

Fr. Romeo Evangelista's Homily
December 1, 2019
First Sunday of Advent (A)

Today is the first day of December and maybe some of us are already excited for Christmas. Since Christmas is coming, there is a tendency for us to browse over a very important season: Advent, the four-week preparation for Christmas.

“Adventus Domini” (the coming of the Lord) was earlier used to refer to the Roman Emperor’s visitation of his territories. Christians now use this term to refer to the preparation for Christmas, the traditional commemoration of the Incarnation of Jesus. In the Christian usage, the four-week Advent has two senses: We prepare to commemorate Jesus’ coming as man 2,000 years ago, and we also prepare for the Second Coming of Jesus.

Preparing for the Second Coming, whenever it may be, is the theme of the first two weeks of Advent that start this Sunday. What is unsettling about this Second Coming – and this is the essence of Jesus’ teaching – is that it is entirely in God’s hands. In contrast, we have always lived our lives with our own plans and preferences. We have mastered the art of making timetables, timelines, and schedules.

Our modern culture is very much future-oriented. Planning is a key word in our vocabulary today. We plan everything. And all this emphasis on planning the future is very good in itself, for in our hectic modern living no planning would result in chaotic lives. However, it can have an unforeseen bad effect, if it is exaggerated – as happens with any good thing which is misused or abused. Too much planning can make us forget the present. A person can make it a habit of living entirely in the future and not be really aware of what is happening in the here and now.

Yet it is in the here and now that God touches our lives, since the past no longer exists and the future does not exist yet. It is in the present moment that God comes to us, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. How does God come to us? When does God speak to us? How can we recognize his presence?

Well, in a general way of speaking, we can meet God in prayer, in reading the scriptures, in the celebration of the sacraments (especially the Eucharist), and in our daily experiences. These are well-known and well-tried means of meeting God. But it can happen that God reaches out to us through other less known means such as through a heart-to-heart conversation with another person, through an intimate meal with close friends, through shared work, through stories by which we share our lives, through forgiving an offender, through sacrificing ourselves for someone. In other words, God is especially present to us whenever we reach out to others in Love. Whenever we make a gesture of genuine love, we experience God.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus insists on the need to be awake and prepared for his coming. And the best way to be prepared for that final coming is to be spiritually awake at all times, since we can die at any time and since his Second Coming can also happen at any time. And so, we are back to the importance of living in the present and of meeting him already in the here and now. The best way to prepare for the future, is to live in the present moment as best we can.

Advent is a time to open ourselves more and more to the action of God in our lives. For God is always there, trying to make us little by little, loving persons. As Jesus reminded us today, "Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come".