

CHRISTMAS CAN WAIT

I think this might be a good slogan for the 4 weeks of Advent

This is a short season of preparation

Getting ready

We should be good at waiting by now

But it seems that in many ways we have grown impatient

We don't want to wait for Christmas

It used to be after Thanksgiving before lights and trees went up

The shopping could wait until normal business hours on Friday

But now it is not enough to be opened at 4 or 5 in the morning

Many places think they have to be opened on Thanksgiving Day

Sales begin as early as Halloween

Our fathers in faith can teach us still something about waiting

The first Advent was thousands of years in preparation

They weren't waiting for a God to be born as a child

They were waiting for the stump of Jesse

The Son of David

They were waiting for the promises God made to Abraham to be fulfilled

These promises were fulfilled partially in the incarnation

When God became man

**But these promises remain to be fulfilled in their entirety
At the second coming of Jesus Christ
And that is the focus at the beginning of our Advent season
Christmas can wait
We need to learn how to prepare
Like the Jews in our first reading
We get to read of these events in hindsight
We know what was happening
And how so much played out over the centuries
But not so for those living at the time
They were living through the trials and tribulations
Their land had been split
The north and the south
Jeremiah was a prophet from the south
But he was sent to the north
His prophesy was not for a splinter group
It was for the entire Israelite nation
It is for all people today
Despite the current situation
They are not forgotten by God
A shoot of Jesse will arise**

In the spring, after a long winter

What is the first sign of life?

A shoot springs from a plant that looks dead

This is God's promise

Although the kingdom of David may look dead

To those living at the time, it seems to be destroyed

There will come forth a shoot

A sign of life

And this shoot will rule for all time

This promise of a future event is what we have in our Gospel as well

Yes, each Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ

It is a celebration of a past event

It is a celebration of a current event

Christ's presence and reigning in our hearts

It is a promise of a future event

His second coming

We do not want to concentrate only on one

And forget the others

So we read of this future event in our Gospel

There will be signs in the sky

People will die of freight

The powers of the heavens will be shaken

Nothing about rapture here

Faithful Christians will not be spared

Christ does not promise to snatch them away

Just as Mary and Joseph were not spared from any suffering

Jesus himself was not spared any suffering

We cannot expect anything different when the end comes

**This is what it would be to have hearts drowsy from carousing
and drunkenness**

Letting the anxieties of daily life distract us

Be vigilant and pray you may be able to stand before the Son of Man

If we think we will be spared

Why bother preparing?

If we are not prepared

We will buckle under the pressure when it comes

This preparedness should not be a cause of despair

Like a young couple expecting their first child

Going to Lamaze class

Learning about the risks

The potential for a caesarian birth

These do not lessen the expectation or joy in their lives

They know there will be a day of rejoicing

And they are prepared

The term Advent is Latin for coming

So we have these 4 short weeks to prepare for Christ's 2nd coming

This will be a new birth

And like all births, there is a radical change

Like the young couple

A new birth involves labor and pain

It is a time of trial and a sort of crisis

If this is true for each human birth

What will it be for a cosmic birth?

When a new heaven and new earth will be created

There are temptations to avoid the time of preparation

To become distracted with things

Parties, shopping, decorations, travel

All these are good things

But are they the meaning of the season?

Do they take on the highest importance?

It is easy for any of us to take the short view in the world

Making Christmas about these external things

Forgetting about Advent

It is easy to take the short view in the Church

There are those that claim Vatican II was the end of the Catholic Church

**I know of priests that thought John Paul was the end of the Church
I know some priests that have left the priesthood because of Pope Francis**

**We can get so caught up in keeping Christ in Christmas
Or fighting for the right to say Merry Christmas and not Happy Holidays**

**All good and noble things for sure
But even these can prevent us from preparing**

Advent is a gift

It is a time of preparing from a distance

Looking forward to great mysteries

Considering where we are in our lives in our relationship with God

Reviewing our lives

Taking a sober look at them

Am I on the right path?

Do I need to alter course?

Advent is a time of renewal

How was my past year?

How was my past ten years?

This is a time of fresh beginnings

But we cannot do it alone

We cooperate with the grace God offers during Advent

The world is not as it was even 20 or 30 years ago

And it will continue to change

We need to find that which does not change

Christ

The same yesterday, today, forever

Advent is a time to be on the watch

Looking inward

To see where we have surrendered

To see where God is inviting to

This is the time to prepare

Christmas can wait