

Homily of First Sunday of Advent Year B, 2020

Isaiah 63:16-17, 19, 64:2-7; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Gospel 13:33-37

The meaning of Advent Wreath: **Circle** symbolizes eternity of God. **Green wreath** symbolizes life everlasting. **Candle light** symbolizes Jesus, the light of the world. **Four candles** symbolize the four weeks of Advent season. **First purple candle** of the first week symbolizes hope. **Second purple candle** of the second week symbolizes peace. **Pink candle** of the third week symbolizes joy. **Third purple candle** of the fourth week symbolizes love. **Purple color** foreshadows the royalty of Jesus.

The theme of the first week of Advent is hope. Jesus is the hope of the world (Matthew 12:21). This is the hope, St. Paul says, that does not disappoint (Romans 5:5).

This Sunday marks the beginning of the Advent season and a new liturgical year. We are, now, in Cycle B. Advent season is observed in the Catholic Church as a time the Church recalls the expectant hopeful waiting for the coming of the Messiah. Literally, the word advent means the 'approaching of,' the 'coming of,' the 'advancing of.'

Ordinarily, almost everybody, Christians and non-Christians alike, in one way or another, prepare for the celebration of Christmas. Business establishments do whatever they can to commercialize Christmas. As we know, there is, usually, so much external preparation. For us Catholics, spiritual preparation is more important. For instance, when we expect a visitor, we get our house in order, we get food and drink ready, and we clean up and dress well. If the house is in order, and food and drink well prepared and arranged, but the host appears shabby, the visitor will feel embarrassed and may not stay for the meal. In the same manner, spiritual preparation is necessary, so that we have an inn ready for Jesus in our life this Christmas. Spiritual preparation makes every Christmas become the first Christmas. The Mass readings and various parish spiritual exercises will help us in the spiritual preparation.

The first reading is Prophet Isaiah's acknowledgement of and lamentation over the sins of the people of Israel, and a plead for God's mercy. Isaiah laments, "Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful; all of us have become like unclean people, all our good deeds are like polluted rags; we have all withered like leaves and our guilt carries us away like the wind." In the same way, we are to acknowledge our sins and do something about them. True repentance of our sins and Sacrament of Reconciliation will help us in the spiritual preparation. If we do these, St. Paul assures us in the second reading, we will "not be lacking in any spiritual gift as [we] wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Gospel reminds us that the preparation of the coming of Jesus Christ is not a spiritual journey only because of the Christmas celebration. Jesus does not wait to visit us only at Christmas. We are to be watchful for him and alert for him any moment, "whether in the evening, or at cockcrow, or in the morning." Again, this point reminds us the importance of preparing and being ready for the end of time.

Some spiritual steps to a good Advent season:

- Participate in parish Advent season spiritual exercises such as retreat, prayer, Penitential Service, and so on.
- Make Advent season spiritual resolutions to be closer to God.
- Go to Confession.
- Attend additional Masses along with Sunday Mass.
- Make peace with those one has difficult relationship with.
- Do works of charity.
- Be devoted to the Word of God and to private prayer.

We wish one another a fruitful and Spirit-filled Advent season.

Fr. Martin Eke, MSP