

**Rev. Fr. Leonard Goffine's  
The Church's Year**

**FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT**



The first Sunday in Advent is the first day of the Church Year, and the beginning of the holy season of Advent. The Church commences on this day to contemplate the coming of the Redeemer, and with the

prophets to long for Him; during the entire season of Advent she unites her prayers with their sighs, in order to awaken in her children also the desire for the grace of the Redeemer; above all to move them to true penance for their sins, because these are the greatest obstacles in the path of that gracious Advent; therefore she prays at the Introit of the day's Mass:

*INTROIT* To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul: in Thee, O my God, I put my trust; let me not be ashamed: neither let my enemies laugh at me: for none of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded. Show me, O Lord, Thy ways, and teach me Thy paths (Ps. 24). Glory be to the Father.

*COLLECT* Raise up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy power, and come; that by Thy protection we may deserve to be rescued from the threatening dangers of our sins, and to be saved by Thy deliverance. Through our Lord.

*EPISTLE* (Rom. 13:11-14). Brethren, knowing the time, that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep: for now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. The night is past, and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and strife; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

*What does St. Paul teach us in this epistle?*

After fully explaining the duties of a Christian life to the Romans who were converted mainly by St. Peter, he exhorts them to hesitate no longer to fulfil these duties, and he seeks to move their hearts by this time of grace, presented them by the Christian dispensation, and by the shortness of the time of grace.

*What is here meant by sleep?*

The stupidity and blindness of the soul that, forgetting her God, is sunk in a lukewarm, effeminate, slothful and lustful life, which, when it is gone, leaves nothing more than a dream.

*Why does St. Paul say, "salvation is nearer"?*

He wishes to impress upon the Romans that they now have far greater hope of salvation than when they first became Christians, and that they should secure it by a pious life, because death, and the moment on which depended their salvation, or eternal reward, was drawing near. "What is our life," says St. Chrysostom, "other than a course, a dangerous course to death, through death to immortality?"

*What is the signification of day and night?*

The night signifies the time before Christ, a night of darkness, of infidelity and of injustice; the day represents the present time, in which by the gospel Christ enlightens the whole world with the teachings of the true faith.

*What are "the works of darkness"?*

All sins, and especially those which are committed in the dark, to shun the eye of God and man.

*What is the "armor of light"?*

That faith, virtue and grace, the spiritual armor, with which we battle against our three enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in which armor we should walk honestly before all men. A Christian who in baptism has renounced the devil and all his pomps, must not live in vice, but must put on Christ Jesus, that is, must by the imitation of Christ's virtues adorn his soul, as it were, with a beautiful garment. This text (verse 13) moved St. Augustine to fly from all works of uncleanness in which he had been involved, and to lead a pure life which he had before thought difficult.

*ASPIRATION* Grant, O Lord, that we may rise by penance from the sleep of our sins, may

earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.

*Why does the Church cause the gospel of the Last Judgment to be read on this day?*

To move us to penance, and to induce us to prepare our souls for the coming of Christ, by placing the Last Judgment before our minds. Should not the thought of this terrible judgment, when all good and all evil will be revealed, and accordingly be rewarded or punished in the presence of the whole world-should not this thought strengthen us in virtue!

*What signs will precede the Last Judgment?*

The sun will be obscured, the stars will lose their light and disappear in the firmament (Is. 13:10), lightning and flames will surround the earth, and wither up every thing; the powers of heaven will be moved, the elements brought to confusion; the roaring of the sea with the howling of the winds and the beating of the storms will fill man with terror and dread. Such evil and distress will come upon the world, that man will wither away for fear, not knowing whither to turn. Then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, the holy cross, the terror of the sinners who have scorned it, the consolation of the just who have loved it (Mt. 24:30).

*Why will all this come to pass?*

Because as the people love the creatures of God so inordinately, more than the Creator, and use them only to His dishonor, He will destroy them in this terrible manner, arming all creatures for vengeance against His enemies (Wis. 5:8-24, and showing by the manner of their destruction the evils which will fall upon all sinners. The darkness of the sun will indicate the darkness of hell; the blood-red moon, the anger and wrath of God; the disappearance and falling of the stars, will represent the fall of sinners into the abyss of hell and their disappearance from earth; and the madness of the elements, will exhibit the rage of the beasts of hell. Sinners will then vainly, and too late, repent that they have attached their hearts to things which will end so horribly, and that only increase their torments.

*Why does Christ nevertheless command: "Lift up your heads, for your redemption is at hand"?*

These words are spoken to the just who as long as they live on earth are like prisoners and exiles, but who at the Last Judgment will be taken body and soul into their long desired fatherland, the kingdom of heaven: into the freedom of the children of God. These will have reason to raise their heads, now bowed in mourning, and to rejoice.

*How will the Last Judgment commence?*

By the command of God the angels will sound the trumpets, summoning all men from the four parts of the earth to come to judgment (I Thess. 4:15). Then the bodies of the dead will unite with their souls, and be brought to the valley of Josaphat, and there placed, the just on the right, the wicked on the left (Mt. 25:33). Then the devils as well as the angels will appear; Christ Himself will be seen coming in a cloud, in such power and majesty that the sinners will

be filled with terror. They will not dare to look at Him, and will cry to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them (Lk. 23:30).

*How will the judgment be held?*

The book of conscience, upon which all men are to be judged, and which closed with this life, will be opened. All good and evil thoughts, words, deeds and motives, even the most secret, known only to God, will then be as plainly revealed to the whole world as if they were written on each one's forehead; by these each one will be judged, and be eternally rewarded, or eternally punished.

O God! If we must then give an account of every idle word (Mt. 12:36), how can we stand in the face of so many sinful words and actions!

*Why will God hold a universal public Judgment?*

Although immediately after death, a special private judgment of each soul takes place, God has ordained a public and universal judgment for the following reasons: First, that it may be clearly shown to all how just has been His private judgment, and also that the body which has been the instrument of sin or of virtue may share in the soul's punishment or reward; secondly, that the justice which they could by no means obtain in this life, may be rendered before the whole world to the oppressed poor, and to persecuted innocence, and that the wicked who have abused the righteous, and yet have been considered honest and good, may be put to shame before all; thirdly, that the graces and means of salvation bestowed upon each, may be made known; fourthly, that the blessed providence of God which often permitted the righteous to suffer evil while the wicked prospered, may be vindicated, and it be shown on that day that His acts are acts of the greatest wisdom; fifthly, that the wicked may learn the goodness of God, not for their comfort or benefit, but for their greater sorrow, that they may see how He rewards even the slightest work performed for His love and honor; finally, that Christ may be exalted before the wicked on earth as before the good in heaven, and that the truth of His words may solemnly be made manifest.

*ASPIRATION* Just art Thou O God, and just are Thy judgments. Ah, penetrate my soul with holy fear of them, that I may be kept always in awe, and avoid sin. Would that I could say with the penitent St. Jerome: "*Whether I eat or drink, or whatever I do, I seem to hear the awful sound of the trumpet in my ears: 'Arise ye dead, and come to judgment.'*"