

# 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent

## 2 December 2007

### LESSON: This Advent Is Meant to Be Different

This Advent is **different** from **every other** Advent that we have ever lived, ever.

It is different because **we** are different.

In the past year, we have **changed**. We have another year of **life** under our belts.

- ? Maybe it was a year full of **successes, joys, and advances**.
- ? Maybe it was a year full of **failures and sins**.
- ? Maybe it was a year of **suffering and hardship**.

**Whatever** happened during the past year, it has **affected** us.

We have **more experience**, more **knowledge**, and, we hope, a little more **wisdom** and a deeper **love** for God and neighbor.

As a result, when we **turn our attention** once again to Advent, to the **three comings of Christ**: his first, 2000 years ago; his last, sometime in the future, and his ongoing one, through his grace, his providence, and the sacraments - when we turn our attention to these three comings of Christ, we will **see something new**, something **different**.



Jesus Christ is God.

- ? He is **infinite** beauty, power, goodness and truth.
- ? We can never know him **completely**.
- ? He is an **inexhaustible treasury** of greatness.
- ? Because of our life experience during the past year, we are now **ready** to discover **new facets** of this treasure, new **levels** of meaning, wisdom, strength and joy.

God's providence has been **preparing** us over this past year, so that we could now learn things about God and his plan of salvation that he **couldn't show us before**, because we weren't ready.

All three of those comings of Christ have the same purpose: **to reestablish and deepen our friendship with God**.

He is looking forward **making that happen**, to deepening our friendship with him, in these coming weeks of Advent.

## ILLUSTRATION: Visiting the Monuments

One of the many remarkable things you notice when you **travel** is how much **familiarity breeds indifference**.

- ? When we visit one of the **great cities** of the world, like Florence or Paris, for example, as a pilgrim, or even a tourist, we are **deeply moved** by the **beauty** of the ancient churches, monuments, and works of art.
- ? You would think that the people who actually **live** in those places would have an even **greater** knowledge of and appreciation for the **treasures** that surround them, since they see them so **frequently**.
- ? In fact, however, if you take time **to ask them**, you very quickly discover that in many cases, a tourist or pilgrim who has spent **a week there** has seen **more** of the city's treasures than the full-time **residents!**
- ? I remember well when I lived in Philadelphia – the only time I went to Independence Mass or the Liberty Bell was when people visited...
- ? What a tragedy! Those who have the **best possible opportunity** to benefit from those treasures are so often completely **indifferent** to them!



The **same thing** can happen to us as **Catholics**, in a **spiritual** sense.

- ? We can become so **familiar** with the works of God and the truths he has revealed to us, that we forget how **wonderful, amazing, and awe-inspiring** they really are.
- ? You often hear it said, in fact, that **converts make the best Catholics** - precisely because they are able to **see the beauty and value** of our faith with **fresh eyes**.

Advent is an **invitation** the Church gives us to **refresh our vision** of the **wonderful** things God has done, is doing, and will do.

## APPLICATION

### Watch and Hope (linked to Preface for Advent)

We are all **busy** people. We cannot simply **retire from everyday life** for the next four weeks in order to pray - though if we **could**, it might be a good way to live Advent.



But even so, God has **something** he wants to **show** us this Advent, something **to teach each one of us**, something for us **to do and to discover**.

How can we make sure we **don't miss it?**

- ? Today's **preface**, the thanksgiving we will offer as we begin the Eucharistic prayer, gives us the **secret**.
- ? It uses **two verbs** that can serve as the **guiding theme** of our Advent, two verbs that describe Advent **actions** we can

perform **anywhere and anytime** - in the car, while we wash the dishes, before we go to sleep.

The verbs are "**watch**" and "**hope**".

Here is how the preface uses them.

- ? First it calls to mind Christ's **first coming** to earth, on the first Christmas, to save us from our sins.
- ? Then it says: "Now we **watch** for the day, **hoping** that the salvation promised us will be ours when Christ our Lord will **come again** in his glory."

**Watch and hope**. These are Christian attitudes that should accompany us in every moment.



- ? **To watch means to stay awake**, as Christ advised in the Gospel, to put on the **armor of light**, as St Paul encouraged in the Second Reading.
- ? **To watch means to live pro-actively**, not passively, doing everything we do in such a way as to please Christ and benefit our neighbor.

To **hope means to always keep the future in mind**,

- ? to remember that the pleasures and pains of **this** life are **passing**,
- ? to **look forward to heaven** with just as much **eagerness** as we look forward to Christmas vacation, or to the presents that we will receive on Christmas Day.

Jesus will come to us again in Holy Communion during this Mass.

When he does, let's **thank** him for this new Advent, and let's ask him to **teach us to live it well, watching and hoping**, so that we will discover everything he wants to show us in the next four weeks.

