

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson
27th November 2022 - 1st Sunday of Advent

Readings (Year A): 1st: Is. 2:1-5. Psalm: 121:1-2,4-5,6-9. 2nd: Romans 13:11-14. **Gospel:** Matt 24:37-44.

It may seem a little odd that the Church's year should start with a gospel reading about the end of time. But consider time, not as a long line from the day we were born to the day we shall die, but as a circle, for we have come from God our Creator and are living out a journey back to God, our soul's destiny. And the starting point of a circle is precisely the point of its completion.

The Advent wreath is a good expression of this circular journey of life, from God at the beginning to God at the end. As Advent follows November the month of the departed, the image of a circle of life is very appropriate. Life in all its passing moments is caught up in the unending circle of eternity. At death, we believe 'life is changed, not ended.'

Today's gospel brings three pictures of life before our minds:

The flood hurtling down the valley towards the unsuspecting town:

The unexpected disappearance of people from the company of their work mates and associates: the stealthy burglar picking his way through the security of the house.

Pictures to alarm us and fill the soul with terror?

Or is their mood not so much one of terror as a salutary tone to remind us that we must never settle down here as if we have made it here for eternity. Life is ever and always moving on.

We are very aware especially in today's media led world of unexpected catastrophe in earthquake or flood or violent storm, or famine or epidemic. Nearer home maybe someone plucked suddenly from our midst.

We are wise for a moment but quickly forget the circular shape of time. We continue to live as if on a straight line going away from our creator. That is to forget that the line of life is a circle which starts and ends with God. And nothing is ultimately of value unless it serves our journey back to God. On our way we have to let go of others in our partings, we must move on when all we have treasured is taken away, and keep going when the familiar ways are changed.

Whoever lacks the eye of faith sees only an ending and a farewell.

But whoever sees with the eye of God moves on into a new stage of the journey.

In the Advent wreath the evergreen foliage is a symbol of hope. In the prayer from CAFOD for this week it is of hope. Printed in the newsletter (and below) for you to use and pray. When all around seems to die and fade away, the green leaf of God's love stays with us. And the candles express the flicker of light: today of hope.

As this first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the Church's year we are given the thought that the end of the journey is precisely where life started: from and for God.

And it is a journey out of darkness towards increasing wisdom and light: the light of Christ: the Advent candles drawing us on to that greater light.

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A Prayer for the first week of Advent from CAFOD. Hope "Stay awake, praying at all times." Luke 21:36 We stay awake, watch and wait, for we do not know the hour or the day of your arrival. Come, Lord, bringer of hope. Create in us a desire for a world transformed to reflect your glory. Come, Lord, bringer of hope. Lead us in your ways, as together we make a change, to dispel the darkness of poverty. Come, Lord, bringer of hope.