

Votive Mass of the B.V.M. in Advent “Rorate” – December 15, 2018 – Fr. Bryan Jerabek, J.C.L.  
Cathedral of Saint Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 6:15am – 900 words – English/Spanish

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Thank you all for coming to this, our first – in recent memory, at least – *Rorate Mass* here at Saint Paul’s. We would have to pore over the 125 years of parish chronicles to know for sure if this Advent devotion had been part of the parish’s life in the past. In any case, we may safely say that it has certainly been a while.

This Holy Mass takes its name from the opening words of its introit or entrance antiphon: *Rorate cæli desuper...* “Drop down, O heavens, dew from above, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bud forth the Savior.” The prophet Isaiah uttered these words some seven centuries before the birth of Christ, giving voice to Israel’s long-nurtured expectation of a savior.

We make this yearful expectation our own – or at least we should – during this holy and penitential season of Advent. We ask God to soften our stony hearts with his heavenly dew, that he will cleanse us of our sin so that the Just One – our Lord – may more fully blossom in us. In the midst of the darkness of our world we seek as our guide that true light that the darkness can never overcome.

Our focus during Advent on the Messiah’s coming is not merely an exercise in looking back to an event that took place 2,000 years ago. No, we also look ahead: for we await his return in glory. And in-between those two comings he remains with us through his Church and the seven sacraments. Indeed, he dwells in us through grace, of which the sacraments are the cause. But when he does come in glory, what will he find?

Will he find the earth giving rise to the Just One – to justice? Surely not. Our world seems to be growing darker by the day. The guilty go free and the innocent are condemned. Even in our allegedly advanced age, there is oppression of every sort. Technology seems to compound and multiply the impact of injustice and evil. Christ has remained in our midst – but so many have not remained with him.

Isaiah’s longing remains relevant and needful, then; and so it is good that we have not only this season, but this special Mass. Isaiah’s longing must be our own. Let the Just One indeed come: may he come to us swiftly. And may we remain with him – each day, henceforth. We ask him this grace. In asking, we also invoke the aid of our Blessed Mother and his, who made his first coming possible.

Yes, at the announcement of Gabriel, Mary conceived Christ by the dewfall of the Holy Spirit. At the announcement of an angel Christ will return in glory, as well. Why would his mother not be present for that coming also? She will be with him! Even now she seeks to bring the likeness of her Son to maturity in each one of us, so that when he does come for us he will see us as one of his own.

A little over a week of Advent remains for us to prepare for a holy and happy Christmas. Have you made a good confession? Have you spent additional time in prayer? What about good, spiritual reading? If God’s dew will fall upon our souls and be of benefit, we must do our part to cultivate the soil. Let us not ask for grace presumptuously. The Lord looks for our good will and our good efforts.

Amidst the flicker of candlelight and the gradual sunrise of this evocative holy Mass, we should look to the Lord Jesus, who comes sacramentally to our altar, and with the help of our Blessed Mother’s prayers, beg of him those graces we need to finish this holy season well. Thank you again for making the sacrifice to be here today. I will now very briefly share a word for our Latino brethren here present.

Bienvenidos a todos a esta muy bonita santa Misa de la Virgen en Adviento. La tradición de la Misa al amanecer, iluminada por velas, es muy antigua, aun si ya no sea ni muy común ni bien conocida; estoy agradecido por tener la oportunidad de celebrarla, y les doy las gracias por su gentil presencia.

La luz de las velas en medio de la oscuridad es una imagen de la venida de Jesucristo, la verdadera luz, a nuestro mundo. Y realmente él ya está por venir en Navidad. Nosotros tenemos el deber de prepararnos durante esta temporada de Adviento para acoger a esa luz. Debemos hacer una buena preparación espiritual.

Esta Misa se llama “Rorate” por la primera palabra en latín de la entrada: *Rorate caeli desuper...*; son palabras del profeta Isaías: “Destilen, oh cielos, el rocío desde lo alto, y lluevan, nubes, al Justo: ábrase la tierra y haga germinar al Salvador.” Son palabras de espera – de anhelo. Nosotros hacemos bien si anhelamos al Justo también.

Pidamos a Dios esta gracia: que podamos verdaderamente anhelar al Señor durante este tiempo; que ese “rocío desde lo alto” haga emblandecer nuestros corazones, que a veces se hacen duros; y que nosotros, por nuestra parte, podamos cultivar nuestras almas para acoger bien a nuestro Señor Jesucristo. In nómine Patris et Fílii et Spíritus Sancti. Amen.