**Homily of First Sunday of Advent, Year B, 2026**

Isaiah 63:16-17, 19, 64:2-7; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Gospel 13:33-37

This Sunday marks the beginning of the Advent season and a new liturgical year. We are, now, in Cycle B.

Prior to Vatican II, the same set of texts was read each Sunday throughout the year and repeated the following year. There were no readings for daily Mass. The Sunday readings were read through the week. Following the reforms of Vatican II (1962–1965), the Catholic liturgical year and lectionary were divided into a three-year cycle (A, B, and C) in order to provide a broader reading of Scripture over a three-year period, enabling the faithful to read, hear, and know the word of God more deeply.

Many churches are decorated with Advent wreath from this first Sunday of Advent. Decoration with Advent wreaths began long before its use in churches. The use of Advent wreath in churches is said to have begun among the Lutherans in the 16th century, and spread to other churches. Advent wreath further explains the meaning of Advent season:

The green wreath in circle shape symbolizes God's eternity and everlasting life. The candle light symbolizes Jesus, the light of the world. The four candles symbolize the four weeks of Advent. The first purple candle is called Candle of Hope. Jesus is the Hope that does not disappoint. The second purple candle is called Candle of Peace. He is our Peace. The third candle, pink in color, is called Candle of Joy. Jesus is the joy of the world. The fourth candle, is called Candle of Love. Jesus the fulfilment of God's love for us.

The word Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus*, which means *coming*. St. Bernard of Clairvaux writes about the three comings of Christ. Unlike the other two, which are visible, the third coming lies invisibly between them. In his first coming, Christ came in our flesh, dwelling among men and women. In the final coming, he will be seen in glory and majesty. In the middle (third) coming, he comes in spirit and in power.

The Advent season prepares us for the celebration of Christ's first coming. It is a penitential, soul-searching, and spiritual reawakening journey to renew us to welcome the "Word Made Flesh." The purple color of the Advent season reminds us that the season is a penitential and a sobering journey. The purple color also foreshadows the sovereignty and the royalty of Christ. Purple was a kingly color.

Almost everybody, Christians, and non-Christians alike, in one way or another, prepare for Christmas celebration. The commercialization of Christmas is well known. However, for us Catholics, the spiritual preparation is more important. A good spiritual preparation makes every Christmas become the first Christmas. That is why the first reading from Isaiah is an invitation for repentance and a pleading for God's mercy and forgiveness. "Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful; all of us have become like unclean people, all our good deeds are like polluted rags; we have all withered like leaves and our guilt carries us away like the wind. … Yet, O Lord, you are our father; we are the clay and you are the potter; we are the work of your hands." Therefore, we are to acknowledge our sins and have a true repentance. The Sacrament of Reconciliation helps us to prepare spiritually.

Our spiritual preparation for Christmas is an essential way to welcome the "revelation of Jesus Christ" in our present life "in spirit and in power;" and in our final time, "in glory and majesty." His coming may be in the evening, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. No matter the time, Jesus tells us, "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know the time."

Some spiritual steps to a good Advent season:

- Earnestly pray with and meditate on the themes of the four weeks of Advent season: hope, peace, joy, and love.
- Participate in parish or group or community Advent season spiritual exercises such as retreat, revival, novena, prayer service, Penitential Service, Confession, etc.
- Perform personal acts of penance.
- Make spiritual resolutions to be closer to God.
- Try to reconcile with those you have a strained relationship with.
- Do works of charity.

Isaiah prays "O Lord, you are our father; we are the clay and you are the potter; we are the work of your hands." If you have ever visited a blacksmith, or a sculptor, or a potter at work, you would understand Isaiah's prayer. What you see is the total surrender of iron to the blacksmith, of wood to the sculptor, and of clay to the potter. This brings to mind Isaiah question in 45:9, "Shall the clay say to the potter, "What are you doing?" or, "What you are making has no handles"? A song paraphrased from Luke 10:39 says, "Lose yourself in me, and you will find yourself."

Prayer of Losing oneself to God:

O Lord, grant that I may see what you want me to see,

That I may hear what you want me to hear,

That I may think what you want me to think,

That I may speak what you want me to speak,

That I may be where you want me to be,

That I may do what you want me to do,

That I may become who you want me to become,

That your will be done, not mine. Amen.

We wish one another a fruitful and Spirit-filled Advent season.

**Fr. Martin Eke, MSP**