

First Sunday of Advent (English and Latin Masses)
December 3, 2023
Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant

“Bestir, O Lord, Thy might, we pray Thee and come; that, defended by Thee, we may deserve rescue from approaching dangers brought on by our sins, and being set free by Thee, obtain our salvation.” (taken from the Latin Mass Collect for the First Sunday of Advent)

For as long as man has both drawn a breath and conceived a thought, we have proposed a litany of questions. In our quest for answers, one question has proven most difficult. That one question: “What is my destiny, my purpose?” From philosophers and kings, to religions and ideologies; all have sought to provide man with an answer, with The Answer. To play off Tolkien, the one answer to rule them all. I, in my turn, offer you an answer this morning to this question. My answer is neither original nor insightful for my answer is the Church’s answer. Our destiny, our purpose is found in a child who once slept in a manger. Mankind’s destiny is found answered in the person of the Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

As I type these words, I would be remiss if I did not address how the answer of Jesus Christ might appear to those who are currently living in a world which either mitigates or outright denies His Presence. Their rebuttal would take the form of stating that we are giving the “standard Christian answer.” They might go so far as to mock us asking if we could provide any other answer than the One, who is offered. Since Jesus lived and died so very long ago, others may even go so far as to say that we cannot prove the existence of our “invisible friend,” therefore, dismissing our answer as a childhood fantasy. And, honestly, can we fault them for their opinions?

If we were to take a tour of our world, through the eyes of video news, we might arrive at the same conclusion as others. Yet, do I need to judge the behavior of someone a thousand miles away when I could readily look at the behavior of Christians within my own local community? In many ways, as we have “grown up,” we have lost that which is most pure, most innocent and most beautiful which is found within. We have forgotten what it means to be a child. This is why I offer The Child as our answer, as mankind’s ultimate answer.

During the season of Advent, we are called to reflect upon the first coming of Christ as we await His second coming. It is this reflection of The Child which should call to our memories the complete, the total gift of self which was offered by the Second Person of the Trinity, the sole begotten Son of God. Jesus descended to our human level to experience everything we experience. He laughed and cried. He felt joy and sadness. He suffered and He was exalted. Most importantly, for today’s reflection, He also felt rejection.

My family, Jesus knew rejection. I do not want to gloss over this important fact. He knew the feeling of being rejected by others. He suffered deeply due to this rejection. However, despite knowing, and the key word is He Knew, He still offered Himself completely to His Father, our Father, for each one of us. He still knows this rejection even now. He is rejected over and over again by the sins of mankind, by our sins, by my sins. And yet, just as a helpless child, no matter its screams, still has to wait for its parent or parents’ attention, so must He await

still for our attention. For the attention He requires begins in a manger and ends upon a cross. This is our destiny; it is the Cross. We must be willing to embrace the Cross, all of its shame and all of its pain, to finally fulfill our destiny. For the Cross IS a total gift of oneself. It is an action which, like His gift of Himself, is repeated daily. Every day He walked upon our earth; He chose to give Himself to us. We must be willing to do the same for each other.

I admit, it is so much easier to say this than to live this. I wish I could simply offer a “one time covers all” prayer and my gift of myself would be total and complete. I know this is not the case. You know this as well. Likewise, I wish I were not so afraid of what this gift will mean in my life. It means I place myself, as He placed Himself, at the service of others; even if that means rejection and ridicule. It is a choice to not be afraid of what He is requiring of us all. Each one of us must eventually make this choice. We must choose to live as The Child who awaits His Calvary. It is man’s destiny to abide with God in Heaven. Yet to see this through to the end, I, we must daily choose to follow Him knowing, as He knew, where that journey eventually will lead.