

8. December 2024

## Advent in apocalyptic times Part I: The two meanings of Advent

NOTE: Over the next few days we will be doing a series of meditations on the theme 'Advent in Apocalyptic Times'. If anyone would like to listen to a meditation on the readings for the second Sunday of Advent, you can find it at the following link: <https://en.elijamission.net/2021/12/05/>

*"Behold: though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples, on you the Lord is rising and over you his glory can be seen" (Is 60:2).*

These words of the Prophet Isaiah are as relevant today as they were when he spoke them. Nevertheless, the radiant light which "enlightens every man" (Jn 1:9) has dawned upon the world in the coming of the Son of God, and it remains among us. When people accept His light, the darkness recedes. Also in this year, Advent communicates to us the Good News that the radiant light has dawned upon humanity. Our Heavenly Father has sent His Son into this dark world to redeem mankind. Therefore, the approaching Feast of the Birth of Christ is a cause for great joy, even if heavy shadows loom over this world.

Those who have had the grace to know Jesus and follow Him are called to celebrate Advent and Christmas with all love and joy, without being overwhelmed by how much the world has turned away from God. With the psalmist we exclaim: *"Though an army pitch camp against me, my heart will not fear, though war break out against me, my trust will never be shaken" (Ps 26:3).*

This tranquility comes from the certainty of faith that, in the end, God will guide all things according to His plan, even if the powers of darkness sow confusion among us. We are not simply exposed, at the mercy of darkness and forces hostile to God, however powerful these may prove to be; but the Lord defeated them on the Cross. *"The Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil" (1Jn 3:8)* and to free men from the slavery of sin.

All this we keep in mind as we prepare for the Feast of Christmas in the Season of Advent. Our Heavenly Father entrusted the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph with His only begotten Son; the One Who took on our human nature to lead us to heavenly glory.

No matter how dark the times may be, our songs praising the Child of Bethlehem and inviting us to give our hearts entirely to Him must never be muted.

Advent, however, is not only the preparation for the tender Feast of the Birth of the Son of God; it also reminds us that this Jesus, born in Bethlehem and crucified and resurrected in Jerusalem, will return at the End of Time to judge the living and the dead. This is attested to in the Scriptures and in the Creed of our Church.

This awareness is extremely important. In countless Gospel passages, Jesus Himself insists that we must be vigilant and await His Return. In the time leading up to His Parousia, God has entrusted us with a great mission: the Lord's victory on the Cross is to be realized throughout the whole world. The faithful are called to carry the saving message of the Gospel to the whole world. Everyone must learn that Jesus Christ, the Savior, is here! The Son of God brings salvation to all people. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through Him (Jn 14:6).

The day and hour of Jesus' Second Coming are known only to the Father in heaven (Mt 24:36). But we human beings are called to live every moment as if He would return at that very hour. May the Lord, when He returns, find us awake!

Thus, the two aforementioned dimensions of Advent help us to lead our lives focused on God and to fulfill the task entrusted to us as laborers in His vineyard. With our eyes fixed on the Birth of Jesus and His Second Coming, we draw from God the strength we need to remain steadfast in faith, without faltering, in these apocalyptic times. The growing darkness should even become a challenge to us to cling even more to the Lord and to enlist in the army of the Lamb, the One Who "*went forth victorious, that he might conquer again*" (Rev. 6:2).