

## The First Sunday of Advent: Preparing for What Matters

So, how many of you went shopping on Friday? I'm not sure why they call it "Black Friday." Is it because we kill off whatever money we have, or put ourselves into a black hole of credit? Or is it because our shopping puts all these merchants' books in the black? Whatever. Black Friday is the first day of the Christmas shopping season. Those who were up searching for bargains were beginning their preparation for Christmas.



This is the First Sunday of Advent. Advent is the season of preparation. Only, unlike the shopping sprees we go on, or the other parts of Christmas preparation, like cards and parties and gift wrap, we are not preparing for just one day, or even a week. Advent is the season of preparation for the rest of our lives.

We are preparing for the Coming of Our Lord. There are actually two comings. The first is the Nativity of the Lord. Christmas is the celebration of the coming of the Lord as one of us, the Second Person becoming a human being. We romanticize the season. We put up mangers. We sing beautiful Christmas carols. We emphasize the wonders of a baby who will transform the world. We sing Silent Night. This is all OK as long as we realize that Christmas is not just about a baby, it is about the Eternal Word of God, present for all time, present before there was time, taking on our human nature defeating the stranglehold that evil has upon us.

The Second Coming of the Lord is the coming at the end of time, or the end of our own personal time. It is at the Second Coming that the Lord will judge us on how well we have reflected His Life in the world.

Advent preparation is not about preparing for one day. It is about the rest of our lives and the rest of the time that the world has to exist. To make this preparation we have to fight evil, in the world and in our lives.

The Gospel speaks about people not being ready for the coming of the Lord. Many of these people of Noah's day weren't ready to be whom God created them to be. Consequently, they weren't ready for the flood. They were too busy with their lives to be concerned about God's will and his Way. Like during Noah's time, on the Day of the Lord, Jesus' Second Coming, only one of the two men in the field and one of the two women at the mill will be ready for him. The others will be too busy.

The gospel reading does not say that the people of prior to the flood were evil. It just says that they were unconcerned. This is the attitude of so many that we rub shoulders with every day. Most people do not try to be evil. They just are unconcerned about having a place for God in their lives. The number of people of all faiths who worship regularly is far less than those who do not worship at all or who attend a Church, synagogue or mosque only a few times a year. Will they be ready when it is time to give an accounting of their lives on how well they have served God? We pray that they will return to God and live. We also get so busy doing things, that we just don't take time for the only thing, the only Person who matters. We don't make time for daily prayer because we are too busy. We attend Mass when it is convenient, but seldom change our schedules so we can go to Church. We all need to ask ourselves, "Am I ready for the Lord?"

"Don't get caught napping," the Gospel says. The Lord will come to complete his restoration of creation to God's original plan. How will he find us? What will he find me doing when I least expect his arrival? What will he find you doing?

The ancient Christians were not afraid of the Second Coming. They looked forward to it. “Maranatha,” they prayed: “Come, Lord Jesus.” “Come, Lord, and restore peace justice and love to the world. Come Lord and complete the work of creation. Come Lord and reward your faithful people.

I don’t know how many shopping days there are left before Christmas. Actually, I don’t really care. What I do care about is how many days I have left “to walk in the Light of the Lord,” as the first reading encourages us to do.

“Stay awake,” the Church tells us on the First Sunday of Advent. Be ready. Today, perhaps, the Lord will come knocking. He might be calling us home, or he might simply be looking to see how well we are bringing His Presence to the world. We cannot allow ourselves to be unconcerned. We need to be ready at all times to serve Jesus Christ.

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