

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT – November 29

Jer 33:14-16; Ps 25; 1 Thess 3:12-4:2; Lk 21:25-28, 34-36

Sister Mary Paul Mehegan, O.P.

Today we begin a new year in the Church and look to the liturgy for Christ's message for us. And what do we hear but that we must live in hope as we prepare ourselves and our community for the Savior's coming into our hearts this Christmas. St. Luke's gospel message speaks of the "end time" but in more comforting words than are used by the other evangelists, using the title "Son of Man" to remind us that Jesus will bring us peace as our Brother if we increase our efforts toward integrity and justice.

Advent is a season where Christians give special attention to the coming of Christ as Prince of Peace. The world today is hardly a world of peace, so what can we do? In 1970 Pope Paul VI made a moving plea in his encyclical *Progressio Populorum*: "If you want peace, work for justice." That message bears repetition today so many years later. Not only does it apply to our Advent season but it is relevant to our lives in the future months and years.

Today the prophet Jeremiah's message focuses on God's concern for a just ruler, one who will practice honesty and integrity. Today as we become aware on all sides of injustices suffered by ourselves, our neighbors, our countrymen and women and millions of people in every corner of the earth, we can increase our efforts to contribute to any projects that will help alleviate any of these injustices. We can write our Congressmen and women, we can donate to any number of causes according to our means. Ever so little as our efforts might seem to be, we must try to do our part for justice and for peace.

Saint Paul assures us through his letter to the Thessalonians of his day—the "saints" he loved—that any efforts they make to grow in love for one another will be rewarded with joy. And the psalmist follows Paul's promise by expressing great trust in the Lord and confidence that God will be present to relieve whatever misfortunes may await us. It isn't always easy to love one another.

Like the early Church to whom St. Luke addressed himself in the Gospel, we are living today in a tension between our trust in Jesus, the Son of God, and our need for courage to face whatever trials may still be in store for us—an uncomfortable time for many. The four weeks of Advent, if we use them well to reflect on God's goodness to us in the past, can be a precious gift. Jesus uses the title "Son of Man" to bond with us through his incarnation. May the weeks ahead show us ways to prepare our hearts for Christ's coming. We can choose to spend some extra time in prayer, conscious acts of kindness, generosity and peace-making. We might also choose to participate in the liturgy as often as we find possible.

With the early Christians and with all our brothers and sisters today let us say: “Come, Lord Jesus!”