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It's hunting season, and so I thought I would speak about a book I remember my grandmother reading me about hunting: *Winnie the Pooh*. Specifically, the chapter called, "*In Which Pooh and Piglet Go Hunting and Nearly Catch a Woozle*" Maybe you remember it. Pooh Bear is walking around, tracking footprints when he comes across Piglet, who would normally be too afraid to track a Woozle, but he is with Pooh. They continue tracking only to see now a second set of footprints, smaller, maybe belong to a Heffalump, and as they keep walking there is now a third, now a fourth. Finally Christopher Robin comes down from a tree and informs the Bear of Very Little Brain that he and Piglet were walking in circles. They kept coming back to where they had been.

The liturgical year is something like this. Go to any of our classrooms and you will see the liturgical calendar is always cyclical and never linear. Advent awaits Christ's coming, and then we have Christmas to celebrate his birth, and after a while we have ordinary time (not boring time, ordinal time, like first week, second week, third week), and then we fast and prepare for the sacraments with Lent and Easter, and then we have the Easter season, then more ordinary time, all the way back to Christ the King at the end of the year, and the start of Advent again. But the reason it is cyclical is that as the year goes on, we anxiously await the second coming, which is what Advent is also about. Advent, starting in two weeks, looks both forward and back. We hear it more and more each week in the readings. Today Christ speaks about the tribulations at the End Times, and next week we have Christ the King, in which we say that Christ is Lord of Heaven and Earth, even if we won't fully experience it until Heaven because his "Kingdom does not belong to this world." The Kingdom is already present but not yet fully present. That sense of longing is what builds, and then we focus on that longing in Advent.

Christmas decorations are already in stores, despite the fact we are not even in Advent yet. When Christmas arrives and the Christmas season begins, people will begin taking down their Christmas decorations. People are rushing to get to and finish Christmas, with the unfortunate fact that Advent is completely forgotten. The always witty columnist and author Father George Rutler says in his book on the history of hymns, "If Confession has become the lost sacrament of our age, Advent has become its lost season. These absences are the holy hollows of the Culture of Death: if man does not confess his sins, he cannot live eternally, and if he has no promise to await, he will find no reason to confess."

If we focus on that promise and our longing, we will do everything to make sure we are always ready to get there. We often think that we can repent later, for we are in good health and young,

and is Christ really going to come back soon? He says tribulations will come first, right? Or maybe he forgot because he is too busy running the universe; it has been two-thousand years!

This week I received the alumni newsletter from one of the Roman universities where I studied. There was a photo of a priest in the alumni news section. I did not know him personally, but I recognize his face. I would see him in the bookstore or the coffee shop. He was the year ahead of me, and I wondered, maybe he had gone back to defend his doctorate or had published a book. No, in fact, the news said that Father Jude Chidiebere Egbuom of Nigeria was murdered on the way to a barber shop on September 10 of this year. We never know when we will be called home.

And while it is true that there have always been people suffering for the faith, the twentieth century was the century that produced more martyrs than all the previous centuries since Christ combined. 65% of all those who have died for the faith died in the twentieth century. We have been in the End Times since Christ Ascended into Heaven, but every day we are one day closer. The tribulations have always been taking place, so it could be any day. We must always be awake, we must always be prepared, because "But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father."