

ADVENT 2021

*Hear the herald voice resounding:
"Christ is near", it seems to say.
"Cast away the dreams of darkness,
Welcome Christ, the light of day.*

We are into a new liturgical year. During the last few weeks of the last liturgical year, the daily readings were long and dour. In the Book of Wisdom, we were told "how naturally stupid men are who have not known God and from the good things that are seen have not been able to discover Him-who-is." In the book of Maccabees, various kings tried to force God's chosen people to abandon Him and worship the gods of the pagans. In the Book of Danial, the king ordered Danial from whom he had previously received wise counselling to be thrown to the lions, however, God sent an angel to protect Danial who remained safe. In the gospel readings, Jesu told us to stay awake, be ready for terrible things will happen but he also tells us not to be afraid and to pray constantly. He reassures us that if we remain faithful to him, we will be protected.

When we look at what is happening in our world today, is it any wonder that we are tempted to think that we are in the end times. Global warming is threatening to ruin our planet; we are still struggling against a vicious virus; wars are still waging; people around the world, even in developed countries, are suffering and dying from disease, famine, drought and homelessness. At the same time are leaders are acting like spoiled and spiteful children while migrants are dying trying to cross the channel to safety. We are indeed living in a difficult age but that is not unique, in every age throughout history there have been terrible things happening. Jesus' promise is still with us. Stay awake, be ready and do not be afraid. If we are faithful, he will be with us always. If the world ends tomorrow or next year or in a thousand years, we know that God will not abandon us.

We are now into Advent and looking forward to celebrating Jesus' first coming when he humbled himself to take on our humanity so that we could share in his divinity. The readings tell us to rejoice, do not be afraid, be glad for God is with us. Whatever kind of Christmas is in store for us I think we should try to make it a very special one, not with tinsel, flashing lights and lots of presents for Jesus has given us the greatest gift, himself. May we always be aware of his presence in our lives and look forward with joy and confidence and without fear to his second coming.

*Wakened by this solemn warning,
Let the earth-bound soul arise:
Christ her sun, all sloth dispelling,
Shines upon the morning skies.*

*So, when next he comes with glory,
Shrouding all the earth in fear,
May he then as our defender
On the clouds of heaven appear.*

Jesus lived and died for us so that we might die and live with him forever.