

Theme of the Week - Hope

This First Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the Church's Year, and is characterised by the theme of hopeful expectation. The words of Jesus in the Gospel are indeed about hope, but may sound enigmatic to a modern reader, so must be put into context.

Jesus speaks of himself as the **Son of Man**. To understand this title we have to go back to the Book of Daniel (6th/5th century BC), chapter 7, where the prophet has a vision of four terrifying beasts coming out of the sea. The sea in the Bible is always a symbol of chaos, darkness and evil. The four beasts are respectively the Lion (Babylonians), the Bear (Medes), Leopard (Persians), and a monstrous beast with iron teeth (Alexander the Great). The beasts symbolize the empires of this world which build up their success through oppression, war and bloodshed, and destroy one another.

What are the beasts of our modern world? Are there structures of injustice and oppression that eat people's lives as if they were worth nothing?

Then Daniel continues: *In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man...He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.* Jesus presents himself as the one to whom God has entrusted the bringing about of the NEW WORLD, a world where violence and oppression will be no more, and where authentic humanity will flourish. This plan of God is confirmed in the Apocalypse at chapter 21, where John writes: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea (i.e. evil) was no more.*

How should we prepare ourselves for the coming of the Son of Man? Jesus tells us by referring to the Flood. People in those days were eating, drinking and marrying and there's nothing wrong with that, but in Genesis 6:11 we read that *the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence.* Eating, drinking and relationships are all good things, but there are two ways of satisfying our basic needs: a selfish one, and one that is aware of others. We can satisfy our hunger by making an idol of food, or we can be grateful for our daily bread and break it with those around us. Equally we can seek relationships for what we gain from them (pleasure, interest, reputation), or for the joy of sharing, helping and having a chance to be there for our neighbours.

This also applies to our **daily work**. We can come to school every day mumbling and complaining about things, or we can live like people of the NEW WORLD, bring joy into everything we do and share a smile with all the people we encounter. This is the meaning of the words "one will be take, one left", one will be made part of the new world of the Son of Man, the other left into the old world of selfishness and egotism. **Which one of the two worlds do you wish to be a part of?**

Advent is a time of preparation for the birth of Christ, but we are not meant to live it as a childish tradition and pretend that the Christmas story repeats itself. Christ has already physically come 'in history' 2000 years ago, and will come again 'in glory' at the end of time, but between these two comings, year after year, **he asks to be born in our hearts.** Every Christmas day, Jesus asks us "Will you give me your human nature so that through you I may bring hope to a troubled world?"

Advent is our preparation to answering this question, and hopefully the answer will be the same as Our blessed Mother Mary's: YES LORD, I am yours, use me!

HOPE

Weekly Reflections

27th November 2022



A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew (Mt 24:37-44)

Jesus said: For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Prayer for the Week

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility; that on the last day we may rise to the life immortal; through Christ our Lord. Amen

Day 1

When Jesus calls himself the **Son of Man**, he is referring to a vision of the prophet Daniel. In this vision Daniel saw four terrible beasts coming out of the sea and devouring everything and each other. They are the symbol of the powers of the world who prosper because of violence, oppression and injustice.

- Can you name a few of the 'beasts' of our contemporary society?

Day 2

The vision of Daniel continues with the appearance of a **Son of Man** who brings the reign of terror of the beasts to an end and establishes a kingdom of true and authentic humanity.

- What do you think it is that makes us human?
- What is true humanity?

Day 4

In the Gospel Jesus mentions the people of the time of Noah, who ate and drank and got married, but were full of violence. All the things above (food, drink, and relationships) are good, but they can be lived in two ways: a selfish way, or a generous way.

- How? Can you come up with some examples?

Day 5

In the Gospel Jesus uses a language that may sound harsh to us: Flood swiping, people being taken and left, and thieves breaking into a house. Nevertheless, was just using the well-known genre of apocalyptic imagery. His basic message is: be attentive and prepared, because things will change and I will bring about the new world of justice, peace and joy. **DO YOU WANT TO BE PART OF THIS CHANGE** or would you want to be left behind?

Day 3 St Andrew, the Apostle



We humbly implore you, O Lord, that, just as the blessed Apostle Andrew was for your Church a preacher and pastor, so he may be for us a constant intercessor before you. Amen