

# Homily for Monday of the 34<sup>th</sup> Week

November 26, 2018

I am regularly taken aback when I come to the words in the *Deliver Us* prayer of the canon, "...as we await in joyful hope the blessed coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." I ask myself, "Am I really waiting with joyful hope for that second coming?" As I look out at you, I have the same question for you.

The earliest Christians expected the second coming in their lifetime, but fifty years later Luke constructed his eschatology to make the second coming appear at an indefinite distance in history. Now we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century rather resemble Aristotle's view that the cosmos is eternal; we have no expectations of any end.

And so it seems as if Wordsworth had it right:

*The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.  
---We are living for the kingdom of this earth.*

Not many of us are interested in getting and spending, although it is always a temptation in a consumerist world. But it is good for us to ask often, "What am I aiming for? What do I hope for?"

I hope that my work will be fruitful, but do I measure its fruitfulness by my scores from the students, my publications in refereed journals, my advancement to full professor?

I hope that our capital campaign will reach its goal so that we have the needed facilities for the quality education we promise. But we struggle to enlist others in our hope.

I hope that our president and our country will come to its senses about our constitution, and about the plight of others beyond our "American First" attitude.

Better: I hope that my faith will be somehow visible, and fruitful, but I can count on my fingers the number of students who have told me that their faith lives have been enriched by my teaching or my other acts of service on campus.

Better still: I hope that our commitment to a faith that does justice may have some impact on the homeless in Seattle, the dislocation of indigenous peoples, the plight of refugees.

You may have higher hopes, but these too are probably short-term goals, rarely fulfilled, and so fueled by a pallid hope. What I am missing is the power to do all these things and more. I am missing the "awaiting in joyful hope for the blessed coming of our Savior Jesus Christ."

For it is hope in that second coming of Christ that makes real all our present hopes.

Made in the image of God, we have an inborn thirst for that perfect justice that leads to perfect peace. That thirst causes us to push for justice even when our attempts meet opposition or failure. We keep on trying because it is the divine thirst for justice that is in us.

**Now that thirst is not illusory:** it will come to perfection in the second coming of Jesus, when the world is brought to its completion in Christ.

And so there is a reciprocal relation between the second coming of Jesus and our attempts to get justice

in this world. Our thirst for justice impels us to keep on trying, and our trying is part of the work of Jesus' bringing justice to the earth now. But if our failures discourage us, if we give up working for justice now, then we will also give up on the hope for the perfect justice which only Jesus can give. Our thirst for perfect justice will wither and die. We will have no answer for those who in ask us, in the word of St. Peter "...for the reason for our hope."

The Church comes to help us in our weakness. Advent is the time when we long for the second coming of Christ and the perfect justice and peace which it entails. This Advent, I want to concentrate on the fact that the second coming of Christ makes real every desire in our world and makes many of those desires possible, probable, actual. Advent hope is the fuel for present accomplishment and the joy which is a harbinger of the perfect joy of the second coming.

That's why in each Mass we pray to "Await in joyful hope the blessed coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." It's the good news.