

**Homily by**  
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**First Sunday of Advent**  
**November 28, 2021**

Happy New Year; Happy New LITURGICAL Year! Today we celebrate the first day of the liturgical year, the first Sunday of Advent, a season of hope; hope in the coming of Jesus. During Advent, you may have noticed that we, at the Cathedral, pray a different form of the penitential act at the beginning of Mass. The words of prayer in this penitential act, when we invoke, when we ask for, Jesus Christ's mercy, correspond to the three comings of Jesus that are also the focus in today's readings:

- "Lord Jesus, you **came** to gather the nations into the peace of God's kingdom: Lord, have mercy."
- "Lord Jesus, you **come** in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness: Christ, have mercy."
- "Lord Jesus, you **will come** in glory with salvation for your people: Lord, have mercy."

The first invocation, "Lord Jesus, you **came** to gather the nations into the peace of God's kingdom," refers to Jesus' **first coming** as a child, at Christmas, which God promised to the Jewish people in today's first reading from the prophet Jeremiah. God assured the house of Israel and Judah that "the days are coming when" he "will raise up... a just shoot." That promise gave **hope** for all who were awaiting the coming reign of God.

The third invocation, "Lord Jesus, you **will come** in glory with salvation for your people," makes reference to Jesus' second coming, of which we heard Jesus speak in today's Gospel when he told his disciples that "There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay." Jesus declares that the world as we know it will come to an end. Although some "people will die of fright," Jesus urges his followers to "stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand."

That leaves us with the second invocation, "Lord Jesus, you **come** in word and sacrament to strengthen us in holiness." In this prayer, we ask for Jesus' mercy to give us strength through the "word and sacrament" of His church. This "in-between" time, between Jesus' first coming as a child in Bethlehem and his second coming in glory at the end of the world, is exactly where we are right now. In his letter to the Thessalonians, St. Paul urges the Thessalonians, and us, to NOT lose hope, during this "in-between" time, over a delay of the return of Christ. Rather, Paul urges us to increase our love for one another so as to strengthen the church, the body of Christ. He calls us to follow the instructions that Jesus gave us: To "love one another, as I love you." (Jn 15:12)

To aid us in answering Jesus' commandment and to "strengthen us in holiness," during this Year C of the three-year cycle of Sunday readings, the church features readings from the Gospel of St. Luke, who is the namesake of the parish in which I was raised and who happens to be my personal favorite evangelist. Luke, who was the only Gentile among the four evangelists, is believed to have been a well-educated physician and wrote his gospel to Greek-speaking, non-Jewish converts. I enjoy Luke's gospel (and his second volume "Acts of the Apostles") because he wrote, in an "orderly sequence," an account of the life and teachings of Jesus for the universal mission to be Jesus' "witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) The Gospel of Luke stresses Christian prayer and also shows a special interest in sinners, women and family. Luke's Gospel includes a number of parables, which are found ONLY in Luke, and are among my favorites:

- The Good Samaritan
- The Lost Coin, and
- The Rich Man and Lazarus, to name just a few.

In this "in-between" time, during this Advent season and throughout the upcoming liturgical year, may we all hear Jesus' word in the Gospel according to Luke and actively participate in word and sacrament so as to not lose hope and be strengthened in holiness.