

First Sunday of Advent, Year C, December 1, 2024.

TO YOU, OH LORD, I LIFT UP MY SOUL (PSALM 25)

Story of Christmas shopping - We don't have time for that. Typical of last-minute Christmas shoppers, a mother ran furiously from store to store. Suddenly, she became aware that the little hand of her five-year-old son was no longer clutched in hers. In panic, she retraced her steps and found him standing with his little nose pressed flat against a frosty window. He was gazing at a Christmas manger. Hearing his mother's near hysterical call, he turned and shouted with innocent glee: **"Look Mommy! It's Jesus – Baby Jesus in the hay!"** With obvious indifference to his joy and wonder, she impatiently jerked him away, saying, **"We don't have time for that!"**

Advent is a time of waiting for Christ Jesus, allowing Jesus to be reborn in our lives. It is also a time for purifying our hearts by repentance and renewing our lives by reflecting on and experiencing Christ's several comings (advents) in our lives. Jesus Christ comes into our lives through His Church and its members, its Sacraments (especially in the Holy Eucharist), the Word of God, the worshipping community, and finally, in His Second Coming.

In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah waits and hopes for an ideal descendant of King David who, as the Messiah of God, will bring security, peace, and justice to God's people. Jeremiah's waiting and hoping were fulfilled in Jesus. Jeremiah's prophecy assures us that the Lord, our Justice, will fulfill His promises and, hence, that we need not be afraid, despite frightening events in the world.

To you, oh Lord, I lift up my soul (Psalm 25)

The Psalmist - King David, expresses the central idea of patient, vigilant, prayerful waiting for the Lord in today's Responsorial Psalm (Ps 25).

"In you, Lord my God, I put my trust. I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me. No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause. Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long" (Ps 25: 1-5).

In today's Gospel, Jesus prophesies the signs and portents that will accompany his Second Coming and encourages us to be expectant, optimistic, vigilant, and well-prepared: "When these signs begin to happen, stand firm and raise your heads, because your redemption is at hand" (Lk 21:28). Jesus wants us to face the future with confidence in God's providence.

With news of troubles, fighting, wars, and ceasefires, Christ wants us to remain resilient in our faith. God is still in control of the universe. His power surpasses that of evil and Satan. In Jesus, we hope for enduring security, peace, and justice in the world.

Fr Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP. First Sunday of Advent December 1, 2024

As the little boy in our story told his mother, ***“Look, Mommy! It’s Jesus—Baby Jesus in the hay!” Advent and Christmas are all about Jesus. Although some people might be too busy to have time for Jesus, may we acknowledge Christ’s presence in our midst and deepen our trust in Him.***

King David, who wrote Psalm 25, asks God for guidance. That is what we need to pray for today—God’s guidance and direction. Fortunately, these gifts are contained in the Bible—the Word of God. Additionally, we have the powerful presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist right here on the altar at Holy Communion. Amen.

Blessing of the Advent candle:

Lord our God, we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: He is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, He is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, He is the Savior of every nation. Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light signify Christ’s promise to bring us salvation. May He come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fr Martin Ezeihuaku, MSP.