

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT C

Have you ever had déjà vu?

You know ... the feeling that whatever is happening right now has happened before.

As we begin Year C of the liturgical cycle of readings we can have that feeling of déjà vu because it seems as if we just heard today's Gospel, didn't we?

We did - sort of - two Sundays ago when we heard St. Mark's account of Jesus describing the "return of the Son of Man."

Even as the season of Advent helps us to prepare to celebrate the first coming of Jesus at Christmas, the First Sunday of Advent always focuses our attention on Christ's return in glory.

In today's Gospel, Jesus admonishes us to be vigilant

"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life."

Sounds like a typical old-fashioned office Christmas party, doesn't it?

Advent reminds us not to become ensnared by the world's false promises of security and fulfillment.

It's easy to become drunk and drowsy by filling ourselves with endless pursuits of entertainment and distraction.

Advent is meant to stir up in us our deepest, truest longing: our desire for union with God.

I guess it's natural to have the feeling of déjà vu every year when the season of Advent returns.

In the Opening Rite of the Mass I referred to the "great wheel of the liturgical year."

We have come "full circle" again. However, in the liturgical year we are not "spinning our wheels."

Rather, the ever-turning cycle of the liturgical year is meant to move us forward so that each year we might take advantage of the opportunity God is giving us to grow in our relationship with Jesus.

As the Lord himself reminds us through the prophet Isaiah in the First Reading, God will fulfill the promise he has made.

God is faithful: He has raised up a righteous shoot for David in sending us his Son.

Jesus is the source of our hope and our joy.

As the Advent wreath reminds us: He is the light that shines through the darkness.

The world is so very much in need of the hope that faith in Jesus brings.

3

We are challenged to be signs of that hope.

We are called to be lights shining in the darkness.

We pray as St. Paul does in the Second Reading: "May the Lord make us increase and abound in love for one another and for all."

I recall a conversation I once had with someone who ministers in our parish.

He shared with me that he had heard "the call" to serve in a new way after he had survived a heart attack.

He asked himself, "How am I going to spend the days that I have been given?"

"How will I be remembered? What is the legacy I will leave?"

He felt the call to help others, especially to help vulnerable children.

And so he became involved in an organization that helps children who are at risk from neglect in their own families.

Each of us are given the opportunity to make a difference.

Each of us are given the graces we need to conduct ourselves in a manner pleasing to God.

Advent is the perfect time to make a new start in our journey of discipleship.

4

Yes, we have heard this all before.

And yet, Jesus is the one who said, "Behold, I make all things new!"

What is "new" about you and me since Advent 2020?

What "new thing" do you long for God to do in your life this year?