

Second Sunday of Advent
December 10, 2017

Knowing Fear

It was during a January appointment in 2015 when the cardiologist informed my mom it would be a matter of months. This news was not a surprise; mom had been ill for some time. Yet knowing the end was imminent had a way of getting her attention. Despite her deep faith, there were times early on when I could sense her apprehension and anxiety – her fear. Who among us would not know fear in this circumstance? Mom spent her last years and especially her last months, getting ready to meet God.

“Getting ready” is what Advent is about. The scripture readings throughout Advent are all about preparation for our coming Messiah. (The word “advent” comes from the Latin word *adventum*, or “coming.”) We anticipate Jesus’ coming, both in our celebration of Christmas and his Second Coming. This is the season of preparation for His arrival. We joyfully anticipate the homecoming of family at Christmas and we also spend some time to prepare our home for the visit. So too, during Advent we are joyous in anticipation of the arrival of Jesus, but also want to prepare for it. Advent is the early Christmas gift – a gift of time to get our “spiritual house in order.”

Today’s scripture readings provide a caution and even a frightening image: “*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire and the earth and everything done on it will be found out.*” Yet scripture doesn’t stop there. We also hear, “*Fear not...*” and, “*Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs...*” and even, “*The Lord... is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*” It is a loving, nurturing God who waits patiently for us. The apprehension or fear of “everything being found out” is transformed into awe, reverence, and “fear of the Lord.” Our God is both infinitely-powerful *and* infinitely-forgiving – truly **awesome**.

Those few months before my mom died were her most **awesome** Advent experience. She got ready. She remained close to word and sacrament. I watched grace remove one kind of fear and replace it with another – apprehension was transformed into awe, both for her and for me. Mom died peacefully a few months later. And my Advents have never been the same.

“Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him...”

Wishing you an **awesome** Advent,

Rob Sgambelluri

Second Sunday of Advent
Lectionary: 5

Reading 1 [Is 40:1-5, 9-11](#)

Comfort, give comfort to my people,
says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her
that her service is at an end,
her guilt is expiated;
indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD
double for all her sins.

A voice cries out:
In the desert prepare the way of the LORD!
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!
Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill shall be made low;
the rugged land shall be made a plain,
the rough country, a broad valley.
Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together;
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Go up on to a high mountain,
Zion, herald of glad tidings;
cry out at the top of your voice,
Jerusalem, herald of good news!
Fear not to cry out
and say to the cities of Judah:
Here is your God!
Here comes with power
the Lord GOD,
who rules by his strong arm;
here is his reward with him,
his recompense before him.
Like a shepherd he feeds his flock;
in his arms he gathers the lambs,
carrying them in his bosom,
and leading the ewes with care.

Responsorial Psalm [Ps 85:9-10-11-12, 13-14](#)

R. (8) Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

I will hear what God proclaims;
the LORD—for he proclaims peace to his people.
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,
glory dwelling in our land.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Kindness and truth shall meet;
justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth,
and justice shall look down from heaven.

R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

The LORD himself will give his benefits;

our land shall yield its increase.
Justice shall walk before him,
and prepare the way of his steps.
R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.

Reading 2 [2 Pt 3:8-14](#)

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved,
that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years
and a thousand years like one day.
The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard "delay,"
but he is patient with you,
not wishing that any should perish
but that all should come to repentance.
But the day of the Lord will come like a thief,
and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar
and the elements will be dissolved by fire,
and the earth and everything done on it will be found out.

Since everything is to be dissolved in this way,
what sort of persons ought you to be,
conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion,
waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God,
because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames
and the elements melted by fire.
But according to his promise
we await new heavens and a new earth
in which righteousness dwells.
Therefore, beloved, since you await these things,
be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

Alleluia [Lk 3:4, 6](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:
All flesh shall see the salvation of God.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel [Mk 1:1-8](#)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:
*Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;
he will prepare your way.*
*A voice of one crying out in the desert:
"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths."*
John the Baptist appeared in the desert
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.
People of the whole Judean countryside
and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem
were going out to him
and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River
as they acknowledged their sins.

John was clothed in camel's hair,
with a leather belt around his waist.
He fed on locusts and wild honey.
And this is what he proclaimed:
"One mightier than I is coming after me.
I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals.
I have baptized you with water;
he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."
