ADVENT AND THE THOUGHT OF OUR FINAL END

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In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear faithful, with the first Sunday of Advent we begin a new liturgical year. And it may come as a surprise that on this very day, when we begin anew, as it were, to contemplate the mysteries of the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, when our thoughts are already turning to the sight of the divine Infant in the grotto of Bethlehem, on this very day the Church reads to us the Gospel in which the Saviour foretells, announces His coming in glory, when He will judge the living and the dead. And deep in our souls we probably ask ourselves the question: why, actually, today, at the threshold of the new liturgical year, does Holy Church want us to think about the end of the world?

My dear ones, philosophy teaches us that *omne agens agit propter finem*. Everyone who undertakes an action undertakes it for the sake of the end he wants to achieve. If we set out on a journey, we must know where we want to arrive. We must know the destination of our journey. Otherwise we will most likely find ourselves in a completely different place, far from the one we ought to have reached.

And it is just the same in our Christian life. We must constantly remind ourselves of what the modern world would like us to forget. That is, of where we are heading, why we were created, why we actually live here on earth at all. As the catechism teaches us, we were created by God for a very concrete and simple purpose: to know God better each day, to love Him more ardently and to serve Him more faithfully, and in this way to earn for ourselves the reward of eternal life in heaven.

Our life here on earth is not, as some think, some chain of chance events leading us toward inevitable death. Our life on earth is nothing other than a time of trial, a time in which we are to prove that we deserve eternity with the Most Holy Trinity. And whether we receive that eternal reward depends on our conduct here on earth.

All of us, I hope, remember this basic, fundamental truth of the faith, that God is a just judge, who rewards the good and punishes the evil. But do we remember, in our daily lives, even from time to time, the judgment that awaits us? I am afraid that we do so far too rarely. How much evil in the modern world results from the fact that people have stopped reflecting, meditating on the fact that what we do here on earth, what we neglect, will have eternal consequences. And the Advent that begins today is for each of us an excellent opportunity to cure our shortsightedness, to direct our thoughts toward the ultimate end of our human life, of our existence here on earth.

OUR JOURNEY

A certain traveller, overtaken by dusk as he walked through a forest, noticed a light. He drew near and saw that there was a small hermitage there; he knocked at the door and asked the monk who opened it for the possibility of spending the night. He was received. He went inside. And what surprised him was how simple, how modest the cell was in which the hermit lived. He could not refrain from asking: "Father, but where is your furniture?" The monk answered him: "And where is yours?" The astonished guest replied: "Mine? But I am on a journey, I don't need any furniture." And the hermit said with a smile: "I, too, am on a journey."

Dear faithful, this Advent that we begin today reminds us that we are all on a journey. It reminds us that here on earth we can pitch a tent for a shorter or longer time, but we cannot, my dear ones, make here a lasting, permanent home. Our homeland is somewhere else entirely. We are called to reach the kingdom of heaven, to win it by our good works, by the profession of the Catholic faith, by living in a state of sanctifying grace.

And so at the threshold of Advent, Saint Paul the

Apostle cries out to all of us: "Brethren, knowing that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep. It is high time for us to awake, that we may no longer live sunk in torpor, bound by our laziness, our indifference." Each of us, my dear ones, should use this Advent for serious reflection, for meditation on the last things, because each of us will die one day. Each of us will stand before the face of the divine Judge and will be called to account for how he lived. Therefore, since this is inevitable, since it will befall each of us, there is nothing more salutary, nothing more useful, than to prepare well for the hour of our death.

Dear faithful, as we begin this Advent of the Lord 2025, let us pray fervently that we may always be ready to meet the Redeemer. Let us live as Catholics, let us fulfil our duties of state as zealously as possible, and let us await the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, He who 2,000 years ago was born in Bethlehem, who is born in a mystical way on the altar when the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Holy Mass is offered, and whom one day we shall all see coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.

And together with the whole Church, let us raise to heaven today the prayer — the collect — which the priest recited at the beginning of Holy Mass: "Stir up Thy power, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and come. May Thy protection deliver us from the dangers threatening us because of our sins, and may Thy might save us." Amen.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.