**1st Sunday of Advent**

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 There are four stages of life: The first stage, you believe in Santa Claus. The second stage, you don’t believe in Santa Claus. The third, you dress up as Santa Claus. And, the fourth, you look like Santa Claus.

 It’s Advent: a quiet prelude before the brightness of Christmas. Today’s celebration of the First Sunday of Advent is a reminder that there are only few weeks before Christmas.

 Too often, our first response might be to make a list of what needs to be done for Christmas. To put twinkling lights and decorations around the house, to buy what is needed for the Christmas cooking, to shop for presents. It is easy to feel anxiety about “getting it all done.”  But, first of all, we need to pause and reflect on entering into Advent as a season with true meaning. The word ‘Advent,’ of course, means ‘coming.’

 In this season of Advent, we commemorate Jesus’ coming at Bethlehem two thousand years ago, and His Second Coming at the end of the world, and also His coming to our hearts and our lives.

 In this season, the Church urges us to open our hearts to believe and receive Him with faith, hope, and love. So, the readings today tells us to ‘stay awake,’ to ‘be prepared.’ Each of our readings today describes dark days: dark times for the Hebrew people and dark days for Christians.

 In the first reading, we read the ancient readings from old Israel that speak of its longing for God’s coming. Here, the prophet Isaiah cries out on behalf of people who live in the darkness. People were waiting for Messiah for a long time. God had not forgotten His people. He promises that He is always faithful. Better days are ahead. So, stay on course, keep the faith!

 The great promises and plans of God are just for us, but we can be asleep or blind to what God is ready to do in our life. So, Jesus says in the Gospel today to “wake up and be on the watch” because we do not know the day or hour the Lord is coming to us. So, Advent is a time to wake up our spirits so that we can be aware of God’s presence in our lives.

 Advent is not a time to just wait for Christmas to happen, but a time to prepare for Christmas and the coming of Christ into our life. It is not a time simply to imitate how our parents celebrated Christmas, but to decide how we will celebrate Christmas this year in a special way.

 But, actually, we are too busy and our minds are so occupied without even noticing we push away Jesus. Our minds are full, our calendars are packed, our expectations are low, so we are not actively looking and seeking for the coming of Christ. We may say to Jesus who wants to enter our minds, “Sorry, there is no room for you.”

 The good news of Advent is that God chose to be with us. God entered into our world and into our lives. But, the bad news is that we are often unaware of this miracle. This first Sunday of Advent is the beginning of the new Church year. Maybe it is a good time to make some spiritual resolution as we prepare for Christmas.

 As we light the candles of this Advent wreath each week, and as their light becomes brighter each week of Advent, the light of Christ will become stronger in our life because Advent is not about the rebirth of Christ. Jesus was born once and for all in Bethlehem 2000 years ago and will not be born there again.

 Advent is about the rebirth of our faith, the rebirth of our commitment to Christ. Do not let Him approach your life and catch you asleep. During the coming week, let us embrace a spiritual attitude, so the Season of Advent may become something special for us.

 May Advent be a true moment of preparation for each and everyone of us in the expectation of the coming of Jesus Christ.

 Wake up! God is all around us. Wake up! We are not alone. Wake up! Don’t miss the blessings that are right here. Wake up! God is Emmanuel. He is always with us. Watch! The Savior has come, He is coming, and He will always come to us!