



1st Sunday Advent, Yr C

Lectio Divina

Lectio: Jesus is completing his journey to Jerusalem and his Cross. Jesus is in the Temple and teaching the people in these last days before he is betrayed though he brought the Good News. In this regard, he has been teaching clearly that salvation is a free and total gift of God's love for everyone without exception. This gift must be humbly accepted; it is a gift too good to be missed. Jesus knows there will be many challenges for those who would be his followers. There will be natural disasters and wars to get through, there will be betrayal by friends and relations and even the Temple will be destroyed. They will need to stand firm (cf Lk 21:5-24). Jesus did not want the people to miss out on salvation and thereby the sharing in the blessings of the kingdom, and, one day, in the glories of eternal life. Fear can paralyze but it can be overcome with understanding.¹

► So, in our text, in the Temple, which he has just told them will be destroyed, Jesus continues to talk with the people. He goes on to one of the challenges they will have to face namely, that the world will be changed in a revolutionary way. History till then had led to Jesus' coming. Now this coming is changing the world; death and evil is about to be overcome. Great and world-wide signs and transformations will happen as people accept salvation and the world is redeemed (i.e. the new world comes to birth). These transformations will continue till Jesus comes the second time in power and glory. The shape of this new world and the end of the world (i.e. its birth) is coming. This transformation is fearful because the shape of this new world is not yet defined. It is 'what menaces the world' because the 'old' world of sin and death is losing its control; the world is being transformed by love into the new world. Liberation is at hand, so fearlessly stand firm!

■ Also, our text is chosen for the start of Advent because it encapsulates Advent themes. Advent is a time of expectant waiting (in prayer) – for the Christmas feast as well as for the end of the world. Advent has also a penitential theme. We must renew our lives; Christmas is no ordinary celebration. It is the celebration of the coming of the Saviour that fundamentally changed the world – Man and God are reconciled in and through Christ's first coming.

Read: Luke 21: 25 – 28, 34 - 36

Meditatio: Of what am I fearful? Is Jesus my rock, my Saviour? Is my life free of the powers or delusions of evil? Am I co-operating with Jesus in the coming of the new world? Am I joyfully looking forward to the world renewed? Do I observe the turmoils in the world as signs of the coming of a new world; like a seed breaking open to die but in doing so to bring forward new life? What glimpses of the Lord's glory have I seen in my life? Do I live with the hope of sharing, one day, in eternal life with God in glory? How is my life of faith; is it deepening or slipping? Do I over-indulge in this world's pleasures putting in peril my eternal pleasures/blessings in the next world? Am I putting off sorting out my life? Am I keeping in touch with Jesus through prayer?² Am I fearful of what Jesus might ask of me if I get close to him? What can I do to enter into the 'joyful waiting' of Advent? Do I realize how vital Jesus is to me; Christmas celebrates the liberation of the world that is only possible to God? From what things do I need to be liberated? Will I take the opportunity to celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation in Advent to be open to the full joy and blessings of Christmas?

Oratio: Pray that Christmas will be a joyful celebration with fear banished in the celebration of God's love for us. Pray that the joy of Christmas may be experienced throughout the year as the fullness of the new world emerges. Pray for those in the midst of natural disasters, wars and betrayal, may the light of Christ lead them through to security and peace. Pray that we will daily renew and deepen our faith in Christ. Pray that we will not put off daily prayer; time spent in prayer is never wasted time! Pray for hope and confidence in the coming of the new world.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer – Renew your prayer-life in Advent.

✍ Fr Joe

Luke 21: 25 – 28, 34 – 36

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.'¹

'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'

Notes:

1 Verses 28-33 are omitted in our text. These verses refer to reading the signs of the times and similarly we should be able to recognize the signs of the transformation of the world which come through Jesus coming, his Cross and resurrection. Through all this the Word of God will not pass away (rather it will come to completion).

2 You might bring Advent style prayer into your life through Advent. Consider putting up an Advent Wreath* in your home as a focus of prayer and a challenge to letting the light of Christ glow more strongly as we move through Advent. Also, when you put up your Christmas Tree decorate it with ornaments and tinsel but also add cards with your prayers, add some of these prayer cards daily or weekly. *An Advent Wreath is a ring of greenery surrounding 4 candles, 3 purple/mauve and 1 pink. Progressively, light one candle for each week of Advent; light the pink candle on the third Sunday representing joy; Advent is joyful waiting.