

**Homily for December 2, 2001
1st Sunday of Advent Cycle A**

By Father Charles Bowes

**Isaiah 2:1-5
Romans 13:11-14
Matthew 24:37-44**

The Lord's coming is not a thing to fear.

“The Son of Man is coming at the time you least expect,” says Jesus in Matthew 24. How striking, how dramatic the impact of these words for us American Catholics in light of the terrorist attacks! Traditionally this first Sunday of Advent touches upon the “end time,” the future coming of the Lord which is for each of us the day of our death and rebirth into the new heaven and new earth. In subsequent Sundays we shall hear of the Lord’s coming now through our repentance, and then at Christmas we’ll celebrate the Lord’s coming long ago, the Incarnation, the revelation of God in Jesus.

A week from this Monday, December 10, at 7:00 p.m., we’ll celebrate our Advent reconciliation service. Extra priests will be available. It’s a time to name and claim our unloving choices, our struggles, our fears, and invite God to recreate us, to invade our hearts with the hope and peace of this Advent/Christmas season. We’ve

all received a wake up call through the events of September, and this is a great time to allow God to be God to us, to give God the greatest gift God seeks: our need, our brokenness – for then and there, right there in our acknowledged need, God can be God to us and we can be God’s children. And in this way, Christmas, the enfleshment of God in the human, happens all over again. For the human way of giving to God is to receive – to make way for the invasion of God – who brings not terror, but peace, not death, but everlasting life. So there’s info in the bulletin about our reconciliation service a week from Monday. Try it. It’s a good way to end this year and begin the next aware of and welcoming the ever-surprising coming of the Lord.

As part of our journey this Advent, we’re blessed to enjoy the first of two new hymnals. I’ll ask you to pick up a copy now of the green book, *Gather Comprehensive*, and get familiar with it briefly. Please share with those around you. Turn first to the dedication in memory of Mr. Kreis, just inside the front cover, and then just four pages later find the Table of Contents – the page labeled “Contents.” Notice the headings: Music for Daily Prayer; The Mass – including the Glory to God and the Creed and the parts and responses of the Mass together with musical settings of

the parts of the Mass. Then there are Hymns and Songs all grouped according to seasons and themes along the lines of the liturgical year, our year of prayer – Advent, Christmas and so on. The Lectionary is there with all the readings, and then Indexes of a host of topics.

I'd like you to turn just to three items. First turn to #153, The Order of Mass – you'll notice it has the parts of the Mass, such as the Glory to God and the Creed, and a variety of musical settings follow for various Masses. Then turn to #317 – this is the beginning of what makes up the bulk of the book: Hymns and Songs. They are grouped seasonally and by theme, and these numbers will be on the hymn board for reference. Finally turn to #897. This is the Lectionary. Notice that this is the First Sunday of Advent/A – we Catholics and also now many Christians of other denominations use a cycle of three readings, A, B, and C, corresponding to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. St. John's Gospel is read during the Easter Season and in the summer of the "A" cycle of reading of the Gospel of Mark. These texts are here, not necessarily to be followed during the liturgy, since we are encouraged to listen to the Word proclaimed, but they are here to be used before or after Mass for further reflection or to prepare for the next week's Mass. Likewise the number of the scripture readings will appear on the hymn board as well.

So it's a gift this Advent/Christmas season – these wonderful new books with *Spirit and Song* to follow. I find it a pleasure just to pick this book up and read through the hymns listed under a given heading – sometimes I even remember the melody, but so often I

find the words themselves to be uplifting and prayerful. After all it was none other than St. Augustine who observed: "He who sings prays twice."

In addition to this gift from the Glen Kreis family, the family of Mary Calvin is donating the singers and accompaniment copies of *Spirit and Song* in memory of Mrs. Calvin's mother, Adelaide Moran. So we're thankful to all, and to the God who blesses us with life and faith strong enough to share and remind us that the Lord's coming is not a thing to fear.

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