

Homily. 1st Sunday in Advent. Year. C. 27/28 November 2021.

You'd be right to wonder a little about what's going on with this gospel and why it is that we're starting our Church new year right back where we ended the old one? Yes, just two weeks ago on the 33rd Sunday, we did hear Mark's version, but Luke's doesn't differ that much. Really, it's all about the context. In both Sts. Mark and Luke Jesus is speaking about the end of an old way and the coming of something entirely new and refreshing. This end refers to the end of everything, of the world, of time and of history itself. Yet, here on the 1st Advent Sunday our Church wants us to think of the end in terms of the old law and the coming of the new covenant of our salvation in Christ. We're being asked to think of these words in the present context of our Advent preparation for the birthday of Christ at Christmas. We're also being asked to think in terms of His coming to birth in us today through the working of the Holy Spirit.

Unlike so many other creeds, Christianity is a historically based religion. Our faith takes time and history very seriously, because that's the reality within which we all live and have to find our way in this life. We simply can't experience anyone or anything outside of the fence of time and the boundary of history. God knew this which is why the the Timeless God chose to enter time, being born amongst us as one of us at Bethlehem some 2000 years ago. Tell me if you can, how else could the Immortal Everliving God hope to speak and act effectively for us and with us we're it not in a person, namely Jesus of Nazareth? Only by becoming fully one of us, with and for us, could our freedom be won in both time and history which define our every experience and all of our days on this earth.

We're on time; we're behind time; we're running out of time; this is the right time. We think and say these things every day. Jeremiah speaks of to us of the days of the coming of the Lord and of those coming days and times. Jesus, too, speaks of a coming time when the old will be brought to a conclusion and a new way of living will arise. He tells us to stand up then, holding our heads high because our liberation will be at hand.

In the Advent Season the Church is telling us that this is our wake up time, our time to pray for strength, so that when Christmas time comes around we can stand with confidence before the Son of Man. This short time of 4 busy weeks is special, a time of God's grace given for our growth and strengthening so that with joyful hearts we can be ready to receive the hope offered by Christ's birth in history. But not just that though; we have to wake up our awareness of His coming to us each and every day that we live and move forwards on our journey of faith.

Jesus became flesh at Bethlehem. He was and He is the definitive skin that God is in, but that not the end of His advent. His Spirit lives now in you and me, making us into the skin He's chosen to be in today. That's our gift which defines our mission and purpose here; to be Him and to bring Him to those we meet, especially people in any need or crisis. So friends, as the saying goes, seize these days, these few weeks of waiting and preparing in any way that you can. Then, to paraphrase the Closing Prayer of the Mass, we'll be better able to live in this world of people and things that are ever changing and passing away with our hearts firmly fixed on the Him and the things that endure forever.