

**December 1, 2013 - First Sunday of Advent**  
**Prepared by Fr. Thomas J. Marti, MM, Seattle, WA**

Isaiah 2: 1-5; Psalms 122; Romans 13: 11-14; Matthew 24: 37-44

*"... You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."*

In the first reading, Isaiah the prophet envisions something of the Kingdom of God that is to come. He envisions a world of peace when swords will be turned into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks where there will be no more wars – a world of peace!

Advent is a time of preparation. Liturgically in remembering the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God, at Christmas we are reminded that we must prepare for the return of Christ, as Isaiah and the prophets of old prepared for the birth of the Messiah.

Jesus spoke of the coming of the Son of Man to his disciples and cautioned them to prepare for this coming. Here he was with his disciples, his church, and spoke of his coming. Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of Man is here, is with us and yet is to come to realize the fullness of the Kingdom, the Reign of God. Proclaiming the Kingdom of God was the focal point of his mission. "... Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33)

Jesus comes to us in many and varied ways in the course of our life but we do not always recognize him. We are called to be Christ to the world. Remember Jesus words: "You are the salt of the earth . . . you are the light of the world." (Matthew 5: 13-14). "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven." (Matthew 5: 16)

As Jesus sent his disciples to bear witness to this Kingdom, the Kingdom of peace and justice, of compassion, mercy and love, so he sends us, the church, to continue his mission of proclaiming this Kingdom through the witness of our lives. We are missionaries continuing the mission of Jesus. We are missionaries for we are a people sent. That is what a missionary is, one or those who are sent.

Jesus was conscious of his being sent by the Father which he referred to many times. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (John 20:21)

As we anticipate and look for the full realization of God's Kingdom when Jesus returns we must not stand idly by. We must be engaged in bearing witness to this Kingdom in our daily lives.

Our good Pope Francis has reminded us of this task of mission many times. We prepare for the final realization of the Kingdom by engagement in works of justice and peace, mercy and love. We, in this sense, are called to be activists, working for a just and peaceful world. Let us recall the vision of Isaiah the prophet when he envisions and prophesizes a world of peace when swords will be turned into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks where there will be no more wars – a world of peace!

In this context I would like to recall with you the words of the Holy Father in his World Mission Message for 2013:

*“The Year of Faith, 50 years after the beginning of the Second Vatican Council, motivates the entire Church towards a renewed awareness of its presence in the contemporary world and its mission among peoples and nations.”*

In addressing the youth of the world at World Youth Day in Brazil, Pope Francis strongly emphasized their missionary role, saying: “Where does Jesus send us? . . . There are no borders, no limits: He sends us to everyone!”

In celebrating Advent in preparation for the feast of Christmas we are reminded that Jesus, the Messiah, has indeed come, is coming daily into our lives, and will come again in the full realization of the Kingdom he preached. We must be ever ready for the coming of Jesus Christ into our lives. We meet him in one another, in those who are sick and lame, in the immigrants and refugees of the world, in those who are hungry and those who are victims of violence. We prepare for the coming of the Lord be reaching out to others with compassion mercy and love.

The bishops of Vatican Council II reminded us of this as recorded in the Council document, *Gaudium et Spes*:

*“... [T]he greater part of the world still experiences such poverty that in the voices of the poor Christ himself can be heard crying out for charity from his followers.”*

Let us prepare for Christmas by committing ourselves to the building up of the Kingdom of God in our daily lives, in our world so hungry for the Word of God!

**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: Peace, social justice and integrity of creation**

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