

1st Sunday of Advent C 2015.

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the



ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of

Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.'

'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'

Thoughts:

The liturgical text of this Sunday leads us to meditate on the teaching of Jesus on the end of the world. Today, when we speak of the end of the world, the reactions are quite varied. Some are fearful. Others are indifferent. Others begin to take life more seriously. Others still, as soon as they hear some terrible news, say: "The end of the world is drawing near!" And you? What is your opinion on this matter?

Some more Questions:

- What did you feel during the reading? Did you feel fear or peace? Why?
- Did you come across anything in the text that gave you hope and courage?
- What is it today that urges people to have hope and to keep going?
- Why is it that at the **beginning** of Advent, the Church confronts us with the **end** of the world?
- What can we answer to those who say that the end of the world is drawing near?
- How do we understand the image of the coming of the Son of man on a cloud?

When we say "The end of the world", **what** world are we talking about? Is it the end of the world of which the Bible speaks or the end of **this** world, where reigns the power of evil that drives away and oppresses life? This world of injustice will come to an end. No one knows what the new world will look like, because no one can imagine what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Cor 2:9). The new world of life without death (Apoc 21:4) surpasses all things just as the tree surpasses its seed (1 Cor 15:35-38). The early Christians were anxious and wanted to know the when of this end (2 Ts 2:2; Acts 1:11). But "it is not for you to know the times and the hour that the Father has set with his authority" (Acts 1:7). The only way to contribute to the end "and that God brings about the time of rest" (Acts 3:20), is to witness to the Gospel in every moment and action even to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

For us 21st century people, apocalyptic language seems strange, difficult and confused. But for the people of those times it was the common way of speaking and all understood. It expressed the strong certitude of the faith of the little ones. In spite of all and against all appearances, they continued to believe that God is the Lord of history. The main purpose of apocalyptic language is to foster the faith and hope of the poor. In Luke's time, many of the people of the communities thought that the end of the world was close at hand and that Jesus would have come back. That is why there were those who stopped working: "Why work, if Jesus was returning?" (cf 2 Ts 3:11). Others stared at heaven, waiting for the return of Jesus on the clouds (cf Acts 1:11). Jesus' words shows that no one knows the hour of the final coming. Today we have the same thing! Some await the coming of Jesus so much that they do not see his presence among us, in our daily concerns and events.

Maranatha – Come Lord Jesus.

2nd Sunday Advent Year C

Luke 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:



A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight.
Every valley will be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low,
winding ways will be straightened
and rough roads made smooth.
And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

Reflection:

On the second and third Sundays of Advent, the church gives us John the Baptist as a model of someone who knows how to wait. In this first passage we have Luke's summary of the mission of John the Baptist. It is none other than the mission of Jesus himself and of all preachers of the gospel.

St Luke invites us to meditate on God's word which comes to John in the wilderness, bypassing the powerful ones of the world. The season of Advent invites us to be credible and courageous witnesses to the Good News. We are encouraged to avoid the danger of becoming arrogant by promoting our own

name and fame instead of the name and power of Jesus Christ. Then other people will notice our prophetic lifestyles in a rapidly expanding secular world. Just as John the Baptist provided a suitable opportunity for Christ to come into people's lives without confusing them between himself and Christ, we do the same. John preached the truth because God had decreed that human beings would be saved by the truth.

Prayer:

Lord, we pray that in our heartless world the church may, like John the Baptist, fulfil what is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah, and be a voice crying out to those who feel themselves in a wilderness that you have not abandoned them, that every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill laid low, winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth.



MARANATHA - COME LORD JESUS

3rd Sunday of Advent Year C 2015

Luke 3:10-18

When all the people asked John, 'What must we do, then?' he answered, 'If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same'. There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, 'Master, what must we do?' He said to them, 'Exact no more than your rate'. Some soldiers asked him

in their turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!'



A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.' As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

A few questions

a) The need for conversion: *metanoia*, that is, changing one's imperfect way of thinking to the divine way of thinking and acting. Do I feel this need?

b) God's mercy towards the poor and humble of heart manifests itself in Jesus Christ. Do I identify myself with these?

c) "A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people" (Lk 3: 15). The early Christians anxiously awaited the second coming of the Lord: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come' Let everyone who listens answer, 'Come' " (Apoc 22: 17). Do I await the coming of the Lord, or am I so busy with material life that I am inordinately attached to all things passing?

On the third Sunday of Advent St Luke gives us a glimpse into the personality of that wonderful person, John the Baptist. In your meditation, let him remind you of great people you have known.

John speaks openly. Notice how he has a different word for each group which questions him. Notice too how the soldiers feel that even they can get a word of salvation.

Verses 15 to 18 give us a further insight into the kind of person John the Baptist was. He may have said these words in a moment of discouragement, in which case they express his trust that God would complete what was lacking in his ministry. But perhaps they tell us of his humility in the midst of his extraordinary success as a preacher.

During these Advent weeks, we can prepare for Christ's arrival by imitating John the Baptist, a voice crying in the wilderness, and undergoing conversion from our sins. Advent is a particularly appropriate time to experience God's forgiveness by celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation, with genuine repentance and a determination to avoid the occasions of sin in the future. In this way we can truly look forward in hope to the Messiah's arrival both at Christmas and at the Last Judgement. Reflecting on John, we pray that we too will become repentant for our sins so that we will be ready to meet the Lord whenever and however he comes.

Closing prayer

Word, splendour of the Father, in the fullness of time you came down from heaven to redeem the world. Your Gospel of peace frees us from every fault, pours out light into our minds and hope into our hearts. When, among the splendours of heaven, you will return as judge, welcome us to your right hand in the assembly of the blessed. Praise be to Christ our Lord, to the Father and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

4th Sunday Advent Year C 2015.

Luke 1:39-45

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into

Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb

and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy.'



Reflection:

Each year the gospel passage for this Sunday is a story of Mary's pregnancy, and for this year it is the visitation. We meditate on this story as the second joyful mystery of the rosary, so that this could be an opportunity to go into it deeper than we usually can in saying the rosary, and this would give depth to the way we say that prayer which plays an important part in the lives of many people.

It is the story of two pregnant women and, therefore, an opportunity to enter into the symbolism of that experience, especially for those who have gone through it, seeing it as a symbol of how waiting can be a creative time, one when we express our love and one also when we can unmask all the self-centredness that is latent within us and blocks our ability to give ourselves wholeheartedly to others.

Mary should be the main focus of our attention, symbol at this moment of her life of the person of faith, and

indeed of the church. Particularly significant is the expression "blessed" that is attributed to her by Elizabeth; we must give the word its full biblical meaning, indicating that a person has a great gift from God and also that he or she has brought blessings to others. Mary's blessedness in this passage is simply that she has faith, no great achievements or visible signs of God's favour – just faith.

Mary prepared for Christ's coming into her life very simply. She brought his presence which, paradoxically, was already in her own life — because he was a growing baby in her womb — into her cousin's life. She sensed Elizabeth's needs and she responded accordingly by reaching out and being present to her. Mary was thus a true disciple because she shared Christ's presence, thereby making a significant difference in Elizabeth's life. She literally took Christ to Elizabeth.

In one sense, there was nothing dramatic about Mary visiting her cousin who was in need. Her actions were quiet and uneventful. Yet, in another sense, Mary's unassuming response was precisely what was required from any true disciple. The most important and challenging task of all disciples is to share the presence of Christ, who is already in their lives, with everyone they meet.

Where and how does the joy of God's presence occur in my life and that of my family and community?



Mary woman of Faith -

**BE IT DONE UNTO ME ACCORDING TO
YOUR WORD**