

Homily. 1st Sunday in Advent. Year. C. 26/27 November 2022.

Recently I watched a speculative series on archeology. Most of it was froth and bubble with little hard evidence to back up the assertions being made. But, as is the case with almost everything, there were a few grains of truth in what was said. One point that stood out to me was when the presenter said that human beings suffer from a bad case of amnesia.

Drawing on my own experience and many years spent working with countless people I really do believe this to be true. We are a forgetful race, a race with a very short term memory. The past quickly fades into the background or it gets reshaped into something that it wasn't. The many demands of living force us to focus on the present and on what's coming next. Past memories, good and bad, get suppressed, or if they're recalled they take on a very different hue than was the case at the time.

This is the reason why Christianity is always talking about remembering, about calling into mind all that God has done and is still doing for us. Remembering and recalling is at the heart of every Season in our Church as year after year we retell and celebrate all over again what Jesus Christ did for us. Doing this in the Lord's memory is the key motive behind each Eucharist. Remembering makes present and accessible to us now what took place 2000 years ago. Recalling his self gift, and eating and drinking it in, makes the love of Jesus and the power of His Spirit alive in us today. He isn't someone been and gone like our dead relatives or those remembered on anniversaries and at war memorials. Rather, he's a living person, Gods Son, Risen and dwelling within us here and now.

Our Church, with its Seasons and cycles of celebrations, along with our Eucharist, counteracts our amnesia by recollection. We can easily see, hear and feel the truth of this as we begin a new Church year on this 1st Advent Sunday by listening and looking around us. The colours are changed, the Penitential act is different, the Gloria is omitted and the Mass Prayers and Preface have a fresh focus. The readings, too, are all about waking up, rising from our slumber and opening up our eyes, minds and hearts to the new act the living God is doing for us. This new act of God for us is the renewal of the gift and power of Christ, the Light of the World, coming to birth in us for the peace, healing and salvation of all.

Coming here means that we have arrived rejoicing into the house of the Lord, gathered in from all races and nations to Gods holy mountain, ready to be instructed in God's ways and to walk along God's paths. It means that we are waking up and trying to stay awake so as not to be surprised by the acts of God like the people in Noah's day were nor stunned by the Lord's unexpected arrival as the householder was when the thief struck.

It's my hope and prayer, and I trust yours too, that whatever we say and do over the next 4 weeks serves to draw us out of our drowsy amnesia, filling us with a fresh awareness of Christ coming to be born again in us. If so, then Advent will have worked it's magic on us making us alert and ready to celebrate our faith in the days of the Christmas Season that are fast approaching until we can be one with the Lord forever.