

**Days of Noah**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent (A)**  
**(Rm 13:11-14; Mt 24:37-44)**

*“As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man”*  
(Mt 24:37)

Advent is the season of preparation for the coming of the Lord. By celebrating his first coming at Bethlehem, we prepare for his second coming on the final day. Jesus uses the story of the Great Flood to illustrate the need for preparation. As in the days of Noah, the second coming will bring about the destruction of evil, and a renewal of creation.

In that time, mankind was warned about the impending flood, but chose not to respond. People continued to give themselves up to worldly activities and debauchery. Only Noah heeded God and built the ark. When the flood came, he and his family were safely delivered in the ark through those waters, to the new creation. Likewise, in our days Jesus has warned us, and now we must make preparations.

In 2004 there was a devastating tsunami in Thailand, and again in 2011 a widely filmed tsunami in Japan. These events can help us imagine the great flood in Noah’s day, when an unstoppable wall of water washed everything away with devastating power, unleashing panic and helplessness. In Japan, the citizens were well aware of the danger and had drills and procedures in place, because once an earthquake hits and the sirens go off, there is only a few minutes to get to safety. Many survived because they were prepared.

Advent is our annual preparation drill for the coming event, to put into place the procedures and plan of action that will ensure our safety on the final day. We must not be like those people St. Paul describes in the second reading, who let down their guard and become spiritually drowsy, abandoning their faith and giving in to the flesh (Rm 13:13). We must constantly be vigilant; Jesus warns that the end will come on a day and hour we do not expect, like a thief in the night.

In the biblical story, the ark represents the Church. By building and living our lives within the Church, God’s family will be delivered safely through the end-times to the glory of the resurrection. Advent is a time to renew our practice of the faith, making sure we are:

- 1) Attending Mass faithfully each Sunday and receiving the Holy Eucharist;
- 2) Confessing our sins so as to be always in God’s grace;
- 3) Bringing the life of the Church into our home through daily prayer and a Catholic culture.

When the day comes we will be prepared, because we are already in the ark.

Advent is not only a time to think of our personal salvation, but also that of our family and companions. It wasn't just Noah who was saved, but his entire household. Jesus warns in the Gospel that among two companions working in the field, one will be taken, and one left. The annual celebration of Christmas – with all the Advent preparations leading up to Christmas – are a “public awareness campaign.” For instance, when we send Christmas cards, it is a reminder to our friends and acquaintances that the one who was born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago comes again today, and we must be ready to respond.

Our parish will hold a public procession on the upcoming Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a not-so-subtle invitation to come back to church and join with Mary who is pregnant with the world's salvation. Likewise in the days leading to Christmas we will celebrate the *Posadas* devotion in a few different neighborhoods, inviting the community to join with Mary and Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem. We must ensure our own salvation, but we also do not want our neighbors to be left behind.

There is still room in the ark, and we need to fill it. As you plan your family Christmas celebrations, make sure everyone will come to church for one of the Christmas Masses, and join in this beautiful liturgy which is a high point of the Church calendar. In our parish we put a lot of effort into making the Christmas Eve Masses joyful and beautiful, with extra decorations, a new nativity set, and carols sung by the choir and musicians.

The world allures us with its pleasures, and we easily become weary and tired. As time marches on we can become lulled into a spiritual laziness and lose our readiness. This Advent season, let us be renewed in faith and hope, so that we must once again look with vigilance to the day of the Lord.