



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

1st Sunday of Advent-Year C-December 2nd 2018

Padstow/Wadebridge

Readings: Jeremiah 33: 14-16, Psalm 24, 1 Paul 3: 12-4: 2,

Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36

Welcome to Advent, my favourite season of the Church's year.

Advent is always a time of tension – a time of what has been and what is to come – between history and the hereafter.

While all around us secularists and neighbours are switching on extravagant cascades of Christmas lights, we await the light of the world.

While Truro celebrated Santa and his reindeer last week, we celebrate the gift beyond price and await His second coming. While the world around us has largely forgotten Jesus, we are locked into the season of anticipation, waiting with the great saints and prophets of the Old Testament for the fulfilment that will take place at Bethlehem beneath a star jewelled sky and in the company of angels crying 'Glory'. Waiting to recapitulate in Scripture and in Song and in Celebration, the central moment of salvation history, the fulcrum of the Faith, the Incarnation of the Word, the arrival in obscurity of Immanuel, God with us, Jesus the Christ.

But we are also waiting, two millennia rolled by, for the Lord of the Second Advent, for the winding up of history, for the vindication of the

Saints, for the Final Judgement and the Assumption of the Universal Church.

Advent then is a time of return to our roots. To stand with Abram under the desert sky and hear the call to follow and become the People of God. To walk with Moses through the Passover, now become eternal in Christ, the Lamb of God, out of slavery and on the long journey to the land of the promise.

To hear the long cry of the prophets against complacency in the world, against the pagan default of the worship of matter in idolatrous materialism, against the abandonment of the God who made us in favour of false gods and goals, against the culture of sin and death. Until we have stood shoulder to shoulder with our forebears in the Faith, we cannot begin to know the longing of the heart that will lead us, star bound, to the advent in the stable of Bethlehem. For this is the season of longing, the season when the heart stretches out in hope and anticipation and excitement towards the supreme promise of God in the child of Mary, in the infant king. But we are not simple sentimentalists. This Advent has eternal implications. We also stand now some way down the road not only from Bethlehem but from Emmaus. We walk together in the light of history. We know there is to be another Advent when the Lord will come again. Jesus tells us about this in today's Gospel. The next time the Second Person of the Trinity comes to us it will not be in obscurity or at the constant threat of sinful Man. He will come again in glory and the signs accompanying the return of Our Lord will be utterly terrifying. The Lord of all worlds, conqueror of sin and death will arrive in the wake of cosmic and terrestrial distress and disorder of unparalleled magnitude. This time there will be no mistaking who He is and what His coming will mean. 'And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity

at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.'

So we prepare both for Christmas and for the Future, for the Incarnation and the Judgement. How do we prepare. Jesus tells us and Paul tells us.

Pray for strength for endurance.

That is critical. At the Judgement, as I so often have to remind people, the Lord will not ask you, 'Were you successful?' But He will ask you, 'Were you faithful?' That is the test and endurance, spiritual fortitude, is the key.

Pray regularly. That is what underpins all we do as Christ's disciples. If we are not in regular to constant touch with HQ we will not win the battle. Ask the Lord to increase your love for each other. In other words build up the Church. We are one body, one family, not random individuals. If we do not love one another and work together, we fail. And love the whole human race. Our little human love is utterly inadequate to this immense task. We have to introduce people to unfailing and infinite love of Jesus. That means evangelism. The Good News is not our private property.

If you want the best for the world then we have to share it.

Ask God to confirm, strengthen your hearts in holiness.

Then we may be confident at the end when Christ comes with His saints. Indeed He tells us that, while everyone else is fainting for terror, 'when these things begin to take place, you must look up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

Advent is the time of tension between the Child in the manger and the coming of the Lord of Glory. Those who have knelt in love before the

child in the arms of Mary and done His bidding need not fear the final revelation of the cosmic glory of the Second Advent. Those who love Jesus do not fear His coming

That remarkable relationship between the Transcendent and the Immanent is summed up very simply in the words of the old 1950s Frankie Lane song which I used to sing as a child: (You can hear it on the internet still)

My friend is the king of all kings and yet my friend walks beside me
My friend Rules the earth and the sky and yet my friend stops to guide me

My friend takes my hand just when all appears in vain and makes it plain
Through joy or pain He'll remain My friend

My friend tells me life is a road and though it ends at the bending
My friend tells then there's a road beyond this road that is unending
Some day when I walk up the happy road that lies around the bend
who will there be to welcome me ? ... My friend