

HOMILY ADVENT SUNDAY ONE – C (Homily 02)

“Celebrate a Triple-Header”

(Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36)

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The season of Advent begins roughly a few weeks after the World Series of baseball finishes. What is unique, more exciting and especially more important than winning the World Series, is the triple-header that is involved in the season of Advent and Christmas.

John McLaughlin of Toronto captures it well in his comment in the *Living With Christ* booklet for this Sunday. There are three aspects to Jesus’ coming in the Advent Season, he tells us. One looks to the past as we anticipate the celebration of his birth among us 2,000 years ago. The second looks to the present, as we prepare ourselves to receive him anew in our lives today. The third looks to the future, for his coming again.

So as we begin the Advent season, let us prepare our hearts not just to celebrate Christmas, but also to live in Christ today and to be ready to welcome him when he comes again in glory.

The readings spell out this triple-header quite clearly. The prophet Jeremiah in the first reading speaks of a righteous Branch from the House of David that will bring justice and righteousness. He adds that Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will be safe. The coming of Jesus as a little child in humility and powerlessness was a partial fulfillment of that prophecy.

In the gospel, however, Jesus, the one who came in humility as a child at the Incarnation, now speaks of a day when he will come in glory and power. The nations will be confused and people will faint in fear. Those who believe in him and are faithful to him will be able to stand tall with heads held high in confidence and serenity, for their redemption is drawing near. This is a very interesting comment, implying that the birth of Jesus, his life, death and resurrection and the sending of his Spirit at Pentecost, was only a beginning of our redemption. That redemption will be complete only when he comes again in glory.

The key to this triple header, however, lies in the second reading from Thessalonians. There we are told that what is important in all of this, is love. The three comings of Christ into our world and into our lives is all about the abounding, extravagant, generous love of God poured out for us, on us and over us. We are to respond to that amazing love of God for us made present in Jesus Christ by loving one another just as Jesus has loved us, and just as St. Paul loved the Thessalonians in his day.

We are to be blameless, with holy hearts, and growing daily in doing God’s will rather than our own, and living in a way that pleases God. Then we can be assured that we will be able to stand erect with heads held high in confident joyful celebration, when Jesus comes again in glory.

Joe Mehan was an example of someone who lived his life fully as a triple header. A family man and dedicated teacher, he devoted himself to serving his community in a variety of ways. When he came down with Lou Gehrig's disease, his faith kicked in and helped him and his wife Rena to journey through that time of suffering in an admirable manner. Instead of complaining, he trusted the Lord and resolved to live every day he had left to the full. When I visited him months before he died, he shocked me by asking me to preside at his funeral and assured me that everything was prepared and ready. Rena shared at his wake that as he lay dying, he would murmur, "God is good, God is good." Joe is someone who celebrated the birth of Jesus throughout his life, looked forward with confidence to meeting Jesus after his death, and above all was open to the Spirit of Jesus coming to him each day of his life. He serves as an inspiring example for us.

The Eucharist that we celebrate together now flows out of the death of Jesus among us 2,000 years ago. It is also an intense encounter with the Risen Lord right here and now through Word and Sacrament. Finally, it is a foretaste of that eternal banquet that we are confident we will share in when Jesus comes again in glory and power.

So as we begin this Advent season, let us prepare our hearts not just to celebrate Christmas, but also to live in Christ today and to be ready to welcome him when he comes again in glory.