

## *Our Lady of Lourdes*

First Sunday of Advent

November 28, 2009

Fr. Bob

Readings:

Jeremiah 33:14-16

1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Our readings for this Advent Sunday of Advent, take us in two different directions. Jeremiah and the Gospel of Luke have the language which speaks of God and the glory of the second coming of Christ. They tell us that wonderful as well as fearful things will happen when the Lord comes into the lives of his people. For the people of Jeremiah's time, the words talk about a complete reversal of their fortunes as they've experienced in their lives. They are told that their country will be safe, that Jerusalem will be secure and that God's justice, after a long a painful wait will come into play.

The Gospel of Luke is more dramatic. It talks about signs that will occur in nature and we should look for them in the sun, the moon and the stars. It also tells us that nations will be in turmoil, and the seas and the waves will threaten the people. The coming of the Lord sounds like something that is meant to threaten us, and cause fear and panic. And for centuries that's how people have looked at it: fearful to the point that they did not really want to see it happen. Those feelings probably came from a sense of unworthiness, a sense that the judgment would be too much for them and a sense of a God who sounds angry. We usually hear the bad news and tune out the good. We usually fear the worst and don't dare to trust in the goodness. So the important words of the coming of the Lord pass us by and we miss what is really the most important.

In that same passage Jesus tells the disciples something that we must all hear on this Advent Sunday of Advent: "But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand." Those are not the words of an angry God waiting to expel his people from his goodness and his mercy. For people of faith, it is something we should look forward to, even if the unknown scares us. The coming of the Lord, should not be seen as a fearful thing but rather the culmination of the work of Christ.

And the readings point out something for us today. We don't know the time when it will all happen. As a matter of fact, it's an important part of our faith that the Lord, through the Spirit, comes into our lives in this age, in the present. The spirit of Christ is something that does touch us everyday. Paul's letter encourages us not to be people looking at the skies and just waiting. He talks about our lives today and prays for us, that the love for God and our neighbor is something he hopes will be increased in our hearts so we can stand before the Lord today, and be justified. The words call us to change how we live and that means allowing for conversion to happen. A change in our hearts. And the Gospel tells us not just to be vigilant, but also active. Advent calls us back to Christmas and the birth of Christ. It also has the dimension of what may be a far off future that we'll never see in our lifetime. But it is also very much about today and how we live righteous lives and prepare to receive his love in the here and now. For he will come to us in our lives, within our lifetime and it will happen many times if we live with vigilance and live as we should. We should not live as if our redemption is something that will come later.

In this Advent, we are called to be a people who are willing to see God in the present and again, that means change and allowing ourselves conversion that comes from within and comes with the actions of our lives. A people who can change because of the goodness and the activity of God. We are strongly encouraged not to waste this season and the possibilities it means for us. It is much more than counting the days to Christmas. It's more about how we live our lives and through them, prepare for the Lord to touch our hearts. It's a time for confronting many questions that are essential. We believe in a God of goodness, but are we willing to change to his ways. Have we truly opened ourselves to God's graces. And is it happening now, or is it put off for another time, because we have not made time for the Lord.

As we begin Advent, may we hear the positive words of redemption. And may we be open to the coming of the Lord into our lives, in this day and in all of our days. That is how we are called to wait. To wait as people who have are willing to convert our lives because of the God we believe in.