

## The First Sunday of Advent Cycle C 2021

In the Christian context , Advent refers to the period of four weeks of preparation, for the Feast of the Incarnation, the coming of Christ as a man.

The coming of Christ has three dimensions:

A) The historical and monumental event in history when God assumed a human body, "The Word became Flesh and put his tent among us ."

B) The coming of Christ to us daily, especially in the Eucharist.

C) The second coming of Christ which will also be a day of Judgment.

They are connected because they form part of the plan of God for our salvation. The incarnation would lead to Christ' sacrifice on the cross which reconciled us to God. The institution of the Church and its sacraments with the help of the Holy Spirit, help us on our daily conversion. At his second coming, Christ will unite both the living and the dead to himself.

When Bartimaeus, the blind man, heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, he did not shout "Jesus of Nazareth have pity on me", instead he said "Son of David, have pity on me". The Son of David was a messianic term, Jeremiah and other prophets, writing hundreds of years before the birth of Jesus, had foretold that the messiah would be a descendant of David.

God is always faithful to his promises. He promised that through Abraham, all nations would be blessed. Jesus who was the promise of a blessing to all nations, who came two thousand years after the promise.

In today's first reading Jeremiah says:  
*"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”.*

Five hundred years more went by, before the birth of Jesus. It is foolish to doubt the second coming of Christ and to be unprepared, because so much time has elapsed since his ascension.

To keep our focus on being prepared, as we await the second coming of Christ, we have to follow the advice of St Paul:

*“To increase and abound in love  
for one another and for all,  
... to strengthen our hearts,  
to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father  
at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones”.*

As we prepare for the coming of Christ this advent .... to invite him into our hearts that we may experience His peace and joy, we have to beware of the thieves who can rob us of this. The thieves are not necessarily other people who could guide us astray, they could be forces and influences of a godless culture that lead us to drunkenness, debauchery and fornication. It could be advertising that fools us into believing that we can not be happy this Christmas unless we acquire something we cannot afford. Anything that encourages us to always put ourselves before others, especially the poor and the weak, will rob us of what God calls us to be: loving, caring and compassionate. As Christians, we firmly believe that people are always more precious than things. This Advent, we ought to focus more on the family reconciliation, spiritual healing, and unity than on the acquisition of things.

We also need to be alert, because Jesus will also come, gently knocking on the doors of our hearts. We do not wish to miss this opportunity of our lifetime.