

Homily - Lk. 21: 25-28, 34-36
First Sunday of Advent, Year C
Riverstown, 27th November, 2021

Today we begin the season of advent. And as we know, Advent is a time of waiting for Christ, allowing Jesus to be reborn in our lives. It is also a time for purifying our hearts by repentance and for renewing our lives by reflecting on and experiencing the several comings of Christ into our lives. Besides His first coming at His birth, Jesus comes to our lives through the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, through the Word of God, through the worshipping community, at the moment of our death and, finally, in His Second Coming to judge the world.

Msgr. Arthur J. Tonne, a Franciscan priest from Michigan who died at the age of 98 in 2003 used to narrate a beautiful anecdote clarifying the message of today's Gospel.

Well! Several years ago a bus driver in Oklahoma reached an unusual record. In 23 years he had driven a bus over 900,000 miles without a single accident. And, when asked how he had done it, he gave this simple answer: "Watch the road."

Yes! In today's Gospel, Jesus gives us the same message in several ways: "Be vigilant at all times,"

“Stand erect,” “Raise your heads,” “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy.” In other words, I think, the summary of today’s Gospel Reading and the summary of this Advent Season is this: “Don’t wait until it is too late. Change your life and change it today”.

There is an old Hasidic tale about Rabbi Naftali. It was the custom of the rich men of his city, whose homes were on the outskirts and a sort of isolated, to hire men to watch over their property at night. Late one evening, as was his custom, Rabbi Naftali went out for a walk and met one such watchman walking back and forth. The Rabbi asked, “For whom do you work?” And the guard told the Rabbi the details of the person who had hired him, and then he inquired, “And for whom do you work Rabbi?” The Rabbi was not expecting this question in return, and he was indeed moved by what he asked. The Rabbi paused for a moment and then he said: “I am not sure whether I work for anyone or not.” And he walked along with the watchman for some time in silence. Then he looked at the watchman and told him: “Now, will you come and work for me?” “Oh Rabbi, I should be honoured to be your servant,” said the watchman, “but, what would be my duties?” And there came the reply: “Just to keep reminding me of that question: “For whom do you work?”

Well! When Jesus invites us to be prepared for the end times, I believe, He is talking about conversion. He is telling us that all that we have here is just temporary, it is transitory and that we need to become aware of the fact that God is in charge of our lives. And He reminds us that we need to change the way we live in the present. When the Church gives us this Reading on the First Sunday of Advent, the Lord is saying to us: “Don’t wait until it is too late. Change your life and change it today. No matter what has happened to you in the last few months, the season of Advent is a chance for you to make a new beginning in your life with Christ’s help. So, do it. Change your life and change it today.

If you haven’t given much time to prayer recently, then make a commitment to spend a few minutes in prayer each day this Advent Season. If other things have got in the way of your relationship with Christ, then make a decision today, to put Christ back at the centre of your lives. If you feel the Spirit is calling you to be more compassionate, more forgiving, nicer to your family or friends, more attentive to the needs of the poor, then do it today. If God has been inviting you to be more serious about helping others, then don’t wait. Do it this Advent Day. And if Christ has been whispering to your heart, asking you to get serious about discerning your

vocation, then do it. Be open. Pray today that God will show you His plan for life.

Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, an American minister and author known for his work in popularizing the concept of positive thinking, especially through his best-selling book *The Power of Positive Thinking* once told of encountering a hurricane while on a cruise in the Atlantic. After the captain managed to sail around the danger, he and Dr. Peale were having a personal chat. The captain said he had always lived by a simple philosophy namely that if the sea is smooth, it will get rough; and if it is rough, it will get smooth. He added then something worth remembering: “But with a good ship,” the Captain said, “you can always ride it out.”

Well dear brothers and sisters, our ship is our Faith in Christ. With a good ship, with deep faith in Christ, you can always ride it out. Life is unpredictable. But God is always with us. So, we don't have to know when the end of the world will happen, but we need to pay heed to His invitation: “Don't wait until it is too late. Change your life and change it today. And Jesus says: “with my life, you can change your life and you can make a difference in the world”. God bless you all, **Amen.**

