



Msgr. Joseph A. Pellegrino

First Sunday of Advent: Preparing for the Lord

We begin Advent focusing on the two comings of the Lord. We are looking forward to the celebration of the first coming in Bethlehem. There were many prophecies of this coming in the Bible. Today's first reading quotes just one of these prophecies, from the Prophet Jeremiah. The days are coming when the promise to Israel will be fulfilled and a just shoot shall rise from the line of David. He will do all that is right and just. It was in the City of David, Bethlehem, that this prophecy would be fulfilled.

The second coming of the Lord is that which takes place at the end of time. Jesus speaks about this in apocalyptic terms in today's Gospel. His language is meant to engage us, involve us. We can't just be passive bystanders to the words, "People will die in fright in anticipation of what is coming." The Lord's words cause us to react with the question: "What can we do to be ready for the end time?"

St. Paul answers this question in the First Letter to the Thessalonians, today's second reading. He tells us what to do as we wait for the Coming of the Lord. May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. Amen.

To prepare for the Lord we have to increase our love for each other and for all. Those who follow the way of the love will be saved. Our salvation hinges on our fighting against hate in our world and in our own lives. This is not easy. There are forces all around us encouraging us to hate. Both political parties claim to be fair and just, but their leaders often employ hate tactics. Character assassination is their standard mode of operation. Ad hominem arguments, attacks on the person and not on the position, have become so frequent that they are treated as valid points of view.

And so we pray, Lead us not into temptation. Give us the grace, Lord, to be aware of the hatred around us, and don't let us join in with the hate mongers.

We pray Lead us not into temptation, don't let us fall into temptation because our salvation depends on our fighting hatred. Then when the Son of Man returns with his Holy Ones we won't have to slump over hoping that we will not be noticed. No, if we are the people of Jesus Christ, lovers not haters, we can stand tall at the coming of our Lord, be this at the end of time or at the end of our own personal time.

May we be people of kindness, of charity, of peace. May we be people who live in the joyful expectation of the Coming of Our Lord.