

Jr. 33:14-16; Ps. 25;  
1 Thes. 3:12, 13–4:2;  
Lk. 21:25-28, 34-36



## THERE WILL BE SIGNS...

Welcome back, Advent!  
Welcome back to what is often  
called a “significant time of the year”  
–not because there are “insignificant” times  
of the year from which this season should be distin-  
guished but because it reminds us of the awesome and terrible

signs of the end of the world mentioned in this Sunday’s Gospel: signs in the sky, in the seas and on land; signs of fear and anxiety among the peoples—all of which will precede the final Judgment. These many signs help us grasp instantly that we are entering a “significant time” in which things are breaking up, falling apart. We are pervaded by a strong feeling that time is short, that choices can no longer be put off.

Thank you, Advent, because through the ancient wisdom of the Church you point out to us the best way to understand what is contained in the small beginning in Bethlehem—the birth of a Savior hidden in the infant whose plaintive wails Mary and Joseph seek to soothe—and to reflect on the majestic end, the judgment of the world by that same Child-Savior.

A small divine seed was planted in history. The promise proclaimed by the trembling lips of the prophet Jeremiah (First Reading) is fulfilled behind the scenes in a damp, unimportant grotto in Bethlehem. That promise is fully realized for each one of us too in the future—near or far—that awaits us: a time in which our merciful God will judge not only all of history but also each one of us personally. Jesus and his Word are the small seed that sprouts, bears fruit and yields thirty-, sixty- and 100-fold for each one of us who welcome it into the soil of our sometimes stony hearts.

Referring to the coming of the Lord, Karl Rahner spoke about “the progressive penetration of the human being in evolution—a process that began when God entered history and made it his own.” Let us allow ourselves to be penetrated by the Mystery of this holy time. Let us physically and spiritually step over the threshold of the Holy Door Pope Francis opened to celebrate this Jubilee of Mercy—a door which shows us the direction in which to move so as to ensure that the gaze of Jesus will rest upon us. And let us allow ourselves to be attracted to his judgment, which is filled with mercy.



### Prayer

Lord of time and history,  
help me see with the eyes of my heart  
that time is short, that Judgment Day is near.  
Help me understand that history is not meaningless,  
that you alone are its meaning and direction,  
that choosing you is the only sensible  
and possible choice to make.  
Jesus, help me to create silence within and around myself,  
so that I can hear the cries of the divine Child  
echoing down the centuries to reach me  
and liberate me from slavery, sin and death.  
Amen.

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