



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



First Sunday of Advent, Cycle A

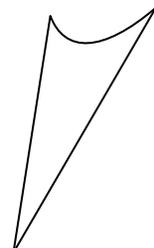
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On behalf of all of us at the Institute for Spiritual Direction, let me offer you a **“Happy New Year!”** For the Church, the First Sunday of Advent is the beginning of a new liturgical year. Our Eucharistic Liturgy is the public prayer of Church, the source, summit and fountain of our existence, and as such, this “New Year Day” is indeed a time for special celebrations.

Our Gospel today centers around Luke’s words of Jesus in chapter 21, *“...then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in a cloud’ with power and great glory.”* Scripture scholars agree that the Gospel of Luke was written later than St Paul’s letters. By that time it had become apparent that the second coming would not occur as soon as Paul and others had expected. Luke’s gospel assumes that the church will be around for a while. In an earlier verse, Luke made it clear that the cosmic signs will happen first, but the end of the world will not follow immediately.

These cosmic signs, therefore, may go on for a long time. The era of the church has seen many events that have led people to believe that the end of the world was at hand. Figuring out God’s schedule for the end of the world is not the purpose of these passages in today’s gospel. These are words designed to encourage and strengthen the church. The description of the cosmic signs is dramatic and frightening, yet Jesus insists that his followers should stand erect and raise their heads when they occur, confident of God’s redeeming power on their behalf.

As you ponder your reflection this week your challenge might be to communicate clearly the sense of hope and confidence contained in this passage to those to whom you minister. For Christians, every day should be lived as if it were our “last day.” Are we reconciled with our God, and are our hearts centered on the divine mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, where hope abides? As we begin our new year this Advent Season and focus on the Second Coming of the Lord, we are invited to trust in God’s protection through whatever disasters and trials we experience and to wait with confident hope for the coming of the Son of Man “with great power and glory.”



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Jesus spoke to his disciples about his return in glory.

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars
and on the earth distress among nations
confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

People will faint from fear and foreboding
of what is coming upon the world,
for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

"Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud'
with power and great glory.

Now when these things begin to take place,
stand up and raise your heads,
because your redemption is drawing near.

"Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down
with dissipation and drunkenness
and the worries of this life,
and that day catch you unexpectedly, like a trap.
For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth.
Be alert at all times,
praying that you may have the strength
to escape all these things that will take place,
and to stand before the Son of Man.