“Wait until your father gets home.” These words struck fear and
trepidation into the minds of my siblings and me while we were
growing up. It succinctly said all that needed to be said; the waiting
in question was not one of joyful anticipation, but one of the hope
of mercy, as we rehearsed our defense in preparation of his return.

In truth, that scenario did not happen very often, but the threat
alone was enough to instill a holy fear. When the Bible uses the
phrase, “Lo, the day is coming,” it was seen as a significant
introductory phrase—that which follows is important! It made
everyone stand up a little straighter and pay attention.

The prophet Malachi describes three types of people: (1) evil doers
who apparently flourish, (2) the begrudgingly obedient who envy
ever-doers, and (3) the Lord’s servants who trust in His Name. The
prophet reduces these three types to two basic categories: the just
and the wicked—those who serve God and those who do not serve
Him. For, while the begrudgingly obedient may perform their duty,
they do so without love. Their hearts long for something else— they
long for the evil doers’ apparent prosperity.

Since the service of God is fundamentally a service of love, the
begrudgingly obedient fail to serve Him in truth. A judgment in fire
awaits them along with the evil-doers whom they envy, whereas for
those who fear the Lord’s Name, that is, for those who serve Him
faithfully in love, “there will arise the sun of justice with its healing
rays.”
There is a medieval hymn entitled: *Iam Christe, Sol Iustitiae*¹

Christe, sol iustitiae,  
mentis dehiscant tenebrae,  
virtutum ut lux redeat,  
terris diem cum reparas.

Now, Christ, thou Sun of Justice  
let dawn our darkened spirits bless  
the light of grace to us restore  
While day to earth returns once more.

During the recitation of Matins on the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we read: “Verily thou art happy O sacred virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise: Because Christ our God the Sun of Justice is sprung from thee.”²

Finally, there is the example of Rutgers University in New Jersey, founded in 1766 as a Protestant Christian school called Queen’s College. Its motto is *Sol iustitiae et occidentem illustra.* “Sun of Justice illuminate also the West,” a clear reference to Jesus Christ, invoked to illumine the campus. I suspect most Rutger’s students today have no clue as to the reference. When a religiously based school goes secular, its Christian origins become relegated to a motto on a sweatshirt no one understands.

We hear in our First Reading from the prophet Malachi as he ends his speaking of God’s call to Israel. At this coming of God’s messenger (understood to be an angel), there will be a refining judgment against “evildoers” such as sorcerers, adulterers, perjurers and those who oppress the widows and orphans. For those who keep the laws of Moses, there will be no need of fear. Blessings upon the vines and fields will be bestowed on those who do what is right and all nations will call them blessed.

The image of the furnace is brought to bear, with the group of those who fear the Lord will experience the healing warmth of the sun of

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¹ From the 10th century, though some feel it is Ambrosian from the 6th century. This hymn is traditionally used for the ferial offices for Lauds during the weeks of Lent before Holy Week.

² *Quia ex te ortus est Sol iustitiae, Christus Deus noster.*
justice. Jesus has honored with the title, "Sun of Justice" since the earliest centuries of the Church, for he is the Lord of creation and the Light that came into the world to dispel sin and darkness.

We should not overlook these titles of Jesus, these Old Testament phrases that became enshrined in the liturgy of the Church, for they are seen as precursors to our Lord and Savior. The Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus contains this title as an invocation: Jesus, Sun of Justice, have mercy on us.

The early Christians marveled at creation, and saw it as a reflection of the grandeur of God. They paid attention to the changing seasons, and the imagery surrounding them. Today, I am afraid we marvel much more at technology, and see in it man’s progress and triumph, rather than as a sign of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in our world.

Jesus warns us in the Gospel that the days are coming when there will not be a stone left upon another stone, but that through our perseverance we will secure our lives, a clear reference to our salvation. If the strong words in all of this week’s readings do not shake us up a bit, I am afraid we have become completely numb. “Lo, the day is coming.” We must be prepared, prepared to give our testimony, and seeking warmth and shelter under the loving arms of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice.