



The First Sunday of Advent  
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In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

One day the Pope is sitting in his office when a cardinal runs in and shouts, “your Holiness, I have good news and bad news!”

“Really?” The Pope replies. “Okay, tell me the good news first.”

“Jesus has returned!”

“Wow!” says the Pope, “if that’s the good news what could possibly be the bad news?”

“He’s in Salt Lake City.”

So, here we are once again, on the First Sunday of Advent, the beginning of a new year of worship, and – as usual – we are talking about the second coming of Christ. Our gospel describes it and our other texts echo and reference it.

Perhaps you’ve heard the phrase, “begin with the end in mind.” It’s something we say to remind ourselves that when we start on any project we should begin working with a focus on the conclusion we want to come to. That’s what this first Sunday of Advent is about, it’s about beginning with the end in mind. I believe this reflects the heart and mind of God.

Jesus reveals to us that God began creation, and brought humanity into existence, with the end in mind – he created us with his goal and plan for us clearly set before him. The plan is for all of us to be forever included in the eternal, joyful life of God with such intimacy what have a relationship with the Father and the Holy Spirit that mirrors the relationship of the eternal Son. Our destiny is to be forever adopted, through Christ, into the life of the Trinity.

In order for that new life to begin, however, this life must end. We cannot forever be in this in-between space, where we are both already God’s children and not yet the glorified humanity we were created to be. We must pass from this life into the life of the world to come, sharing fully in Jesus resurrection.

Anytime something ends and something new begins, can be scary. With Advent now upon us we are letting go of the year that was and turning our hearts and minds towards the year to come. We don't know what the new year will bring. When we head off to college, get married, have children, retire – and at every other stage of life – we must turn away from what was and towards the unknown. There is an excitement, yes, and also a bit of apprehension about the unknown that lies ahead.

And so it is with the end of this world and the beginning of the new world of the life to come. Jesus describes it with fearful language: “the sun and moon darkened, the stars falling from heaven, and ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.” Yet, as Paul tells the Corinthians, “God will strengthen us to the end so that we may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” As difficult as it may be to think of the end of this world and the beginning of the new world, we take hope because we know that it means the beginning of the destiny for which we were created.

And this is an important lesson for every stage of our lives. Whenever change comes, whenever the old ends and the new begins, our faith calls us to believe that God has even greater and more wonderful things in store for us in what comes next. By faith we believe that change can be good, that God is good, and that even when a new world is ushered in amidst anxiety we can trust God's faithfulness to us.

May God give us the grace to face the future with hope and faith and may we welcome the new life of the world to come.

Amen.