

Homily by Fr. Christopher at the Cathedral of St. Matthew, 3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT,
12/15/2018

Here we are more than half way through Advent on Gaudete Sunday. Advent means someone is coming. When he arrives it is time for rejoicing. The waiting though can test one's patience. Waiting is not an easy virtue in this age of Instagram, on-line buying and selling, preprogramed responses for emails, Sunday deliveries for Amazon. Couldn't it really wait until Monday?

According to the history the chosen people of God, the Jews, have been waiting thousands of years for their Messiah to come. The prophets promised one day God's wrath would end. He would have pity on them, send a Redeemer to set them free from oppressors and restore their fortunes in the land he promised them. That happened over and over in their long history. They would wander afar from the Law and worshipping their God alone. God forgave them, renewed the covenant with them. It did not last, they turned again to idols and the customs of their gentile neighbors.

It was not just the restoration of earthly fortune that the prophets promised but new things. The Messiah was to be a Savior-King who would establish a lasting kingdom. He would win the forgiveness of sins and confirm them in their faithfulness to the covenant with God – not by force but by love.

We know that the peaceable kingdom has not come yet. Just look at the world we are in and make a mess of. While we wait nothing seems to change much. Weeds and wheat grow up together in a battle between chaos and anarchy versus the order of tranquility, of justice and peace. In the book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament, the author laments that. "One generation passes and another comes, but the world forever stays. ... What has been, that will be; what has been done, that will be done. Nothing is new under the sun." (1: 4 seq.)

But for those who accept Jesus of Nazareth as Israel's Messiah there is something new under the sun, something indeed to rejoice about. In the fullness of time when God sent his Son, born of a woman, under the Law, he did not come in power and might as many hoped and expected; rather he came in humility, being born in a stable in Bethlehem because there was no room at the inn.

The Son of God became man like us in all things but sin so that all who accept him as their Lord and Savior might become adopted sons and daughters to share one day in his glorious eternal life. In 33 years he completed his mission on earth by suffering and dying for us all, then rising from the dead and ascending into heaven. As he was ascending the angel told those watching: "**Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!**" Two thousand years have passed and we are still waiting. "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you." When it happens we will tremble too. Only the Father knows the day and the hour of his second coming in glory and majesty. So we are reminded to be always ready.

I am reminded of what St. Peter wrote in one of his letters: "**With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some understand slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance.**"

For John the Baptist, as we heard in the gospel, repentance has a practical component. When people asked him, What must we do?, he said share your food and clothing with the needy, do not be greedy extorting more than is your due, do not bully or denounce anyone falsely. Christmas is the time when we are particularly reminded to share our abundance with others. If Jesus said, 'It is

more blessed to give than to receive," he gave us an example par excellence. On the cross he forgave his persecutors, gave us Mary as our mother, and with his last breath poured out his spirit on us.

Even while we are waiting for the final coming and the establishment of the new heaven and new earth, we can rejoice because God has not left us. When Jesus said at the last supper this is my body, this is my blood. Do this in remembrance of me, he confirmed his presence among us whenever we celebrate this Mass and adore his sacred hosts in the tabernacle. I say to you what Paul wrote to the Philippians, **"The Lord himself is near. Dismiss all anxiety from your minds. Present your needs to God in every form of prayer and in petitions full of gratitude. Then God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus."** To him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory, praise, thanksgiving and glad obedience, now and forever. AMEN