

1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT

St. Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

In St. Luke's Gospel, St. John the Baptist is described as coming into the country about the River Jordan preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins. The prophet Isaiah said of him: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord: make straight his paths: Every valley shall be filled: and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough ways plain: and all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

The Church has carefully selected this season of the year as a most suitable time for the special preparation necessary for us to prepare to celebrate the Solemnity of Our Lord's first coming and the season of Christmas. It reminds us of the similarity between the first coming, the preparation for which was the doing of penance, and the coming of Our Lord at our death when the most beneficial preparation will have been penance we did for our sins. Just as the Church begins every liturgical year with the season of Advent in preparation for the year to come, so it should be for us a reminder that Our Lord will come some day for each of us and that our lives, no matter how long or short they may be, are only an advent—a preparation for the coming of the Judge.

We should celebrate Christmas with all solemnity and joy. The streets in our cities, the shops and stores, our churches and our homes should, be decorated and adorned to bear witness to the importance of this, celebrated by so many, as a season of goodwill and one of joy and peace, in a world in such need of these graces which can only be given by Almighty God. The joyous solemnity among Catholics shows the realisation of the great truth that at the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, 2000 years ago, the world began to pass from darkness to light.

This celebration of the birth of Our Lord, however, will be vain and empty: it will lack sincerity unless we recognise the season of Advent as a chance to prepare by penance and prayer. Our soul must be purified, cleansed from all impurity and stain of worldliness and sin. Our heart must be torn from the bonds that hold it to the things of earth. And we, each of us, can do this by adding to our spiritual exercises by making our confession, by making the effort to go to Mass during the week as well as on Sundays, by adding a few minutes more each day to our prayers, by dedicating some time to fasting, by seeking to support the Church and those in need through almsgiving.

Our minds must see in the perfect clearness of the vision of faith that there is no one or no thing greater that should take our attention, fill our thoughts, or receive our adoration, our love, our respect, our hearts than the Saviour of the World. The one who is Purity itself, who is Truth, Justice, Humility because He is God.

How can we be joyful on Christmas Day if we are unworthy of the Christ Child lying in a manger in Bethlehem? Let us make Advent, then, a time of real preparation for the proper celebration of Christmas, remembering that I, each of us, must watch for Christ as Christ watches for me, so that the eye with which I see God will be the eye with which God sees me. Don't let this Advent pass by with your eyes closed to the coming of God.