

First Sunday of Advent – December 2, 2018

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

First Reading: Jer 33:14-16

The days are coming, says the LORD,
when I will fulfill the promise
I made to the house of Israel and Judah.
In those days, in that time,
I will raise up for David a just shoot ;
he shall do what is right and just in the land.
In those days Judah shall be safe
and Jerusalem shall dwell secure;
this is what they shall call her:
“The LORD our justice.”

Responsorial Psalm: PS 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14

R. (1b) To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior,
and for you I wait all the day.

R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
and teaches the humble his way.

R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

All the paths of the LORD are kindness and
constancy toward those who keep his covenant
and his decrees. The friendship of the LORD is
with those who fear him, and his covenant, for
their instruction.

R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

Second Reading: 1 Thes 3:12-4:2

Brothers and sisters:
May the Lord make you increase and abound in
love for one another and for all, just as we have
for you, so as to strengthen your hearts,
to be blameless in holiness before our God and
Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all
his holy ones. Amen.

Finally, brothers and sisters,
we earnestly ask and exhort you in the Lord

Jesus that, as you received from us
how you should conduct yourselves to please
God and as you are conducting yourselves
you do so even more.

For you know what instructions we gave you
through the Lord Jesus.

Gospel: LK 21:25-28, 34-36

Jesus said to his disciples:
“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the
stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay,
perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the
waves.

People will die of fright in anticipation of what is
coming upon the world, for the powers of the
heavens will be shaken.

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in
a cloud with power and great glory. But when
these signs begin to happen, stand erect and
raise your heads because your redemption is at
hand.

“Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy
from carousing and drunkenness and the
anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by
surprise like a trap.

For that day will assault everyone who lives on
the face of the earth.

Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the
strength to escape the tribulations that are
imminent and to stand before the Son of Man.”

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

“My Daddy! My Daddy!” the little boy sang out as he spotted his father progressing up the long airport corridor, returning after a long trip. For some time the little boy had pranced around animatedly waiting and watching. His eyes, his face, his whole body strained forward scanning the faces of other passengers to find his father, moving back and forth trying to see around the emerging throng of passengers. Then, sighting his dad, he lit up with recognition, joyfully exclaiming for all to hear, “My Daddy! My Daddy!”

This Sunday is the first Sunday of Advent, and the experience of this little boy provides an apt study of what it means to await Christ’ coming. Waiting is not a passive exercise of the marginally interested, instead it should be active anticipation. All our faculties should be attuned to the fact that someone important is about to appear. There should be a concentration of our attention and a readiness to respond in enthusiastic greeting.

This week’s Gospel reading provides an appropriate transition from the end of one liturgical year to the beginning of a new liturgical year, for it alerts us to Jesus’ second advent, when he will return from heaven to claim his own. We are encouraged to “look up,” “raise your heads,” “take heed,” “watch,” and pray for his coming is real and redemptive, as real and redemptive as was his first coming. And these actions we are encouraged to follow are the actions of active waiting.

With the Second Advent in mind we are stimulated to celebrate his first Advent with similar active waiting, anticipating a fresh appearing of Jesus’ presence in our lives. Will we be like the little boy mentioned above focusing and concentrating our attention on seeing him? Or will we have our attention diverted by the glitz and secular trappings of a Christmas that ignores that he ever existed, or could ever again reappear to us? Perhaps this is the week when we should determine a plan for peering around the emerging onslaught of secular traditions and purely mercenary celebrations, to actively watch for Jesus. If we take time now to sort out what we are going to do to actively watch for him in the face of this onslaught, and then follow through on our intention, we too will burst forth with exclamations of joy.

““For while all things were in quiet silence and the night was in the midst of her course, thy almighty word leapt down from heaven from thy royal throne...’ The passage, brimming with the mystery of the Incarnation, is wonderfully expressive of the infinite stillness that hovered over Christ’s birth. For the greatest things are accomplished in silence—not in the clamor and display of superficial eventfulness, but in the deep clarity of inner vision; in the almost imperceptible start of decision, in quiet overcoming and hidden sacrifice. Spiritual conception happens when the heart is quickened by love, and the free will stirs to action.”*

Let us pray as we dwell in this time period between Jesus’ first and second appearing that there might be a third appearing, the reappearing of Jesus in our hearts and lives. When the little boy’s dad appeared, he scooped up his son in his arms in mutual love and spent a lifetime mentoring his son to

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growth and maturity. So, may it be with the reappearing Christ in our lives that our hearts would be quickened by love and our free will stirred into action.

* From The Lord, by Romano Guardini Chapter III, page 15)

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading — Jeremiah 33:14-16

1. Compare this promise of Jesus' first advent with the promise of his second advent found in this week's Gospel reading.
2. How did Jesus "do what is right and just in the land"?

Second Reading — 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

3. Define holiness. What are proper motives for pursuing holiness?
4. What does it mean to "strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father"?

Gospel Reading — Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

5. Compare your feelings toward the First Advent with your feelings about the Second Advent.
6. Why do you think the Holy Spirit had Luke write about these things?
7. How do you think we could practically implement this advice?
8. What inner message of the heart is the Spirit whispering to you and your community this week?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.