

ADVENT

ADVENT SETS US BEFORE THE LUMINOUS MYSTERY OF THE COMING OF THE SON OF GOD, TO ENABLE US TO LIVE IN FULL COMMUNION OF JOY AND PEACE WITH HIM. ADVENT INVITES US ONCE AGAIN, IN THE MIDST OF SO MANY DIFFICULTIES, TO RENEW THE CERTAINTY THAT GOD IS PRESENT. THROUGH OUR FAITH, OUR HOPE AND OUR CHARITY, HE WANTS TO ENTER THE WORLD EVER ANEW AND WANTS TO MAKE HIS LIGHT SHINE OUT IN OUR DARK NIGHT.¹

As much as I try to avoid it, usually at this time of year, life becomes hectic and bustling. It is a choreographed schedule of lists and errands, planning and visiting. But not this year. Christmas will not be just one holiday in the year – it will be the beginning of my spiritual journey for the whole year. The steps I take during Advent will map out the path I will continue to walk even when the tree is down, the kids have returned home and life settles back to normal. This year I am celebrating Advent – Christ’s threefold coming. “The Lord came to us in history, as the Holy Infant of Bethlehem. He comes to us now in mystery, and He will come at the end of time in majesty.”² Everything else will take second place.

HE WILL COME AT THE END OF TIME IN MAJESTY:

The first part of Advent is spent in preparation and anticipation of Christ’s coming. We, the faithful, “renew our ardent desire for His second coming.”³ Yet, really, it is not a second coming. He has not ever left us. We are called to “watch for the coming of our Lord at every moment of our lives. It is by recognizing Him who continuously comes in every aspect of our lives that we are drawn into deeper communion with our Lord who will come in glory.”⁴

During this time, we prepare for Him as we were called to do by John the Baptist. “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’”⁵ John the Baptist was not the light but he came to bear witness to the light. That is what we are called to do – bear witness to the light. “It is a call for inner conversion, based on the individual’s recognition and confession of his or her sin. While we are preparing for Christmas, it is important that we re-enter ourselves and make a sincere examination of our life. Let us permit ourselves to be illuminated by a ray of light that shines from Bethlehem, the light of the One who is “the Mightiest” who made himself lowly, “the Strongest” who made himself weak.”⁶

During these weeks of Advent, prepare for the one who has already come and the one who will come again through your own inner reflection. Open your heart to prayer. Ask for a heart to love Him. Take time to renew your faith and cleanse your soul. Enter the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Find a psalm or a reading that nurtures you. Be ready for His coming as the bridesmaids were in Matthew 25:1-13. Live in the light, stay awake and be prepared to receive Him.

THE LORD CAME TO US IN HISTORY:

The second part of Advent is spent in joyful anticipation of the celebration of His birth. We share in the wait with our ancestors who came before us. They were promised a Messiah and they waited in faith for Him to arrive. I imagine that they waited for the arrival of a King, an Emperor or even a warrior. Instead, they welcomed an infant born to a Virgin in a small stable. It is an event that changed human history. “The Creator has become creature; the Eternal has become man; the Divine has taken on flesh.”⁷

This is the time, for us to re-affirm our faith, to renew our baptismal promises and to open up our hearts to Christ. We should turn our eyes heavenward and strive for holiness – one step at a time.

It is a new beginning for the Church as we begin the next liturgical year, but it is also a new beginning for each of us. Just as you cannot tear your eyes away from a newborn baby's face, look to Jesus, our Messiah, who came to us so long ago. In St Augustine's words "It was not enough for God to send his Son to point out the way – he made his Son the way itself, so that we can go on our journey guided by him as he walks along his own way."

HE COMES TO US NOW IN MYSTERY:

And remember as we move through Advent, He is continuously with us. We abide with Him as we open ourselves to prayer and to His guidance through the Holy Spirit. And, of course, "Christ's abiding presence becomes concrete for us in the Blessed Sacrament where His divinity is veiled under the appearance of bread and wine."⁸

"He is the Word of God who even today continues to shed light on man's path; his actions are the expression of the Father's love for every human being."⁹

During this time, this new beginning for us, we pray "Come" as much from the depths of our hearts as it did from the hearts of our forefathers long ago. Christ's birth was only the beginning of His coming. It continues today and always. Our preparation never ends. We are called to continue the journey with Him at our side. Our small steps towards holiness never end. And always, we call to Him, we pray to Him, we ask to love as He loved. And we share – our faith, our hope and our love. He comes to us continuously in mystery.

Now close your eyes. Imagine that December night so long ago. Are you in the stable witnessing the birth of our Lord, that tiny infant in the arms of our Holy Mother? Or are you in the fields with the shepherds singing 'Alleluia!' and praising the coming of the Messiah for the whole world to hear?

"They missed Him at Bethlehem. They ignored Him at Nazareth. They misunderstood and chased Him away in Galilee. They put Him to death in Jerusalem."¹⁰ Let us not do the same.

Father in Heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love
and our minds are searching for the light of your Word.
Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour and
give us the strength to grow in Love, that the dawn of His coming
may find us rejoicing in His presence and welcoming the light of His truth.

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¹ Pope Benedict XVI. [General Audience December 5 2012](#) (Vatican website), Paragraph 8.

² Archbishop Timothy M Dolan. *Advent Reflections: Come Lord Jesus!* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing, 2007), 19.

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church. (Vatican, 1992), Par 524.

⁴ Br John Kozlowski. [Renewing the Mystery of Advent](#) (CatholicExchange.com, November 29, 2007)

⁵ John 1:23.

⁶ Pope Benedict XVI. [Angelus December 4 2011](#) (Vatican website) Paragraph 4.

⁷ Carl E. Olson, [A Scriptural Reflection December 6 2012](#) (Catholic World Report website).

⁸ Ibid Kozlowski.

⁹ Pope John Paul II. [Homily for 3rd Sunday of Advent 1996](#) (Vatican website), Paragraph 5.

¹⁰ Ibid Dolan, 18.