

Pray that you have the strength...!

Today is the first Sunday of advent. Advent is from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning coming. It begins with the first Sunday, which is generally the last Sun in November or the first Sunday of December, depending on whichever gives four Sundays before Christmas. We discover that the liturgy of advent is nearer to that of Lent than other liturgical seasons (Christmas, Lent, Easter, & ordinary time-the longest), especially when we look at the color of the vestments, the omission of the Gloria, and the penitential tones of some of the hymns. The season of advent covers not only the preparation for the celebration of the coming of Christ but also his ever-abiding presence among us and his final coming when he will complete the work of redemption. In the advent, we celebrate the past, the present and prepare for the future.

When we look at today's readings, they are connected to three stages of Christ coming, namely, the promise made, which we read in the first reading in the book of the Prophet Jeremiah. The incarnation through which he lived among us and left us with love to be the center of what we do, which St. Paul describes in the second reading while praying that God will "make us increase and abound in love for one another and all." So that "conducts ourselves to please God." The Gospel of Luke (Which we read in year C, Mark-Year B, Matthew Year A, John in between, especially during Easter and feasts as we read on the Christ the King) describes in similar words the words we have been reading a couple of weeks on end of time and 2nd coming of Christ. Jesus in the gospel elucidates the events that will be associated with the final coming and invite us: "Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand." And: "pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations...."

I would like us to reflect more on the last invitation of Christ in the gospel, for us to pray to have the strength. Prayer is the dialogue with God. It is the backbone of Christian living. It is the food of the soul, especially the Eucharist, that nourishes and strengthens us spiritually. Through prayer will remain in communication with God and continuously feel his presence in every event of our life. As we begin this season of advent, one of the things we have to do is examine and reflect on our response to God's love through excellent and constant prayer life as Jesus, the disciples, and all the holy men and women did. Balanced prayer life has to be continuous, comprising praise and thanksgiving, contrition, and supplication. It has to be constant, praying in season and out of season (Luke 18:1). That we pray does not mean that God will answer all our prayers and solve all our problems, but prayer makes us accept the will of God in our lives and know that the will of God will not send us where his grace will not abide with us. We learn how to pray by praying. It is one of the best gifts we can give to our spiritual life at this season of advent. May the good Lord make this season fruitful to us. Amen.