



November 28, 2021

First Sunday of Advent—year of Grace 2022 begins

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill my promise... Jeremiah 33:14

Dear Friends;

This Sunday we light the first candle of the Advent Wreath. This was traditionally called the candle of hope. Advent is the season of joyful expectation as we look for the coming of the Kingdom of justice and peace. We need openness, vigilance and prayer if we are to avoid falling into the trap of self-delusion, wishful thinking and selfishness. With today's psalm we pray, *"Your ways, O Lord, make known to me."* (Psalm 25:4)

In our first reading from the Prophet Jeremiah, the author announces that God will raise-up a new and just king. This king will behave like God acting justly and rightly thinking of only the common good. In the ancient Mediterranean world they had no understanding of human equality whether in law or even as an ideal. Relationships in this culture tended to be exploitive. Everyone tried to take advantage of others. To a people who rarely experienced justice in their lives, such a prophecy would be welcome news. But they would remain skeptical.

Christians see in Jesus that just ruler and judge who behaves like God. In our passage from the Gospel of Luke Jesus points us to the coming of a new era. For those who long for justice it is a time to stand up and pay attention. For those who are overly invested in the current way of doing things, the change will seem catastrophic.

The dire warning that Jesus gives is aimed at the elites. Ninety-five percent of people in First Century Palestine were peasants. They lived at a subsistence level. They did not have the means or leisure time to carouse, get drunk and be "consumed with worldly cares." Here the Gospel is addressing the greedy wealthy who refuse to accept their responsibility to share their resources with the needy as is required in that culture. It is the greedy who will be caught by surprise when The Son of Man comes in judgment.

In Jewish and Christian understanding the earth belongs to everyone not just to the greedy and the rich. Pope Francis has also defined 'everyone' to include all of earth's creatures. The trouble with our current economic system is we have absolutized the individual person. We have undermined the idea of the commons, that is, things that belong to us all like clean water and air, a healthy planet, nutritious food, and a diverse biosphere.

Corporations and billionaires have been appropriating for themselves things that are meant to be for the use of all. This has led to the degradation of the intrinsic value of all creation. Pope Francis tells us that we have fallen into an "excessive anthropocentrism." By that he means we have placed ourselves as masters of the world rather than God. In our egocentric greed we believe that we, individuals, and corporations are accountable to no one.

In his pastoral letter *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis writes *"Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years..."* Francis urges us to acknowledge the urgency and challenge facing our ecological crisis. We are invited to decisive action. The *Laudato Si'* Action Platform is a collaboration between the Vatican, an international coalition of Catholic organizations and all people of goodwill. It takes a ground up approach and asks us to start at home, parish (you may want to start a group here) and local community. Go to laudatosi.actionplatform.org for more information.

Come Lord Jesus!

Fr Ron