"Stay with us, Lord"
2021-2022 Year of the Holy Eucharist, Diocese of Jackson

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (Year C)
November 28, 2021

I. “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay” (St. Luke 21:25)
   A. What is translated as “dismay” is συνοχη. The term means ‘constraint’, ‘restricted’, or ‘held-back.’
      1. Many people, parishes, and workplaces have been struggling during this pandemic with a feeling of being ‘held-back’ from being able to live in a normal way, or continue normal programs. In a spiritual and moral sense, people feel ‘held-back’ by habits of sin.
      2. Using the NAB translation, it is obvious that there is much ‘dismay’ in our culture and in the Church. There is confusion about the unity of the faith, or how to unite a country that is politically charged against each other.
   B. “People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world” (v 26).
      1. The confusion of the culture and frustration at the pandemic has led to fear — fear over what is to come, how we are to recover, if we will ever be ‘normal’ again, (and in some cases, real fear for health and of death from the virus).
      2. The tendency of anxiety is to push us toward destructive ways of life (Cf. v 34).

II. “They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (v 27).
   A. Advent is a time of renewal. Yearly when we return to Advent, it should be like walking up a spiral staircase, where we are higher each time we begin a new liturgical year.
      1. Jesus became Incarnate in a moment of great anxiety for the Jews. The Incarnation cuts through the mess of their lives, to raise people up and give them hope.
   B. At times, we can feel as if we are not making progress in life — either in a secular way in our jobs, our home-life, etc., but those who are trying to grow in the faith and in love of God can also feel as if they are not growing closer to Jesus Christ.
      1. Our lives are a journey toward Christ, a journey towards death. COVID-19 has made that more apparent to people recently, as the numbers of deaths are paraded into our houses on the news.
      2. But, in Advent, that whole narrative is turned upside down. Advent is not about us coming to Christ, but Christ coming to us. Jesus wants to cut through whatever is holding us back in anxiety and distress. It’s not that He removes those obstacles, but that He cuts through them to meet us on our side.
      3. The Incarnation is Christ inserting Himself into our lives, so that He can join us on the journey. “The Lord is near to the brokenhearted” (Ps. 34:18). “I am with you always” (St. Matthew 28:20).
   C. “If we had no hope in the Lord, what would we do in this world?” - St. Josephine Bakhita
      1. The virtue to be cultivated in Advent is hope.
      2. The Act of Hope: O my God, relying on Your almighty power and infinite mercy and promises, I hope to obtain pardon of my sins, the help of Your grace and life everlasting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Redeemer. Amen.

Prepared by Fr. Aaron Williams