

- Last week I spoke about Advent being the particular time of the year in which we meditate on the two comings of Christ: one coming which has already been fulfilled in history; and another which we still await.
- While Advent is certainly a time to prepare our hearts to receive the Christ Child anew at Christmas so that He may be incarnate in the world once again through us, there is another coming of Christ for which we must still prepare.
- It is His second coming when Christ will come again in glory at the end of time with salvation for His people, and I spoke about this at length last Sunday.
- And I also spoke about how we should prepare for these two comings of Christ by growing in love for one another and by truly striving for virtue.
- But while it is important for us to prepare for these two particular comings of Christ, St. Bernard of Clairvaux tells us that there is yet another coming of Christ which we must not neglect.
- For those of you who may not be familiar with St. Bernard, he was a Cistercian monk who lived in France during the 12th century and who was well known for his preaching and great devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- In preaching on the two comings of Christ for which we prepare during the season of Advent, St. Bernard tells us that there is also a third, intermediate coming, that exists between these two comings of Christ.
- While the first coming and last coming of Christ are visible and manifested in history, this intermediate coming of Christ is invisible, hidden, and only seen by the elect within their own selves.
- St. Bernard tells us that “in His first coming our Lord came in our flesh and in our weakness.” “In the final coming He will be seen in glory and majesty.” But “in this middle coming He comes in spirit and in power.”
- This intermediate coming of which St. Bernard speaks is Christ coming to us through the Word, which we keep in our hearts.
- You see, my dear friends, 40 days after His resurrection when our Lord ascended into Heaven with the promise that He would one day return again, He did not leave us bereft of His divine presence.
- To the contrary, our Lord abides with us even now, and not simply in the Word of Sacred Scripture, but through the sacraments, which provide us with a visible manifestation of and encounter with the Word Made Flesh!
- As Christians we know that we always have our Lord with us. He comes to us in this intermediate way first through the sacrament of Baptism, by which He enters into our souls and makes a home there, forging a covenant of love with us.
- And throughout the course of our lives Jesus comes to us again and again through all the sacraments, most especially the Blessed Sacrament: the Eucharist, by which He feeds us with His very own flesh.
- But Jesus also comes to us through the reading of Sacred Scripture, especially when it is proclaimed at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, speaking to us His word of truth.
- And so that we may never be without Him, our Lord remains with us in the tabernacle, His divine presence signaled by the glow of the sanctuary lamp, waiting for us to come to Him.

- Yet while it is true that our Lord blesses us with His presence in the tabernacle, we must remember that Jesus did not come to earth to dwell in a tabernacle of gold. He has come to earth because He wishes to dwell within something much more valuable: the tabernacle of our souls!
- While it is right and good that we prepare for our Lord's two comings in human history during Advent, we must not neglect to prepare for the daily coming of the Word-made-flesh in our souls. For indeed, this is the most intimate and personal way Christ comes to us.
- Just as we've spared no effort in making this church a suitable dwelling place for God through the use of noble materials, beautiful and theologically rich architecture and artwork, all the more must we work to make our souls suitable dwelling places for the Lord!
- Instead of the intricate stained glass, marble, and gold that adorns this church, we must adorn our souls with virtue and good works.
- Just as the light of the morning sun pours through these stained glass windows, illuminating them and providing us with a glimpse of the heavenly realities, so too must the light of faith, hope and charity pour through our words and actions so that people can get a glimpse of the Christ within us.
- Yet, my dear friends, if we wish to fully experience the grace of this intermediate coming of Christ, then we must come to Christ!
- We do this by making every effort to avail ourselves of His grace through our prayers, through our worthy participation in the sacraments, through our obedience to His Church, and through our service to others.
- My dear friends, if we are truly going to be prepared for our Lord's coming as man in the Incarnation and His second coming at the end of time, then Christ must reign in our hearts now.
- And when we do this, when we allow Christ to reign in our hearts, He grants us the priceless gift of joy – that same joy that our first and second readings speak about today.
- As we now prepare ourselves for our Lord to come to us in the Eucharist, let us pray that we may have the courage to rid from our lives and from our souls all that prevents us from receiving our Lord as we should.
- Let us pray that we may receive Jesus now as the welcome guest of our souls, and in so doing, let us trust that when our lives on earth are over, He will receive us as His welcome guest in Heaven.