

NOVEMBER 30 FATHER ERNIE DE CICCIO

As we begin Advent, we always get this message about being ready, being prepared for the second coming of the Son of Man.

And people will say, “Wait a minute. I thought Advent was just a few days to get ready for the Christmas celebrations.” Well, are you ready for Christmas? And what does it mean to be “ready for Christmas?”

Have you decorated the tree? Have you bought all the presents? Have you got your list of foods for the big Christmas dinner? It's not just about that. It's about preparing our hearts, our souls, so that Christ will find a worthy dwelling place when He comes.

I may have said this story a million times before. I know I certainly have in my church. About this great commercial that was on years ago, and I can't even remember the company, but it was this lovely woman getting the house ready for Christmas. She had her Christmas sweater on with an apron over herself, and the table was set so perfectly. The lights were on the tree, all the decorations. And even though you're watching on TV, you could almost smell the wonderful food that she had prepared, and then she said, “All ready!”

And the camera goes behind her and you see that she had forgotten to put on her pants or her skirt. All you see was her underwear. Ah! Well, she wasn't ready, was she? The table might've been ready, the decorations, the food, but she had forgotten something very important, and we can't let that happen to us during Advent.

We're not just doing shopping, or sending cards, or decorating things, or cooking, or cleaning. We're preparing our hearts, and our minds, and our souls. So, how do we prepare? Well, just like the story that Jesus says: "If the owner of the house knew at what time the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into."

What are the preparations we've made in here for the coming of Christ in glory? And being prepared means that we're not just decorating the house, or cleaning things. We're cleaning in here, our hearts. Because, sometimes in our hearts, there's things that shouldn't be there. We hang on to rancor, and animosity, and vengeance, and hatred. All these negative emotions that separate us from our brothers and sisters, that separate us from God.

You gotta love this first reading that we had today. It's one of the Messianic signs of the prophet Isaiah, and we read from Isaiah quite a bit during Advent. That powerful, powerful sign when he says, "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruninghooks." Isaiah has this vision of a world where there'll be no more war, no more violence, or hatred, or division.

Do we have violent thoughts? Violent emotions? Violent words? There's so many different things that we carry inside of us that we can sweep away and make room for better stuff, like love, like mercy and compassion, like peace and justice. Isaiah talked about this before Christ was born, and Christ's birth is meant to initiate the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of God when we experience it in its fullness will be that kingdom of truth and right, of justice and peace, of love and mercy.

So, then, let's prepare by doing away with those things that have no room in our hearts, that have no room in God's family. Hopefully, Advent will be a time where we'll change a little bit, where we'll say, "Some of the stuff I've been doing or saying has really led me down the wrong path. I wanna be prepared for whenever Christ comes."

And He says it Himself. We do not know the day, nor the hour. It might happen in another 10,000 years. It might happen before the end of this Mass. Ah! Are we ready? We will be ready if we examine ourselves, if we adopt those values that come from above, and strive our best to live in a manner pleasing to the Lord Jesus so that when He does come, we can welcome Him with open arms.