



First Week of Advent: 29th and 30th November 2020

Reflection / Homily – Mgr Daniel McHugh

“Waiting for Our Lord Jesus Christ.”

On Wednesday each week I have a Zoom meeting (an online conversation) with the small team who work with me to prepare a 10-minute time of prayer and reflection that’s called The Burning Bush. It has grown in the time of the Pandemic when people are restricted in getting to Church and find something on the Internet helps to keep in touch with the main thrust of the Readings (usually the Gospel) at Sunday Mass. This Reflection is part of it, but also there is music; a hymn related to the theme; pictures; and a time of quiet prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. The story of the Burning Bush is covered in the new issue of the Sower Magazine that comes out this weekend.

One of my tasks is to prepare an outline that includes suggestions for each part that goes out to the other members of the team before we meet online. This week with Advent coming I was trying to identify two pictures that would help with the Reflection and Prayer: I came up with a picture that is familiar to many, Holman Hunt’s picture of Jesus standing at the door and knocking; and a picture of a person at prayer. These suggestions emerged from my Reflection on the main theme of the Advent Season which I see as Waiting for Our Lord Jesus. The Sunday readings lead us to pray and reflect on the first coming of Jesus which we celebrate at Christmas; his coming at many moments in our lives; and the second coming, His coming at the end of time.

The “coming” that we are all waiting for at the moment is the Birth of Jesus which we celebrate at Christmas. It is a time that not even the Pandemic can stop: the discussions going on this past week in the Country at large and in Parliament have been about Christmas and the importance of celebrating it: people are saying it is a time for children, it is a time for family, it is a time to celebrate community and so on, whether you are Christian or not. Intertwined with it all is the fact that it is the time of the Birth of Jesus, God becoming one with us, the Divine becoming Human in order to show His love and call us to Him.

So, after a strange year since early March we are getting back to something like normal; and then there is the wonderful news of vaccines coming our way very soon, so that life and work can resume more easily by Easter perhaps.

So, what is the Church saying to us about how best to use the season of “Waiting”: well, first it is not saying stand around not doing anything like the famous tramps in the play Waiting for Godot; it is saying be aware that this season is when we focus on watchfulness for the coming of the Lord Jesus and it takes us through the different ways He is coming. He comes anew for each of us at the celebration of the Birth of Jesus; he comes anew at different times and with different experiences in daily life; and he will come again at the end of life. This last one may not be so appealing I think: either in

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terms of our death or the final coming at the end of time. Most of us tend to put that off; I mean, thinking about it!

And yet, it is not so daunting when you consider it as portrayed in the Parable of the Master of the House returning having left His servants with their various tasks and wanting an account of their work; nor in St Paul's letter to the Corinthians where he speaks of the gifts of the Holy Spirit we have received to help us live as we are called to in order to become fully one with Jesus at his return on the last day.

Yes, we are being called by the Church in Advent to be ready, to be waiting for the coming of Jesus in the ways I have mentioned, and I would propose a few matters we can focus on, special gifts of the Holy Spirit that help especially as we seek to use this time well:

- the Real Presence of Jesus is the Blessed Sacrament: Churches will still have restricted access to Mass, but they are still open at various times for private visits to the Blessed Sacrament for Prayer with the intention of considering the presence of Jesus in your life.
- Take time at home for prayer each Sunday. The Burning Bush VLOG can be accessed on the internet via The Diocesan Website and Our Lady of Good Counsel Ethnic Chaplaincies Website. And you may have your own prayer resources too.
- Consider what you might do for others. Remember the words of Jesus last week "whatever you do for the least of these you do it for me". Christmas is not just a selfish time: we can reach out to our fellow Christians suffering for their Faith in different parts of the world through Aid to the Church in Need. We can reach out to the poor in our communities through Foodbanks and Gifts for Christmas; and we can reach out to our family members with whom we have not been in contact for some time!

Then, with the help of the Holy Spirit we will be ready when the Master comes to give an account of ourselves; we will have lived a healthier more wholesome life in Spirit as well as in Body.

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