



Advent Reflections for EOHSJ 1st Sunday of Advent 2023

Reflection by Rev. Carlos Martinez, KHS

Advent Begins!

“Be watchful! Be alert!

You do not know when the time will come.” (Mark 13:33)

Happy New Year! Yes, it is a new year within our Church. The first Sunday of Advent begins a new liturgical cycle and for that reason, Advent is an opportunity for us to begin anew. Think about it. Wouldn't it be nice to start anew? Are there things in your life that you'd like to leave behind or change? Most likely there are and Advent is the perfect time to do so. Beginning anew means that we take the past and give it over to Christ. It means that we let go of our past sin and hurt and ask Jesus to enter in. It means we turn to Him for a fresh start and have hope in all that He wants to accomplish in our lives. It is time to begin again!

Advent begins with a call to vigilance as reflected in the passage above from our Gospel this Sunday. Being vigilant also means that we are prepared. We are not caught off guard. Imagine if Christmas morning came and you woke up suddenly realizing that you forgot to prepare! Imagine if you had no gifts, no food purchased and no plans were made. Of course, we wouldn't allow that to happen, but, sadly, we often allow it to happen to our spiritual lives. We are often not prepared to celebrate the birth of Christ within our hearts. We have spent our time on the fleeting externals rather than on preparing our souls and minds.

The first week of Advent also offers the focus of the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus will return again, in all splendor and glory, to judge the living and the dead. We profess that fact every Sunday in our Creed. So, even though Advent is a time for the preparation of the celebration of the Incarnation, the first coming of Jesus in the flesh, it is also a time to acknowledge that His first coming is ultimately fulfilled in His final glorious coming.

As Advent begins, you are invited to reflect upon how ready you are for Jesus' coming. Are you preparing for it with the same fervor that you prepare for Christmas through shopping, cooking, and decorating? Are you preparing for the spiritual celebration of His birth? Are you awake and attentive to the numerous ways that God speaks to you on a daily basis?

If you find that you are not as prepared for His return in glory as you would like to be, make this Advent a time when you make your heart ready. Commit to prayer, spiritual reading, daily Mass, frequent Confession, reflection and attentiveness to His gentle and glorious voice. May He not find us asleep, but attentive to his call in our lives this Advent and upcoming Christmas season.

We pray: Lord, as Advent begins, help me to put my eyes on You. Help me to open my ears to Your voice. And help me to open my heart to Your glorious presence. May I be attentive to You in every way You desire to come to me. Jesus, I trust in You!

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