

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST
(Invitation to become a Church of Expectancy & Hope)
(12/6/06 TOPIC OF DISCUSSION)
PRESENTED BY FATHER ED JOCSON

Opening Prayer

Each liturgical year begins on the 1st Sunday of Advent not with looking back but with looking forward to our glorious future. The theme of the 1st Sunday of Advent is the coming of the Lord at the end of time.

The second coming of Christ is a future event. Although the Kingdom of God is here among us in a hidden way the fullness of the Kingdom is yet to be manifest, or as one theologian puts it “already... not yet.” During Advent we traditionally prepare for the coming of Christ in the Christmas story as a babe in the manger. This was His first coming, however the second coming of Christ is a “Coming in Glory.”

In the first reading for the 1st Sunday in Advent, [Jeremiah Ch.33 Vs 14-16](#) he prophesies about God fulfilling his promise to the house of Israel and Judah by raising up a “Just Shoot” from the house of David This will ensure the safety and security of Jerusalem which will be called “The Lord our Justice.” In the second reading from [1 Thessalonians Ch.3 Vs 12 and Ch. 4 Vs 2](#) the apostle Paul and his companions pray that by their example and according to the teachings of Christ Jesus “The Lord would make you abound in love for one another and for all.” These were instructions on how to live the Gospel message. In the Gospel of St. Luke ([Ch.21 Vs25-28 and Vs 35-36](#)) Jesus describes his second coming in cosmic terms such as signs in the sun the moon and stars, the roaring of the sea and waves. Although these events will predictably terrify to death those who witness them as the powers of the heavens are shaken, Jesus wants his followers to be assured that not only will they endure these and many other disasters, but that in the very midst of them believers will find their salvation revealed because “They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” His followers are not to be afraid but rather “When these signs begin to happen, **STAND ERECT AND RAISE YOUR HEADS BECAUSE YOUR REDEMPTION IS NEAR.**”

Between the time of Christ's first and second comings the history of the world as we know it happens. At His second coming final judgment will occur. This is what we pray in our profession of faith "He will come again to judge the living and the dead," ([CCC 678 and 679](#)). "Then will the conduct of each one and secrets of hearts be brought to light. Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned." "Our attitude about our neighbor will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love." "On the last day Jesus will say" 'Truly I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.'" To paraphrase #679, since Christ died on the cross for our sins he has the full right to pass judgment. Although Jesus did not come to judge but to save, the very act of rejecting his offer of salvation, his grace, and Spirit of love, one already judges and condemns oneself. The gospel describes this final judgment as the separation of the sheep (to eternal reward) from the goats (to eternal damnation). We are called to serve the least of our brothers and sisters, and acceptance or rejection of this call will determine where we spend eternity. In this manner of servant-hood lies our true vocation. The early catechism describes our purpose for existence as "To know, love and serve God in this world and to be happy with Him forever in the next." The last four things in the life of every human being are: Death, Judgment, Heaven or Hell.

We are called daily to prepare for Christ's second coming in the way we conduct our lives; to "Be on watch; pray constantly and stand secure before the Son of Man."

- 1. To live lives that are blameless before God**
- 2. To live in harmony with nature as wise stewards of God's creation**
- 3. To proclaim with our lives and voice the saving action of Christ**

"Be on watch, Pray constantly.... To stand secure before the Son of Man"

The liturgy invites us to become a church of EXPECTANCY AND HOPE, because we live in the light of a particular future – God's promise to raise up a "Just Shoot" to reign in the line of David, and of a time when the Lord God will rule over a Jerusalem fully restored and made whole. This "promise" found its fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth who was sent

to inaugurate the reign of God and is the very embodiment of God's justice.

His first coming was the fulfillment of God's promise. His second coming is the full consummation of the future promised by God, which has not yet happened.

One other source of confidence for us is that we become anchored by living lives "Pleasing to God," not allowing our spirits to become "Bloated with indulgence and drunkenness and worldly cares," but by using well the time we have to become more loving "Blameless and holy before our God."

"BE ON WATCH, PRAY CONSTANTLY, TO STAND SECURE BEFORE THE SON OF MAN."

In the Nicene Creed we pray "... He will come again in glory."

The Kingdom of God is "already and not yet." "Already" meaning that in Jesus Christ, the world has experienced the inauguration of the Kingdom of God among us. "Not yet" meaning that the fullness of the Kingdom is something not yet experienced – we await the final fulfillment at the end of time at Christ's Second Coming.

Far from promoting passivity, the expectation of "A new heaven and a new earth" should galvanize us to action.

In one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council we read: "The expectancy of a new earth should spur us on, for it is here that the body of a new human family grows, foreshadowing in some way the age which is yet to come.. When we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and our enterprise, according to the command of the Lord and in His Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ presents to His Father an eternal and universal Kingdom (Gaudium et Spes : Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Dec. 7, 1965 #23-24)

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST: in the Catechism of the Catholic Church ([CCC Art. 7 – Profession of Faith](#)) we read:

“Catholics do not believe that the fulfillment of the destiny of creation and human beings will be brought about by material progress or human activity alone (Secularism) but by God.” (CCC 675-676)

“Catholics reject any attempts to predict the end of the world (Millennialism) or to lessen in any way our responsibility for stewardship of this present world based on a future Second Coming of Christ.” (CCC 673)

“Catholics believe that we meet the Glorified Lord upon the event of our death, as well as when His full glory is revealed to all the world at the end of time.” (CCC 677)

We all wait for the world to be more just, more living and more peaceful. The anticipation of God’s restoration of the earth is a basic human drive. We are called to pray and be watchful, for Christ comes into our lives everyday. This daily VIGILANCE prepares us for the moment of our death when we will see Christ face to face. It also energizes us to look forward to the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, when Christ comes again in Glory. The great temptation for us is:

- **Belief that the end of this world is imminent**
- **Distrust in the capacity of the human heart for transformation**
- **Desire for God’s immediate judgment and justice to purge the cosmos of evil**
- **Predict the end of the world and Christ’s Second Coming**

Instead, our words should be “Maranatha – Come Lord.” There is a time and a season for everything and Jesus will return in the fullness of time. The time, however, is not for speculation but is known to the Father alone. In the meanwhile, the expectation of the Fullness of God should energize us as we “Wait in Joyful Hope for the coming of Our Savior, Jesus Christ”. We are called to live lives that are blameless before the Lord, live in harmony with nature as wise stewards of the earth, and to proclaim with our lives and voices the saving action of Jesus who died and rose for us.

We await the restoration of creation when corruption will put on incorruption and death is swallowed up. Evil is what corrupts and

deters the Kingdom of God, and while we are the pilgrim church, God's people marked by the world, stained by the pursuit money, pleasure, power, groaning, as it were, in labor for the birth of the Kingdom. God's promise of "A New Heaven and a New Earth" will be fulfilled. The glorious event of the future Coming of Christ should therefore prompt us with expectant faith to "STAND ERECT AND RAISE YOUR HEADS BECAUSE YOUR REDEMPTION IS NEAR."