

1st Sunday of Advent

November 30, 2025

St. Edward's Parish

Friends, today we begin a new Liturgical Year with the First Sunday of Advent. Advent simply comes from the Latin word 'adventus', which means "coming" or "arrival". It is a season in which we set aside four weeks to prepare for the coming of Christ, celebrated at Christmas. With that in mind, it may seem odd that the first Sunday of Advent does not speak of the baby Jesus; instead, it begins with a Gospel on the Second Coming of Christ. Today, we read from the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus instructs his disciples to keep "awake" (i.e. alert and watchful) because He will come again at an unexpected hour.

The logic to beginning Advent in this way is quite simple: Advent intends to prepare us not only to look back to the first coming of Christ at His birth in Bethlehem. It also intends to prepare us to look ahead to His final coming when God's plan of salvation will be complete. We look back to the first coming of Christ so that we can also be ready to welcome Christ when He comes again. The entire Christian life is something of an 'advent': we live in the anticipation of the coming of Christ. St. Paul, in the second reading, points the early Christians to this reality: "Brothers and Sisters, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers" Paul continues with a call for repentance, namely, to put aside all the sinful attachments and live for Christ. That same call to conversion echoes down to us and lies at the heart of Advent. Next Sunday the Gospel reading will be on St. John the Baptist who turns our attention specifically toward this call to repentance.

It may seem like the Second coming of Christ is a far distant reality. Perhaps it is; we don't know. While we must stand ready for it, this instruction to keep alert can also remind us of the coming end of our own lives when we will have our personal meeting with Christ. This we know will come in our own lifetime. For some sooner, for some later; however, the same

command to be ready guides us. This is not meant to make us fearful or downcast; instead, it is meant to focus us, so that we do not waste our lives on things that distract us from our true goal. Things like entertainments, pleasures, distractions, purchases, achievements etc... If something cannot lead us closer to eternal life, it is time to let that go.

In addition to the two ‘comings’ we have spoken of: the first at Jesus’ birth and the second at the end of time. We can also speak of a third coming, which Advent calls us to be attentive to. That is the coming of Christ in the present. On the night of the Last Supper, Jesus promised the disciples: “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will **come to them** and make our home with them. (Jn 14:23).” Jesus is ready to come to us spiritually and personally at every moment when we remove the obstacles and desire to receive Him. He comes daily in the words of the Scriptures, in prayer, and in the sacraments, especially at the holy sacrifice of the Mass in His body and blood upon the altar, allowing us to receive Him.

Today we light the first candle of the Advent Wreath. The Advent wreath has become a beloved custom throughout the Church and in many homes as a visible sign of the coming of Christ. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent and are often colored to correspond to the liturgical colour of each Sunday (three purple and one rose). The candles represent the coming of Jesus, who is our light in the darkness, and the lighting of one more candle each week bring a little more light until Christmas arrives. As we look upon the Advent wreath at each Mass and light the candles, may we look back with joy and faith at the first coming of Christ in Bethlehem so that we can prepare for His second Coming at the end of time, and also be alert to receive Christ daily in the various ways He comes to us, especially in the Holy Eucharist.