December 4, 2022—Second Sunday of Advent

Around 8 centuries before Jesus was born, the Prophet Isaiah announced the coming of the Messiah, as we heard in the First Reading; In the Gospel, John the Baptist announced the immediate coming of the Savior as he baptized in the River Jordan; holy Mother Church announces Jesus’ Presence with us now and will continue doing so until the end of the world when He comes again in glory.

The prophecy that we heard in the First Reading wouldn’t be fulfilled for many centuries, but it gave the people of Israel hope. The Davidic monarchy had ceased to function, but Isaiah promised that “**a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse** (the father of King David)**, and from his roots a bud shall blossom**”. The people of Israel longed for the day when the Messiah King would come and God’s promises to them would be fulfilled. We believe that Jesus was the Savior foretold by Isaiah; He would fulfill part of that prophecy in this world and another part would be fulfilled at the end of time.

Isaiah said that the Savior would judge the poor with justice, and he would have what we call the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit: **wisdom, counsel, understanding, knowledge, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord**. Also, Isaiah wrote, “**On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out**”. The 3 kings came to worship the Baby Jesus as the first of the nations to recognize Him as King and Savior. This Messiah wasn’t for the Jews alone, but for every nation and people.

There are some parts of this prophecy that are impossible in this world. “**The wolf shall be guest of the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browser together with a little child to guide them.**” The wolf will not be the guest of the lamb, it will eat the lamb. After Jesus comes again, the Scripture says that there will be a new heaven and a new earth. The universe will be remade so that these things which seem impossible now will become reality then.

At long last, John the Baptist announced the immediate coming of the Messiah.
He began preaching in the desert, telling the people of his own time “**Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths**.” He called them to repent of their sins and administered a baptism of repentance. He told them that the coming Messiah would baptize, but His baptism was not just of repentance, but of power to change and purify: “**He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire**.”

Those were difficult times to have faith in God. The Roman soldiers were everywhere making sure that the laws of Rome were obeyed; they didn’t hesitate to use violence and they were not always just. The Sadducees controlled the Temple and were corrupt, not believing in doctrines like the resurrection of the dead and eternal life. Not all, but most of the Pharisees were hypocrites in their practice of religion, placing obligations upon the people that were impossible to fulfil. John called them a “**brood of vipers**” when they came to him. In the midst of this uncertainty, John tells the people to get ready for the Messiah. When John saw Jesus on the banks of the Jordan River, he announced: “**Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.**”

Don’t think of Jesus’ coming as only in the past. It is the duty of the Church to continue to announce His coming until the final coming at the end of time. Through the preaching of the Gospel, and most importantly, through the sacraments, Jesus comes into our lives. In baptism, He purifies us with the power of the Holy Spirit and the Blessed Trinity begins to dwell in our souls. God begins the work of a lifetime to transform us and make us ready for eternal life.

The God of mercy allows us to repent and receive forgiveness and healing in the Sacrament of Confession. There is a real opportunity for us sinners to begin again. Isn’t it wonderful that God doesn’t hold our sins against us but calls us to repentance and with His grace to start anew!

It is in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist that Jesus comes into our lives through His real, true Presence in the most wonderful way. Whether receiving Him into our bodies and souls in Holy Communion or worshipping Him in the Holy Mass or adoring Him in the Blessed Sacrament, He is near. He is with us.

If the world seems as disordered and chaotic as in the times of Jesus and you wonder where God is, look to the Sacraments, read His Word in Sacred Scripture. This is the way He set things up so that we could know Him and Love Hm and serve Him. Don’t miss Him. He is near. Come Lord, Jesus!