

1 Advent C

November 28, 2021

St. Patrick

8:30 and 5:15

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We begin this year with St. Luke's Gospel and these words of Jesus, speaking of himself: You will see **“the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory...Stand up and raise your heads because your redemption is drawing near.”**

Once a parishioner told me about a woman who was diagnosed with a terminal illness and was given three months to live. She asked her pastor to come to her home as she made her final plans. Together they arranged her funeral liturgy. When he was about to leave, the woman said with enthusiasm: “There's one more thing.”

“What's that?” her pastor inquired.

“This is very important,” the woman went on. “I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand.”

The pastor had that puzzled, lost look. And she explained:

“In all my years of wonderful dinners on special occasions, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would lean over and say, ‘Keep your fork.’ It was my favorite time of the dinner because I knew something better was coming, like velvety chocolate cake or a deep dish apple pie—something wonderful. So, I want people to see me in that casket with a fork in my hand and wonder, ‘What's with the fork?’ And you tell them, ‘Keep your fork because the best is yet to come.’” (1)

Advent. *“O Come, O Come Emmanuel”*—that is, God-with-us. Soon, at Christmas, we'll celebrate the main course, the coming of God's Son in the flesh, born of Mary. Sisters and brothers: In these four weeks of Advent, however, we'll also look ahead—at the dessert, the coming of Christ in glory. It is the best yet to come, when the Risen Christ returns at the end of time and fully destroys death, bringing about the **“new heavens and the new earth”** (2 Peter 3:13). And St. Luke's Gospel is clear. We're not to fear that day, cowering with dread. As Jesus

teaches us, we're to **“stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.”**

Just as the dirty dishes are cleared away at the end of the main course, in anticipation of the dessert...well, in these four weeks Jesus calls us to clear away anything which really distracts us from living with hope and joy. Jesus is blunt: **“Be on guard that your hearts are not weighed down with carousing and drunkenness and the worries of life.”** If Advent is worthwhile, what needs to be cleared away in our lives? Those **“worries of life”**...oh, they can bog me down—and you also?— and keep us from truly appreciating that the best is indeed yet to come.

St. Patrick: Let's clear away what keeps us from seeing, with hope, that the best is yet to come. We celebrate soon that first coming of Christ in Bethlehem. Let's not forget the sumptuous dessert. Let's keep the fork in our hand.

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(1) Story attributed to Roger William Thomas. See [www.inspire21.com/stories/faithstories/keepyourfork](http://www.inspire21.com/stories/faithstories/keepyourfork).

*General Intercessions*

*November 28, 2021*

*1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent*

*Deacon/Lector: Before reading the petitions, say--- “After each petition, please give this response, ‘Come, Lord Jesus!’ ”*

**Deepen with us, the church, your mercy and healing as you come this Advent; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Help us to stand in solidarity with those who suffer poverty, racism, or loss; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Empower those who fear death so that they may embrace life; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**With this Advent wreath, remind us to prepare for the coming of Christ in our lives; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**With this Advent wreath, allow the light of Christ to penetrate the darkness of sin in our lives and in our broken world; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**Encourage the Jewish people as they begin tonight their celebration of Hanukkah, that they remain faithful to the covenant made with them long ago; we pray to you, O Lord—**