

Prepare for His Coming!



*(Preparing for
motherhood: Statues
of the Visitation, Ein
Karem, Jerusalem)*

Advent is a season to prepare us to a meaningful celebration of the Birth of our Lord. So we preachers, facilitators and disciples of the Word must interpret the readings in relation to the season itself. We must answer the question: **According to the Readings, how do we prepare for Christmas in this season of Advent?**

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Is 63:16-17, 19: 64:2-7)

¹⁶You, LORD, are our father, our redeemer you are named forever. ¹⁷Why do you let us wander, O LORD, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not? **Return** for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. ¹⁹Oh, that you would rend the heavens and **come down**, with the mountains quaking before you, 64, ²while you wrought awesome deeds we could not hope for, ³such as they had not heard of from of old. No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you doing such deeds for those who wait for him. ⁴Would that you might **meet** us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways! ⁵Behold, 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.

⁶There is none who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to cling to you; for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our guilt. ⁷Yet, O LORD, you are our father; we are the clay and you the potter: we are all the work of your hands.

THE FOCUS: The Return of the Lord

COMMENTARY

- This is a prayer of the people of Israel asking the Lord to return to them.
- Taking into account of the season of Advent which talks about coming of the Lord, the reading makes us conscious of the return of the Lord expressed in vv. 17-return, v.19- come down, and 64:4- meet us.
- What kind of God (Lord) is supposed to return? Our father (v16 2x, 64:7), our redeemer (v.16) wrought awesome deeds (64:2) angry (64:4), hidden your face, delivered us up to our guilt, (64:6) potter (v.64:7)
- What kind of people is asking God to return? Here their sins are enumerated. These caused God to withdraw his presence from the people:wandering from ways (meaning unguided), hearts hardened, not fearing God (v.17) like pagans not ruled by God, not identified with God (v.19), sinful, unclean men, good deeds like dirty rags (64:4-5) [simile], withered like leaves (64:5) [simile], none calling upon your name (64:6) work of your hands (64:7).
- The prayer appeals invoking “your servants” (v.17), like Abraham and other God-fearing Israelites. God must listen to their prayers for their sake.

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REFLECTIONS

The First Reading is a prayer invoking the return of God to the Israelite people.

Because of their sinfulness, God has withdrawn his presence. *Nagtampo ang Diyos* (God is slighted).

The result: they are in a miserable condition. *Wala silang magawang matino* (they do no good), *parang maruming basahan* (like polluted rags).

Therefore, God must return to restore them to the dignity of God's people and give meaning to their lives.

In this season of Advent, we await for the coming of God, to give meaning to our lives, to make sense out of our sufferings and sacrifices, and to give us sense of direction.

We cannot live independently from God.

Living in the absence of God leads to one's ruin and *kapalpak* (mess).

If ever God's presence is not felt, then it is imperative to seek him in prayer.

The content of the prayer must be something like this: Lord, come. We await for your coming. We want now to do your will. We are also your children.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 80:2-3)

**LORD, MAKE US TURN TO YOU;
LET US SEE YOUR FACE
AND WE SHALL BE SAVED.**

SECOND READING (1 Cor 1:3-9)

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, ⁵that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, ⁶as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you **wait**

for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the **day of our Lord** Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE FOCUS: The End

COMMENTARY

- This is a letter addressed to God-fearing Christians. The reading talks about the coming of the Lord: Revelation of our Lord (v.7), Irreproachable on the day of the Lord (v.8).
- Paul acknowledges the giftedness of the Corinthians: grace of God (v.4), you were enriched (v.5), not lacking (v.7), firm, irreproachable (v.8), called to fellowship (v.9).
- For Paul, these Christians are prepared for the coming of Jesus.

REFLECTIONS

The message of Paul affirms the God-fearing Christians in Corinth as being adequately prepared for the coming of Jesus.

Their being prepared is attributed to the grace of Christ himself and to the missionary efforts of Paul (testimony to Christ, v.6).

In this season of Advent, preparations for the coming of Christ (whether his first coming, second coming or his coming everyday) constitute living in the grace of God, meaning fullness of spiritual life, saturated by the person of Christ.

There is no adequate preparation for Christmas without friendship / deep relationship with Christ.

GOSPEL READING (Mk 13:33-37)

³³Jesus said to his disciples: "Be **watchful!** Be **alert!** You do not know when the time will come. ³⁴"It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gate-

keeper to be **on the watch**.³⁵ **Watch**, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. ³⁶May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. ³⁷What I say to you, I say to all: ‘**Watch!**’”

THE FOCUS: To Keep Watch

COMMENTARY

- The command to be watchful is done three times (vv.33,35,37).
- Except the third, all the commands have their own explanations.
- The pattern of the first two commands: watch, because you do not know when.
- Watching is associated with working / diligence (v.34), not sleeping / idling (v.36).

REFLECTIONS

Vigilance is the name of the game.

The return of the master is intentionally unannounced so that the workers will always do their assigned jobs.

The best way to keep vigil is to do one’s job assiduously and diligently.

Work even if no one is watching.

Without saying it, the consequence is terrible. Heed the warning. Imagine the punishment of a worker sleeping on the job.

II. TYING THE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading stresses, “Return, O Lord.” (A prayer).

The Second Reading presents a picture of a community prepared for the coming of the Lord.

The Gospel points out a repeated appeal to be watchful or else...

How to develop your homily/sharing?

You may begin explaining what Advent

is all about. Repeat some ideas found in the introduction of the *Sambuhay* if you have. Emphasize the word *paghahanda* (preparation) for the coming of the Lord (three comings).

Then make observations on the consumeristic preparations, elaborate Christmas decors, Christmas cards, cake, e-mail cards, endless parties, eating and drinking causing death to some, over involvement in church activities causing *puyat* (sleeplessness) and fatigue (not good for the spirit), carolling.

Now convince your audience the real *paghahanda* according to the readings.

Prayer for his coming, expressing one’s longing for God to intervene in our lives (First Reading).

Relate the ideal community (in Corinth) in terms of preparedness (Second Reading), vigilance, diligence (Gospel).

Make practical suggestions: attend Advent recollections, set aside more time for prayer, spiritual reading, preparing the readings for the mass.

Warn those who do not prepare: Christmas does not mean anything without spiritual preparation. It is a waste of money and energy.

Christmas without establishing relationship with Christ is void. Each one should exercise vigilance: diligence in renewing oneself and conversion

End the homily/sharing connecting the coming with the reception of the Eucharist. Christ comes to us in the forms of bread and wine. Active participation in the Eucharist is itself a preparation.

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