

With Advent we enter into the new liturgical year (Year B) and we begin following St Mark's Gospel. Mark is the earliest and shortest of the gospels composed between 65 and 70 AD. He was writing at a time of persecution under Emperor Nero, to Christians who had converted from paganism rather than Judaism.

Mark, who was from Jerusalem, had been at the forefront of the early Church after Jesus' resurrection and ascension, accompanying both Peter and Paul on their journeys. In his gospel, Mark is not so much concerned with recording and elaborating Jesus' teachings. He puts more emphasis on Jesus' actions and miracles. You can imagine how Mark heard these stories first hand, from Peter himself.

However, the main thrust of Mark's Gospel is the manifestation of the suffering and crucified Messiah. Jesus, the Servant King, will only take his throne through suffering, death and on the third day rise to new life. When we read Mark's Gospel we must be conscious that he is telling the story of Jesus in the light of the resurrection.

Today's passage is set just before Jesus' arrest. We have the strong imagery of a doorkeeper and the warning to 'stay awake' to greet the Lord when he comes again.

Prayer over the Offerings

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make, gathered from among your gifts to us, and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here below gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.

Communion Reflection

*My past, O Lord, I entrust to your mercy;
my presence to your love;
my future to your providence.*

Padre Pio

Prayer after Communion

May these mysteries, O Lord, in which we have participated, profit us, we pray, for even now, as we walk amid passing things, you teach us by them to love the things of heaven and hold fast to what endures.

First Sunday of Advent Year B

29th November 2020

The Long Wait Fulfilled



Whilst Covid19 will colour and shape our celebrations over the coming weeks, it will also set the context for the Season of Advent.

Our Government have warned us that we face a long, dark winter ahead of us and yet, at the same time, our scientists confidently tell us that they have a vaccine. There is light at the end of the tunnel! This sense of 'here', but 'not yet' is really pronounced in our daily Advent readings. As God's people, we continue to stumble and struggle in darkness and yet we do so, confident that Christ has redeemed us and that Christ will come again to judge us. This awareness that we are loved and saved as God's children must shape the way we live our lives today. So in today's gospel from Mark, Jesus warns us: 'Be on your guard! Be alert! Watch!'

Have a prayerful Advent. Come, Lord Jesus. Come!

Opening Prayer

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet Christ with righteousness deeds at his coming, so that, gathered at his right hand, we may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom

Isaiah 63: 16-17. 64: 1. 3-8

You, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name. Why, Lord, do you make us wander from your ways and harden our hearts so we do not revere you?

Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes that are your inheritance. For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins. Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Each year, the Season of Advent is enriched with readings from that great Prophet, Isaiah. He ministered in Jerusalem 740 – 680 BC. His message was one of imminent judgment on God's Chosen People, but also of their eventual restoration. Today's passage comes towards the end of his writings and he reflects on Israel's return to Jerusalem after exile. The people had returned home expecting that past glories would be restored, but instead, they found depression, poverty and tribal wars. What appears in today's reading is the gradual awareness of their miserable state, their guilt; but along side this is the growing confidence in God's saving love. If they wait, God will come to save them.

Psalms 79

O shepherd of Israel, hear us, shine forth from your cherubim throne.

O Lord, rouse up your might, O Lord, come to our help.

God of hosts, turn again, we implore, look down from heaven and see.

Visit this vine and protect it, the vine your right hand has planted.

May your hand be on the man you have chosen, the man you have given your strength. And we shall never forsake you again; give us life that we may call upon your name.

1 Corinthians 1: 3-9

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul wrote his Letter to the Corinthians around 55AD. Corinth was a thriving Greek city & sea port and, in the midst of all the comings and goings, he seeks to support and strengthen the young church. In today's passage Paul gives thanks for the gift of the word and knowledge of God made to us in Jesus Christ. And he says that nothing now is wanting to us; we wait earnestly, desiring the return of the Lord.

Alleluia, Alleluia! Stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming. Alleluia!

Mark 13: 33-37

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: Watch!'

