

# 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent

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Today's Gospel passage exhorts that followers of Jesus should be well aware of the temporal nature, the finiteness, and limitations of the world. We should, rather, focus on the glorious coming of Christ. In this passage, Jesus concludes his teaching on His Second Coming with a call for continuous vigilance by his disciples. By being vigilant, disciples should be alert and awake, waiting for Christ by not indulging in material things that give false security in life that will one day fade to dust. For Disciples of Christ, it is a time for joy, knowing that the Lord is coming back; standing upright and erect, ready for the new life with Jesus. Knowing this, followers of Jesus should be filled with and be steady in hope.

To wait in hope for the Son of Man is to have an action-oriented life. What is important in actively waiting with this certainty of His return is to stand up, raise our head, to be on guard, and being alert and pray. Let us understand the biblical meaning of these actions:

To stand up: This reminds us to be faithful to the Lord, standing up against evil and to stand up for God in the world with the help of the Holy Spirit.

To raise our head: This demonstrates an attitude of unwavering trust that God will rescue us from every evil; that God is our protector and shield. It is to have a deep faith in God who provides salvation. We see this in the Psalm written by King David, who trusted God in his utter pain: "O Lord, You are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head." (Psalm 3:3)

To be on guard: This is to be vigilant within oneself, being on guard to protect oneself from the dangers of over-indulging in the worldly pleasures.

To be alert and pray: Being watchful with one's life and to pray always. Prayer is an important attitude to have as it keeps oneself constantly in contact with God.



As we know, for the first week of Advent, the Church celebrates the week of Hope. We are waiting for Immanuel: “God who dwells amongst us”. The word ‘Advent’ comes from the Latin word ‘adventus’ which means “coming” or “arrival.” Important traditions during Advent include lighting the Advent Candles and the Advent Wreath that inspire us to preserve and express the immense Joy and Hope in the coming of Christ at Christmas.

The circular wreath that has no beginning or end symbolizes the eternal nature of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life in Christ. The wreath itself, which is made up of various kinds of evergreen plants, signifies the continuous life in Christ. The four candles on the Advent Wreath represent the light of Christ entering the world. As we know, the four candles represent Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. The lighting of each candle invokes a time and attitude of prayer, penance, sacrifice, and spiritual reflection.

The first Advent Candle that we lit this weekend is also called the Prophecy Candle. This candle represents the hope and anticipation of Christ’s coming; recalling the prophecies about the Messiah and the hope that He brings to the world.

So, let us stand up, raise our heads, stay vigilant, pray, and wait joyfully in anticipation and hope to welcome Immanuel: God who lives and celebrates His Life with us.