

Happy New Year!!! - No, I'm not drunk - getting drunk is a sin - why? - because free will is what separates from the rest of creation - free will to rationally choose the good or the right thing to do

But, yes, Happy New Year - The Church starts each liturgical year with the First Sunday of Advent - so happy New Year

However, the Church doesn't begin its year with fireworks or a ball dropping - I asked Dwayne about fireworks, but he suggested not to do them inside

Instead the Church begins her year in an almost solemn, dour mood

It is kind of like going through the airport - hurry up and wait

But what are we waiting for? - for almost 2000 years, the Jewish people had been waiting for a messiah, a savior

They had been waiting so long, some of the Jewish people had given up hope of the Messiah ever coming

They begin to live as if the Messiah would never come

I fear we often do the same - we live our lives as if Jesus will never come back - but He said He would - As Catholics, we believe the Second Coming of Christ is not a matter of if, but rather of when

They are not so popular anymore, but there were a series of books and movies called Left Behind - They are based on today's Gospel and 1 Thessalonians 4:17

1 Thessalonians 4:17 says, "Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

Our Gospel reading today talks about two men being in a field; one will be taken and one will be left behind - or two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and the other left behind - this is where Fundamentalist Christians get the idea that at the rapture, the non-believer will be left behind and the believer will be taken up into the sky with Jesus

Revelations 20:1-6 talk about the 1000 year reign of Christ

Many fundamentalists Christians take these things in and believe that when Jesus comes, there will be a 1000 years of Christ's reign on earth, and then the final judgement and the end of time - this is called "premillennialism"

This belief didn't show up until the 16th century, over 1500 years after Christ

All Christians were Catholic until the 16th century, until the Protestant Reformation - so all Christians, thus the Catholic Church then and now has maintained that the 1000 years are symbolic of a long time, not a literal number of years Christianity, the Catholic Church, has taught from the very beginning that we are in the end times; we are in the symbolic 1000 year reign of Christ

Jesus never talked about coming to earth three or four times - just twice - one time to redeem us and give us the grace to defeat Satan and evil and a second time to do the final judgement of all souls at the end of time

Jesus tells His disciples over and over again that we will not know the day or hour of His second coming, the end of time

Even though we may not know the day or the hour, Jesus spoke of His return in glory as a certain fact - not as some personal opinion

Therefore, Paul's warning is as true today as it was almost 2000 years ago - now is the time, now is the hour for us to awake from sleep - why? Because any time, any hour could be the time of Jesus' second coming, the final judgment, and the end of time

It is also true, just as it was 2000 years ago, that our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed

Now is the time to set sin aside, not later - because there may not be a later

Now is the time to awake from our spiritual slumber - now is the time to love Christ and our neighbor - now is the time to do right and avoid wrong - now is the time to do God's will for our lives and to avoid sin

Now is the time to prepare for Jesus' Second Coming and our final judgement

No one can do this for us - It is good to have good Christian friends to help influence us and help us become better people - at our final judgment, no one can win a place for us in heaven - we ourselves must accept God's love, grace, and will for our lives

As Christians, we must have a great anticipation for this most important event of all - the return of Jesus in glory at the end of time

At the end of time, all that will remain is Heaven (the Kingdom of God) and Hell

Heaven, this Kingdom of God, is the everlasting kingdom that will conquer all other kingdoms

On March 28, 2014, the movie Noah will be released - from what I can gather from the preview, it will graphically show how Noah was ridiculed by those around him for building a big boat in the middle of solid ground and then how those same people desperately tried to board Noah's ark when it became evident that the flood was going to kill them - they missed the boat - sorry - bad joke - I couldn't help myself

Just as the people did in Noah's time, we need to decide now if we with God or if we are not with God - we need to decide now because just as in Noah's time, there may come a point in time when it is too late to decide

Now is the time to decide and live for Christ and the Kingdom of God...because there will come a time when it is too late to make the decision

Now, there is no need to despair - God's infinite mercy is greater than any sin in your past - if we place our lives in God's hands, we have nothing to fear - we need not fear the final judgement, the end of time, or the second coming

God is the Treasure we all desire - He is the thing of infinite value - His kingdom is the kingdom of true and everlasting peace, joy, and righteousness

The Lord offers us a personal relationship with Him through our Baptism - every day He offers us to be His sons and daughters - every day He offers us eternal life - however, we can lose all of this if we allow sin or Satan to rob us of our faith and hope in God

So where have you placed your hope? Where have you placed your trust? Where have you placed your treasure? In the things of this world or in the things of God?

When Jesus comes back at the Second Coming, at the end of time, when the Final Judgment happens, are you going to be in Heaven or Hell?