

THE TWO COMINGS OF CHRIST

(LUKE 21:25-28, 34-36)



Our first Gospel reading for the new liturgical cycle presents Jesus speaking to his disciples about the coming of the “Son of Man” for the final judgement, indicated by his mentioning “signs”, both in the cosmic and human realms.

He urges his followers to see in these events the heralding of their redemption, the definitive establishing of the kingdom of God; therefore, they should respond positively with confidence and eager anticipation.

There is no time-frame given for the events which Luke describes. By the time he is writing, it is clear that the second coming may be long delayed, so the disciples have to settle down to life in the meantime. This can lead to their becoming complacent and slipping into bad habits, so the reading also gives instruction about remaining alert. Some of the warnings Luke has given earlier find an echo here, for instance, that of the parable of the steward who abuses his position over the household, thinking that the owner is not likely to arrive anytime soon; and the parable of the seed which is choked by thorns, interpreted as “the worries and riches and pleasures of life” which stifle a wholehearted response to the word of God, not to mention indulging excessively in drink and dissolute behaviour. He prefaces all this by the instruction to keep praying, which will keep them in the proper attitude to welcome the arrival of the Son of Man. ■

REFLECT

The word “Advent” means approach, arrival, coming. The liturgy in these four weeks leading up to the celebration of Christmas invites us to reflect on two comings of Christ. The first is Christ’s coming into our world as one of us “in every way except sin”. The second, less comfortable coming is at the end of time, when Christ will appear in glory as universal judge. We can see from the earliest writings of the apostle Paul that the first disciples expected the second coming to take place within their lifetime, then had to come to terms with the fact that this was growing more and more unlikely.

The greatest danger, perhaps, is that we become, unintentionally, complacent, that indeed the cares and problems of daily life can gradually weaken our commitment to living as disciples of Jesus. Thus, the season of Advent encourages us to prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the first coming, as though we were expecting his final appearing: the Prefaces of the Mass for Advent put it this way; “that, when he comes again in glory and majesty... we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which now we dare to hope”; and “so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise”.

Advent, like Lent, is a penitential season in which we are encouraged to look at ourselves and correct anything which detracts from our full commitment to the person of Jesus and his teachings. It is a time to renew and strengthen our relationship with Jesus. ■

LEARN

The word “Advent” means coming, arrival, approach.

The season of Advent has two themes: the coming of Christ in our human flesh at Christmas and Christ’s second coming in power and glory for judgement.

Advent is a penitential season to prepare for the feast of the Incarnation: hence purple vestments and the omission of the Gloria at Mass.

SAY

“Hark! A herald voice is calling: ‘Christ is nigh,’ it seems to say.”

(Edward Caswall)

DO

Pay close attention to the Preface of the Mass during Advent: read it over at home and notice the references to the second coming of Christ.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

To you, I lift up my soul, O my God.
In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame.
Nor let my enemies exult over me;
and let none who hope in you be put to shame.

COLLECT

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming, so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Jeremiah 33:14-16

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I am going to fulfil the promise I made to the House of Israel and the House of Judah:

“In those days and at that time,
I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David,
who shall practise honesty and integrity in the land.

In those days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell in confidence.
And this is the name the city will be called:
The Lord-our-integrity.”

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM Psalm 24

Response:

To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

1. Lord, make me know your ways.
Lord, teach me your paths.
Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:
for you are God my saviour. (R.)
2. The Lord is good and upright.
He shows the path to those who stray,
he guides the humble in the right path;
he teaches his way to the poor. (R.)
3. His ways are faithfulness and love
for those who keep his covenant and will.
The Lord’s friendship is for those who
revere him;
to them he reveals his covenant. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 3:12 – 4:2

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians.

May the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you. And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his saints.

Finally, brothers, we urge you and appeal to you in the Lord Jesus to make more and more progress in the kind of life that you are meant to live: the life that God wants, as you learnt from us, and as you are already living it. You have not forgotten the instructions we gave you on the authority of the Lord Jesus.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Let us see, O Lord, your mercy
and give us your saving help.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Luke 21:25-28. 34-36

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

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.

“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.”

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we
make,
gathered from among your gifts to us,
and may what you grant us to celebrate
devoutly here below
gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord will bestow his bounty,
and our earth shall yield its increase.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing
things,
you teach us by them to love the things of
heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Time always seems long to the child who is
waiting – for Christmas, for next summer,
for becoming a grownup: long also when he
surrenders his whole soul to each moment of
a happy day.

Dag Hammarskjöld

