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“... *when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.*” God’s ways are not our ways and there can be no clearer sign of this than today’s Gospel. A few lines before this in the Gospel, Jesus prophesied that there would be a terrible persecution of Christians and a time of great devastation for Jerusalem. When this great persecution happened in the late 60’s AD, the Christians in Jerusalem had to flee to the Transjordan. There they survived in relative safety while Jerusalem and the nation of Israel were completely destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, just as Christ had foretold. The devastation was total, over one million Jews died and the destruction of the temple was so complete that only a small remnant of one supporting wall of the temple remains to this day, the Wailing Wall. Thanks to their persecution, the Christians were saved. Truly God’s ways are not our ways.

The prophecies of scripture have more than one fulfillment in more than one age for they are meant for all peoples in all ages so these words of the Gospel also speak to us about the second coming of Christ. However, they should not cause us to live in fear. The second coming of Christ will happen for everyone in his or her own life time, even if it does not happen to the world for ages to come. This is why Jesus warns us “*Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man*”. The tribulations that we should be watching for are not cataclysmic, earth-shaking events, but rather the ordinary failings in our daily lives. How is our relationship with our spouse, how is our relationship with our parents and our children? Have we injured someone and not made reparation for that injury? Are we engaged in self-destructive behavior, like drugs or alcohol or sexual sins that defile the temple of the Holy Spirit that is our body? Are we taking our salvation for granted like the Pharisees or believing in the false promise of a Teddy Bear Jesus? These are the

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signs of our times, the ordinary every day events of our lives that form our souls either for Christ or against him.

Each of us should ask ourselves "am I ready to meet my maker right now, this day?" If we can't honestly say 'yes', then we have some work to do. The time is short, no one is promised tomorrow. This is why the Church gives us this season of Advent. Advent is a time to slow down and to reflect on our eternal destiny and on our readiness to meet our Lord. For those who do not listen, Christ's second coming will over take them like a thief in the night. The great and terrible day of the Lord will be an everlasting shame and curse for those who have not prepared themselves for it.

St Paul shows us the high road to heaven, the way that will allow us to stand with our heads erect on that day of the coming of our Lord, 'May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all men.' Love is the criterion by which Christ will judge our lives, for love covers a multitude of sins. Only through sincere, disinterested love will we find ourselves prepared for that great and terrible day that each of us will certainly face. For those who remain vigilant, those who learn to love and to keep their souls clean will be ready to greet the Lord no matter the hour. when that day comes they will meet a loving friend who will embrace them and lead them into his Father's house saying "*Well done, my good and faithful servant ... Come, share your master's joy.*" So as we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ this Advent, let each of us search deep into our hearts for the answer to that question "am I ready to meet my living Lord and maker today?" and let each of us ask the Lord to send the Holy Spirit upon us as he did Mary, the Virgin of the Advent, that he might purify our hearts, our minds, our bodies and our souls so that we might be made as clean and pure and holy as Mary in the sight of God.