again and whether we enter a lockdown and Christmas is not what we wanted or expected... It matters not! We have a God who loves us and became one of us to show us that love. God always remembers and honours His promises. He came as a baby and that child grew into a man, a man of profound suffering who conquered sin and death. Christmas is a time to remember and honour His incarnation (his taking on human flesh). So we prepare ourselves to celebrate that coming with faith and hope that he will come again.

Indeed, He comes again every day into our homes and hearts as we call out to Him in our need. He comes to us every day in the gift of the Eucharist and in the love shown us by family, friends, and neighbours. So what makes His coming at Christmas different? It is an “anamnesis,” a recalling of these special events which happened long ago so that we can bring them back to life in ourselves and deeply remember that God came into; broke into our world.

So we prepare our lives and our hearts by first asking God “to strengthen our hearts in holiness so that we may be blameless before our God” (1Thess) and that whatever we have already

learned to do to please God in our lives, we should do even more! Why.... the kingdom of God is here. It is among us. He came as a child born of a mother, like all of us. He suffered death like we all shall endure but He conquered death. We, therefore, have nothing to fear except the fear of not pleasing the One who loved us unto death. Neither COVID, nor lockdowns, nor earthquakes or floods, or the broken promises of governments can separate us from the love of God. (Rom. 8:38) Rather it is us and our choices that breaks our relationship with Him. He is forever faithful and asks us to keep faith by not allowing ourselves to be “weighed down through dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life.” (Luke 21:34)

God keeps His promises. He has promised He will come again, and He will. It matters not the day or the year. What matters is that we should always be ready. We begin by asking the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to clearly see those areas we need to reform in our lives, so that we can truly be prepared for His return. And all the areas where we see that we are not ready, we humbly ask for God’s spirit to assist us with His grace and avail ourselves of the sacraments and the guidance and wisdom of our beloved priests.

Finally, are we ever completely ready? No, reform will always be needed. Just like when we prepare ourselves to receive guests, there will always be forgotten details, mistakes, and failures. That is when we must turn in faith and love to God’s mercy. He has also promised mercy, so we have no reason to fear.... Come Lord Jesus come!