

Living the Spirit
Advent 2016

This Advent I am encouraging you to go to the parish website, if you wish to reflect on the theme of Advent. I have been writing about Advent for many years now, and there are past selections for your use on the website. In this writing I shall try to summarize a few thoughts from the many past inserts that come to my mind even now.

Why an Advent time?

The word itself means a “coming.” The Church has always wanted its faithful to realize something of the spirituality that the chosen people had, as they waited for the fulfillment of God’s promise to send them a Messiah. In our time we reflect on this aspect, and try to have sentiments of expectancy, hope and trust as we await the celebration of the birth of Christ.

His coming was the fulfillment hoped for. To make our reflection personal we must try to relive not only the past but look to the future. Christ will come again. Some waste time trying to ascertain the time when Jesus made clear that this “second coming” was not revealed. Yet pious Christians have a clear belief that Christ will come to us at the time of our death. Advent is then a time of preparation for our meeting, which has been called a birth into an eternal Christmas.

Advent liturgies

The liturgies of Advent begin with the theme of Christ’s coming to judge the world at the end time. I recall being somewhat afraid of these readings as a child. As time went on I saw the need to have something of the spiritual about our celebration of the first coming. That was and is accomplished by thinking of Christ’s as coming in the past, the present and the future. For any meeting with Christ we must be prepared, so Advent is a time for thinking of our spiritual preparation.

I would be remiss if I did not emphasize that Christ comes to us in the present time. How often we meet Him in the sacraments. We are united to him and him to us in the Eucharistic Communion at Mass. He is ever present in His Word, where His truth enlightens the darkness of our minds and raises us to a redeeming knowledge.

He is also present, as He has said in the poor and needy, in our neighbor. So Advent is a time for us to see to how we prepare to meet Jesus in the Sacraments and at Mass. We see how many around us reach out in charity to the poor and needy during this season. The challenge is for us to make our charity a work of offering not only to the poor among us, but to the Lord who lives in them and identifies Himself with them.

A Time for Faith

This period of time is surely for us a time for faith. As children we had a natural faith, a belief in a coming to us. I suppose you know of whom I am speaking here. We were believers. Christmas really would come. Gifts and presents would be ours. There would be a celebration

Our faith teaches us that in the course of history Jesus was born for us as our savior. I, for one, have no doubt of this. This is because I have received the gift of faith.

You have received this same gift at the very time of your baptism. And with it was received a gift of hope and a gift of love – God’s love for you.

Advent is a time to work at activating our faith. When was the last time you did this? Many do so without a second thought many times a day. It is not something that is always extraordinary. Extraordinary faith is a faith for the martyrs. Ordinary works of faith are found in a habit of prayer to the God we believe in with our whole being.

A Time of Love

Advent looks to the great love the Lord has for us. He is the real gift-giver. How does He love us? He has given us life. These days some fall into a modern dismissal of life as being more of a burden than a gift. Not so, if we recall that revelation tells us that we have been created as images of God Himself. Every freedom we have is a reflection of His Will. Everything wonderful and beautiful about life can be traced back to Him.

At Christmas we will be ending our preparations for the day by looking around us. We would see gifts wrapped for others, as we show our love for others. We will take satisfaction that we have made the preparations for a celebration, a feast perhaps, of many good things custom demands. Advent comes to an end each year with the possibility of spiritual joy.

I cannot help thinking here of how some find Christmas day a time for sorrow for one reason or another. Then it is that we must activate the spiritual within us. Why be sorrowful that loved ones are not with us, for example? Can we not hope and pray that they are happy with God? Why be burdened with anything that would destroy our understanding of what Christmas really means?

I have thought that love has its many stages of time. It begins with a preparation for its coming into existence. Advent is a time for preparing for the coming of love. It was in the original Advent before the birth of Christ. It will be for the future coming of Christ. It is now in His coming on a late December day in this very year. On that day look around you with satisfaction that your efforts to meet Him were not in vain –even if they were less than what you desired.

A Time of Hope

Are there spiritual gifts we are hoping for in this Advent period? I can think of many. The Lord has come to bring us life in abundance. This refers to the spiritual gifts He has for us. It is He who will bring to fulfillment the many spiritual desires we have. Of course, we must work on our part to bring about a happy result.

When we look out at our world, and especially our country, how many desires we should have. We can hope and should pray for peace among all peoples, not least our own. We should pray that many good people will live with a sense of the meaning of life as something more than can be seen.

As I end this, I hope that these rather rambling reflections will help you have at least some moments of living Advent. I actually believe they will do so or I would not have written them. Meanwhile don’t let the time bring you stress about all the many things you have to do. Recall Martha and Mary preparing a feast --One thing only is necessary, so like Mary choose the better part. The Lord be with you!

God love you always!

Monsignor Morrison