

1st Sunday of Advent, Year A

Br. Samuel Springuel

1 December, 2019

1st Reading Isaiah 2:1–5

Responsorial Psalm Psalm 122:1–2,3–8

2nd Reading Romans 13:11–14

Gospel Matthew 24:37–44

Fr. Peter told me once about the remodeling of the School’s main entrance. For those who haven’t been down there in a while, there are three Latin phrases inscribed on the walls just inside said entrance. Now, when they were designing the entrance, Fr. Peter had no problems coming up with the first two inscriptions: *Ora et Labora*, the unofficial motto of the Benedictine Order, and *Pax in Sapientia*, the motto of the School. They were obvious choices. He didn’t know, however, what to put up for the third inscription. He had the space to put in something substantially longer than the other two, but what should it be? Without any ideas of his own, Fr. Peter consulted with Abbot Aidan who suggested the motto which now adorns that space: *Rursus Incepiemus Nunc et Semper*; we begin again, now and always.

This motto is especially appropriate at this time of year. We, as Church, are set to begin again our annual pilgrimage: first to a manger in Bethlehem where a poor child will come into the world with all the fan-fair of heaven. Then to the banks of the Jordan where we will hear a voice crying out in the wilderness: “Make ready the way of the Lord.” From there we’ll travel north to the shores of the Sea of Galilee and the surrounding country-side where we will hear the teachings of that child, who is the Lord, become man. Next we’ll head south, to Jerusalem, to witness his triumphal entry, his ignominious exit with the instrument of his death on his shoulders, his suffering on that cross, his death, and burial. All culminating in his Resurrection three days later. Our pilgrimage will then continue as we witness his Ascension, and await the coming of his Paraclete a few days later. And finally, we, like the Apostles before us, will complete the pilgrimage by taking the news of these events and the gifts we have been given by them out into the whole world. But of course, that won’t really be the *end* of our pilgrimage. As we are beginning again now, so we will begin again next year, and the year after that, and the year after that, always until the end of time.

For that is where our pilgrimage is ultimately going, and it is the focus of our readings today: the end of time. When Christ will come again. When all the nations will come to the LORD’s mountain to learn of his ways. Today’s readings

are a signpost, a reminder of where we are going. Through them the Church draws our attention to the now and always, the already and not yet of salvation. Christ has already come, but he has not yet come in glory. We are to throw off the darkness and put on light now, so that we shall always be ready for the coming of the Son of Man. For while we are creatures of this world, constrained by our current experience of time, we are destined for eternity, granted a share in eternal life by Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection. Today we renew our pilgrimage to that destiny.

And it is a renewal, not a repetition. As we begin again, we are not in the same place where we were last year. The clearest sign of this is that some who were on the journey with us have now gone on before us: Abbot Aidan, Herb Brooks, Milo Coerper. These are just a few of the names of people who no longer walk this pilgrimage with us. Or at least, not in the same way. This past month of November, we've been remembering them, and all who have died; praying for them as they continue the pilgrimage in a different way. Likewise, we believe they pray for us, that we may remain faithful to the pilgrimage in this life and join them on the pilgrimage in the next. Death has not broken our bonds with them. Christ's Resurrection has shown us that death is not the end, but only temporary; we will all be reunited in heaven when Christ comes in glory. They may no longer be on this earthly pilgrimage, but they still are pilgrims on the journey to Christ's coming in glory. It is fitting, therefore, that we renew our commitment to this pilgrimage by remembering them in a special way: helping them on their way and asking for their continued help on ours.

We begin again, with the help of each other, with the help of those who have gone before us, with the help of God; we begin again. We climb the LORD's mountain, we walk in his paths. Should we trip and fall, we must follow the advice of Abba Siseos, one of the desert fathers, and get up. If we fall again, we get up again. To this I add, if our neighbor falls, we must extend a hand to help them up. If they fall again, we must extend that helping hand again. We are in this together, responsible for each other.

We begin again, now and always, *we begin again*.