**Homily** **for the 1st Sunday of Advent**

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        There are four stages of life: The first stage, you believe in Santa Claus. The second stage, you don’t believe in Santa Claus. The third, you dress up as Santa Claus. And, the fourth, you look like Santa Claus.

        It is Advent: a quiet prelude before the brightness of Christmas. Today’s celebration of the First Sunday of Advent is a reminder that there is less than one month before Christmas.

        Too often, our first response might be to make a list of what needs to be done for Christmas. To put twinkling lights and decorations around the house, to buy what is needed for the Christmas cooking, to shop for presents. It is easy to feel anxiety about “getting it all done.”

        But, first of all, we need to pause and reflect on entering into Advent as a season with true meaning. The word ‘Advent,’ of course, means ‘coming.’ Jesus says in today’s Gospel, “People will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and glory.”

        In this season of Advent, we commemorate His coming at Bethlehem two thousand years ago, and His Second Coming at the end of the world, and also His coming to our hearts and our lives. In this season, the Church urges us to open our hearts to believe and receive Him with faith, hope, and love.

        So, the readings for the First Sunday of Advent, this first day of the new liturgical year, begin with a hope and a reassurance. In the first reading, Jeremiah reports, “The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made….”

        This reading from Jeremiah was originally meant to encourage people who were devastated by war, whose country was destroyed, and whose leaders had been taken away by the enemy. To the people of Israel there was no hope, no future, no life.  But, through the prophecy of Jeremiah, now God gives them hope.

        The messiah will save His people, then, they will comeback to their land with great hope and love, and new life and new era will begin.

        Also, in the Gospel today, Jesus makes predictions of disaster befalling people because of their infidelities in their faith and lives. He is speaking to His disciples about the total collapse of the city of Jerusalem where had been the symbol of God’s eternal fidelity. Jerusalem was the central city of the religious and spiritual life.

        His prophecy pointed not only to God’s judgment, but also to His saving action and mercy. He will save His people at the end of times. God has not never forgotten His people and He promises. He is always faithful. Better days are ahead.

        This promise was not just for the people of Israel. Now, His promise of safety, security, and love is for us as well. No matter what happens, stay on course, keep the faith! Jesus says, “When these things happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.” It is great hope and eternal promise.

        Each year, Advent is a new beginning, a chance for a fresh start for the soul and spirit. It is not a time to just wait for Christmas to happen, but a time to prepare for Christmas and the coming of Christ into our life with new power.

        It is a time not simply to imitate how our parents celebrated Christmas, but to decide how we will celebrate Christmas this year in our lives. Jesus was born once and for all in Bethlehem two thousand years ago and will not be born there again. He will be born again here in your home, in your heart, and in your lives. So, we need to make a room for Him and invite Him into our lives.

        We are so busy and our minds are too occupied without even noticing we push away Jesus. Our minds are full, our calendars are packed, our expectations are low, so we are not actively looking and seeking for the coming of  Christ into our midst.

        The good news of Advent is that God chose to be with us. God entered into our world and into our lives. But, the bad news is that we are often unaware of this miracle. This first Sunday of Advent is the beginning of the new Church year. Maybe it is a good time to make some spiritual resolution as we prepare for Christmas.

        Today, we are invited to begin preparing for the coming of Savior into our lives. The Savior has come, and He is coming!