

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT; Cycle – C; Dec.1st 2024
Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1Thessalonians 3:12- 4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

Due to the heavy commercialization, today the great Feast of Christmas is reduced to a mere social celebration. This year too 75% of the so called Christians will celebrate Christmas without having Christ a role in it. It is surveyed that 8 out of 10 non-Christians also celebrate Christmas without anything to do with infant Jesus in the manger. In the modern age the focus is shifted from the manger to the Christmas tree. And the greeting of the season is merely *reduced to happy holy day, instead of Merry Christmas*. Many elderly Christians who are familiar with the traditional Christmas celebrations are a bit disappointed with what is going on today in the name of Christmas. They lament, *“Christmas is not the same as it used to be.”*

For the small percentage of Christians this weekend is of great importance as it marks the period of preparation for us to commemorate the First Coming of Christ which took place over 2000 years ago. This season also invites us to wait for his Second Coming in history and above all warns us to be prepared for his Second Coming in our life. *In a way we can say that Advent is a time for looking both backward and forward*. We look back to commemorate the great historical birth of Jesus and we look forward with expectation that **he will come again**. During this hectic season, as every year, millions of dollars will be spent in the malls in the name of Jesus Christ, claiming that we do all these to celebrate his birthday. But only in 25% of families Christ will have a place in this Christmas.

Today when we stand around the altar at the Eucharistic celebration already with stressed and distracted minds, the Church seems to add gloom and fear into our hearts. Instead of boosting our spirit of jubilation, she seems to ruin the entire mood. For through today’s readings our attention is brought to the Second Coming of Christ rather his birth. Every year, no matter, whatever is the liturgical cycle, A, B or C, we hear the fiery discourse of Jesus about his Second Coming and the judgment. At the same time, we should not be under the impression that Church is least interested in the commemoration of the great event of the birth of Jesus in the history. Indeed, the basis for the Second Coming of Christ is his birth as a human being, which was his First Coming. The centuries long waiting of the people of Israel was over with the birth of the Messiah, though the Jews don’t believe that the Messiah has already arrived. But the waiting of mankind in the modern age will be over with the Second Coming of Jesus.

The discourse of Jesus in the gospel is indeed frightening. **He says, “People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”** The student who is unprepared for the examinations will be scared of the day of exam. Similarly those who do not care for God and His day, and waiting for tomorrow for preparing for the Lord’s coming will be at loss. Finally when they hear the knocks on their door they will be in panic. Neither Jesus nor the Church has any intention to frighten us; rather it is just a reminder for us that we should be always vigilant in our day to day life.

Our Christian life is a pilgrimage on earth. A pilgrim will never rest till he/she reaches the destination. Our destination is nothing less than our eternal home. **Whatever we do; whatever we plan, all should focus on one thing, our eternal life.** We are not sure whether you and I will live long enough to see the Second Coming of Jesus on the cloud to judge the people. **But one thing is sure, one day you and I have to bid goodbye to our earthly life. We can consider that day as the Second Coming of Jesus in our lives.** A pilgrimage is not always that perfect; many things may happen against our expectations. Similarly, our life is not perfect; it is a mixture of success and failure; but we all can make efforts to do the right thing; we all can try to make the best out of every day and every situation. For me more than *tomorrow* **today** is very important and daily I have to examine and see what and how I did today. Perhaps some of you are familiar with the poem, entitled ‘**What have we done Today,**’ written by **Nixon Waterman.** The poem runs as follows:

**We shall do so much in the years to come,
But what have we done today?
We shall give our gold in a princely sum,
But what did we give today?
We shall lift the heart, and dry the tear,
We shall plant a hope in the place of fear,
We shall speak the words of love and cheer,
But what did we speak today? -
We shall be so kind in the after awhile,
But what have we been today?
We shall bring to each lonely life a smile,
But what have we brought today?**

Many people wait for a *tomorrow to do things. Unfortunately, it is not guaranteed. But I can do something so far as ‘today is with me.’*