

1 Advent C 2018 SML
LK 21:25-28,34-36

Waiting, longing, hoping, watching, yearning, expecting.
That's Advent, and it seems as if that's what life is all about.

- ✓ She waits for word from her doctor on the results of the biopsy of the "growth" that was taken from her body, afraid that "it" has come back again. . . that's Advent.
- ✓ He watches every day for the mailman, looking for word from the university where he applied and really wants to study, hoping he's been accepted . . . that's Advent.
- ✓ They sit helpless next to their two-year old son in the hospital bed, wondering if and when he will regain consciousness after his fall down the basement steps . . . that's Advent.
- ✓ She has invited her husband to sit down and talk, realizing their marriage is a mess, and she paces the floor wondering if he will come back after he stormed out the door . . . that's Advent.
- ✓ He's exhausted from praying for a job, having begged God hour after hour, day after day, these past four months, as he pursues this most recent job lead, knowing his savings and benefits are almost gone . . . that's Advent.

- ✓ He wonders if he can make it through the evening. He wants a drink so bad he can taste it. It's been three months since he's had one, three months of sobriety, one step at a time, one hour at a time . . . that's Advent.

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- ✓ He kisses her gently on the forehead, as the hospice nurse has just told him she's gone and her nine years of Alzheimers has ended. Her Advent is finally over.

Her Advent is over, but not his, not ours.

Advent, simply put, means "coming." Advent is the season when we prepare for the coming of Our Blessed Lord at Christmas. But that is only one third of Advent.

Our Blessed Lord also comes to us now, every day, in such mysterious ways as prayer, grace, word and sacrament.

And yet, there is another coming when Our Blessed Lord will come at the end of time, to judge the living and the dead.

To put it succinctly, yet poetically, Our Blessed Lord comes in history (that first Christmas), in mystery (in the here and now) and in majesty (at the end of the world).

All the waiting, longing, hoping, watching, yearning and expecting centers in on Christ coming in history, which is the

focus of the third and fourth weeks of Advent, and on Christ coming in majesty, which is the focus of the first two weeks of Advent. This evening's/morning's gospel is a case in point:

- ✓ Signs in the sun, the moon and the stars
- ✓ Nations will be in dismay
- ✓ People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world,
- ✓ The Son of Man will come in a cloud with power and great glory
- ✓ Your redemption will be at hand.

The great tragedy of that first Christmas was the birth of the Messiah went largely unnoticed. Nobody recognized Him, outside of Mary and Joseph, a few shepherds and three wise men. That's not just a tragedy in history. That tragedy continues now because Christ comes to us in mystery every day and we usually miss Him because He comes today as simply as he came 2018 years ago as a tiny babe in a manger. We miss Him because He comes in a very soft, gentle, unassuming and every day kind of way.

First and foremost, at every single Mass, He comes in simple bread and simple wine consecrated into His Body and Blood and it's obvious by the way some act or pray or spend

more time in Church looking at their phone than at the Blessed Sacrament; it's obvious by the fact that so many don't come to Mass at all, that they have become so desensitized to His coming.

I recently read a letter received by Timothy Cardinal Dolan written by a young man when he was a parish priest some years ago:

Dear Father Tim:

I know it's been years since I've caught up with you, but let me tell you what's happened. You knew me well and you knew how I was always on this religious quest. Not too long after you left the parish, I went to California. I heard there was a Carthusian monastery there, one of the strictest orders of monks, and I thought, "I'm going to go there because this is really going to quench my thirst for religion, faith, and for God."

Well I spent a couple of months there and it didn't work. They were sure helpful, but it didn't work. The Carthusians recommended that maybe I ought to go with the Jesuits and make a 30-day retreat. So I did that. That helped, but it really didn't quench my thirst. I didn't think so, anyway.

Then I got into intense spiritual direction; it helped a little but I was still restless. Then I started to dabble in Eastern mystical religions; I thought this was the be all and end all, and that this was going to satisfy my religious hunger. I got so involved that I ended up actually going to Tibet and spending some time at a shrine, with other people who were into Eastern mystical religions, as an attempt to find and discover God's will. But after a while, that didn't seem to help either. So then what I did was, I went back to California.

Father, I'm kind of embarrassed to admit that then I really got into promiscuity, drugs and alcohol. It was just all a mess. So finally I came to my senses and I hitchhiked home. I was like a modern day prodigal son. Was I ever so scared when I walked up the sidewalk, wondering, you know, I hadn't seen Mom and Dad for years. I hadn't written them or called them. They didn't know where I was. I knocked on the door. My Dad comes to the door. He looks at me. He says my name. He starts crying. He gives me a big hug. Mom runs out from the kitchen. She

sees me. She starts crying. She gives me a big hug. My sister – I didn't even know she was married - she's there with my little nephew that I didn't even know I had. I'm so happy to be home.

We go sit at the table. Mom has made a great meal, probably the best I've eaten in two or three years. We're sitting there talking, conversing. I'm at home. I'm feeling at peace.

After supper I walked down the block to the parish church where I used to meet you – remember, Father? I kneel down in church and I'm praying and I look up and see the sanctuary lamp and I know that Our Lord is present in the Blessed Sacrament. I hear the door open in the back and I look and it's the Monsignor, the pastor that I grew up with. He greets me. I ask him to hear my confession.

I go to confession, I say my penance, and then it dawns on me while I'm saying my prayers there in the parish church: "Lord, I've been searching all over the world for You, and You've been here the whole time. I've been

looking for You in every exotic place, faraway place in the whole world, and here You are, right at home. You've been here all the time, Lord, coming to me, and I didn't recognize You."

I propose to you, that for the young man, all the time he spent waiting, longing, hoping, watching, yearning, expecting, that's Advent. And I also propose that kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, after confessing his sins, that was Christmas morning!

Why wait for Christmas, when you can have Christmas morning day in and day out? If you've become desensitized to the presence of Our Blessed Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, this Advent is an opportunity to be re-sensitized to His coming in the Eucharist and to realize, that as we are waiting, longing, hoping, watching, yearning, and expecting our way through all the situations and scenarios of life, we are not waiting alone. Our Blessed Lord is right here waiting with us.