

November 28, 2021

Father Ed's Sunday Reading

(continued)

But it is not the whole story. In fact, we can speak of three comings of the Lord and all are referred to in the Scripture readings today. Three 'comings' The First Reading from the prophet Jeremiah refers prophetically to the coming of Jesus, our King and Saviour: "I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David, who shall practise honesty and integrity in the land." That is the coming of the Child Jesus in Bethlehem, which we anticipate and prepare for in these four weeks. That is what we may call the First Coming. The Gospel speaks in ominous terms of the end of the world and what we refer to as the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of time. "And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." However, there is still a third coming which forms an important and indispensable link between the First and Second Comings. That is what is spoken about in the Second Reading. It is the welcoming of Jesus into our lives in the here and now. This is something which takes place every day. By it we both acknowledge the First Coming of Jesus in Bethlehem and prepare for the Second Coming at an unknown future date. *Why the end at the beginning?* It may seem strange to start the beginning of the Church year by speaking about the end of the world. Should we not rather be speaking about creation? Or at least about the beginnings of Christianity and the moment of Incarnation? Our life in this world is a kind of journey or pilgrimage. In the Scripture and in life generally the beginnings and the past in one sense are not so important. These are happenings which have already taken place and there is nothing we can do to change them now. However, they have an importance in that they deeply influence what we are now – in both good and less good ways. What is more important is that we should know where we are going and where our destination is. Why is that? Baseball immortal Yogi Berra put it rather well when he said: "You got to be very careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there." When we decide where we want to go, it will influence what we do and it will guide our choices. If I decide I want to be an engineer or an architect, then I have to take certain steps and make certain decisions. If, on the other hand, I decide to be a monk or a hermit, then I will have to make quite different decisions and choices. I will not be looking back at where I came from but forward to where I am going.

The readings of today's Mass urge us to face the realities of life. Many people want to enjoy their life but either of two things happens. Either they spend years of toil and energy trying to set up a situation where they can 'enjoy' but never actually reach their goal, or they 'enjoy' by actually escaping from the day to day realities through indulging in alcohol, gambling, drugs, sex, material indulgence or any combination of these. People, as the Gospel says, are coarsened "with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life". Many of these cares are, if they could only realise it, of their own making. What is our greatest enemy? Is it not having enough money? Is it people we see threatening our livelihood, rivals in work or business? Basically, our greatest enemies are fear and anxiety, especially about the future. Many of our choices and decisions are because of these fears and anxiety. Reading the Gospel one would think we have more than enough to worry and be anxious about. "On earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the power of heaven will be shaken." This is not just the future; these things are happening to people right now.

Yet, the Gospel says the reaction of the Christian disciple should not be one of fear. "When these things [the signs of the end times] begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation

is near at hand.” It all depends on one’s priorities and attachments. If I am principally concerned about the value of my house, my job, my investments... then I have good reason indeed to be anxious when “that Day” comes. A great deal of our fear stems from our wanting to manipulate the future and the world in which we live and realising that it is a very difficult thing to do. It is also a very unrealistic approach. It makes far more sense to come to terms with the realities which face us and find our happiness in those realities. There are some things, obviously, that we can change. If necessary, change them. There are many other things we cannot possibly change. The only choice is to accept them and live within the parameters they set for us. Wisdom, as they say, consists in knowing which is which. It is also a great source for peace of mind.

When we take a bus or train we know our destination and we know, more or less, how much time we need to get there. But on the bus of life we also need to know our real destination and not just one we dream about. Unlike riding on a bus or train, we do not know how much time we have for the journey. For some it may be very long (90 plus years). For others it may be much shorter (30, 20, 10 years or even only a few months or weeks). Actually, the length of the journey is not important although we worry about it a lot. What is important is what we do during the journey. On a bus or train, you have people who chat, some are studying the horse-racing or sports pages of the paper, others are apparently doing nothing or day dreaming. For many, the journey is only an unavoidable means to get to their destination and has no value in itself. Yet there are others who are fully aware of what is going as they ride. They are aware of their surroundings, of the people around them. They may admire the beauty of a morning sky or the loveliness of trees or buildings they pass on their way. The journey and the destination are part of one reality. The going is as important as the arriving and one contributes to the other.*

Awareness *in* the journey of life, today’s Mass suggests our approach should be similar. If we want to celebrate the First Coming of Jesus and prepare for his Second Coming, then the way to do it is to be aware of his coming into every moment of every day. The Scripture for today tells us that on the bus of life we should: a. Be ready to get off the bus at any point, that is, be ready to meet the Lord whenever he calls us to himself, whether that be in the very near future or many years away. The important thing is: Be prepared. b. Do not be afraid, do not worry. Fear, worry and anxiety do not solve any problems. Fear, worry and anxiety are about things which do not yet exist and most probably will never exist as we imagine them. As Fr Tony de Mello used to say: “Why worry? If you worry, you will die; if you don’t worry, you will die. So why worry?” c. Improve our relations with the people around us. A good life consists not so much in the kind of work we do or how “successful” we are but how we have related with other people – with family, other relatives, friends, colleagues and total strangers.

Good morning Jen,