

1st Sunday of Advent Cc

We are now in the season of Advent. Advent represents a new beginning, a fresh start to all of us in our spiritual lives. In today's gospel, we heard about what are going to happen at the end of the world. This seems to be an awkward reading to start a new liturgical year, right? But looking deeply, we can see a new light behind this gloom and doom. Our Lord Jesus Christ is essentially describing to us a fresh beginning, a final and complete establishment of a new and redeemed creation. When everything in the world seems to have collapsed; when everything in our lives seems to be out of hope, the Son of Man will come to save us. In his divine presence, a new world will spring up out of the ashes, bringing up a new hope into our previously dark world. This is God's promise to all of us – that He will step in and re-create us when we need him most in our lives.

There is something compelling about this promise. Say for example, when you promise something to someone, you're giving part of yourself. When someone you trust promises you that they will come through for you, you are filled with great hope. You don't feel alone. Your friend is promising you their presence. You feel assured that they are going to be there for you no matter what.

Our first reading today from the book of Isaiah brings that out. "The days are coming says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made... I will raise up for David a just shoot; he will do what is right and just in the land. In those days Judah shall be safe..." What does God promising to us here? It is not wealth or success. It is not a promise of an easy life or a life free from suffering and difficulties. What God is promising to us is a person – Jesus Christ. He promises us his personal presence that we can see and touch. In the gospel, we see the fulfillment of God's promise in his very person. Jesus is God among us. God has come through for us. God is with us. When I was a seminarian, I had my Clinical Pastoral Education as a Chaplain Intern at Swedish Medical Center in Seattle. During my first week there, I was assigned in ICU to visit the patients and their families there. After a few days, I was called to minister to a single Mom who just lost her son. And so I went and I went pretty nervous because it was my first time to minister in this kind of situation. When I reached the room, the mother was intensely weeping and wailing for the lost of her

only son. She was asking why he was taken from her. She was beside him, kissing him, as she wiped her tears at the same time. I introduced myself and told her that I was the chaplain. She looked at me and nodded and then, went back crying and asking why and telling him that she loved him so much. I didn't know what to say. I didn't even know what to do. I just stood there. And after a few moments, I started to cry as well. I stayed with her crying and touching her shoulder to console her once in a while. When they have taken away the body, I stayed behind in the ICU because I was still crying. I felt embarrassed going back to our office in that kind of state. And the more embarrassing part was that, the nurses start consoling me about it. That it was ok. It's normal to feel like that for the first time. It was ironic because I was the chaplain and I was supposed to console them not them consoling me. I felt then that I didn't do my part. But after a few weeks, I received a card from the mother thanking me for my presence at that moment and how grateful she was for all those who were there for her at the time, the nurses and doctors. She felt that God was with her during that moment because of the help and the support she felt from us. I knew that I didn't do much there but God made use of me, together with other people there, to bring consolation and solace to that mother. Often times, God uses people, things and situations for us to feel his presence, to experience his love and mercy in our lives. We just need to just open our hearts and be mindful of his presence in our lives.

I came across this poem entitled, *"Don't Miss Out,"* by an unknown Author. I would like to share it with you. It goes:

The man whispered, "God, speak to me." And a bird sang.

But, the man did not hear.

So the man yelled "God, speak to me!" And, the thunder rolled across the sky.

But, the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, "God let me see you"

And a star shined brightly. But, the man did not notice.

And, the man shouted, "God show me a miracle!" And, a life was born.

But, the man did not know.

*So, the man cried out in despair, "Touch me God,
and let me know you are here!"*

Whereupon, God reached down and touched the man.

But, the man brushed the BUTTERFLY away and walked on.

God has promised us that He will always be there for us in our lives. He does and He will! – in different ways and situations in our lives. So let us believe in his person.

Let us believe in his love. Let us not miss out on his presence because it isn't packaged the way that we expect. HE hears us... but do we hear HIM? Let us be like that mother, despite of her loss, despite of her sorrow, still recognized God's presence and consolation through the people around her.

As we start this new liturgical year, let us be mindful of this. That now is the time to believe in God's promise. That now is the time to truly put our faith and hope in Jesus, our Lord. Amen.