

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS



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There are many themes to Advent and many ways of both appreciating its beauty and what it heralds which is the birth of the Saviour of the world. Today many people seem to prefer a social gathering rather than a truly inspiring reflection on the coming of Jesus into the world. So many would prefer that it was just a happy season, a nice event, a family gathering rather than the most edifying event of history, that the Son of God came and took human flesh to reveal to us the extent of our importance to the Father. So many people now disbelieve that the event happened and recently someone said to me that it was all ‘fake news’ and that is a truly shocking extent of the debasement of the actual reality. While some still have a vague knowledge of the ‘Stable and Carols’ the vast majority and quite happy to make it a social event a time of socialising and merry making without the slightest idea of why we celebrate and more importantly ‘who we celebrate’.

What is more, in these days of seeming equality of people there is an ignorance of the fact that the people chosen to bring this reality to bear were ordinary everyday people, A young women of a tiny town, a man called Joseph who had incredible courage - a carpenter, shepherds, foreign kings, rulers of Empires and leaders of the same, and angels. If there was ever a history for our trouble world ... this is it.

One prayer often said at the conclusion of the Rosary begins:



“Pour forth we beseech you O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an angel, may be brought by His

Passion and Cross to the glory of His resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.”

It is worth pondering this prayer for it tells the story quite succinctly.

The ‘Angelus’ tells us a little more and leads us to the Mystery of the event and focuses on the ‘The Word’ made flesh, the action of the Holy Spirit and the rôle of Mary the Mother of Jesus.

Advent is a time for Christians of being prepared, of waiting and reflection on what this event was truly about... But how did Mary prepare? What were her thoughts? She was a young woman with hopes and dreams of many things like countless others... This Advent we could concentrate on her preparation and actions...

Have you ever heard the expression ‘pregnant pause’. What a lovely expression this is. Used to denote an air of expectancy, silence filled with something undefinable, heavy with meaning, solid yet not tangible. Advent is a time of waiting, for the celebration of the birth of Christ. A birthday, a time to rejoice, to fill us with hope and love. Advent is a waiting time. Advent is a coming. Pregnancy itself is a patient waiting- an expected fulfilment, dates known or anticipated, a longing to hold and behold what is within, to grasp tenderly, touch to succour. Patience is sometimes stretched to the limit, yet time is needed to run its course. A longing to behold, tempered by the knowledge of unpreparedness. Was this not so for Mary? What was her advent?

Pregnant with the Son of God she too had questions, filled with the tiny babe who was to be the bearer of Good News to all.

Her questions must have been many. Her surrender had been complete yet it had to be lived out... Her feelings surely must have been like those of all mothers from time immemorial, to simply hold the form within her. To wonder what he would look like. Yet her longing coupled with curiosity, tempered by

Glory to God in the Highest and Peace to people of good will

total trust and faith, must have made her intensely aware of the coming of this infant blessed and sent by God, given as a gift... A gift to all.

For her it was not filled with glitter and tinsel or filled with expensive gift buying. But it was filled more with the wonder, the surprise more akin that of a child's first or second Christmas. It was also filled with anxiety and service as she visited her cousin Elizabeth over rough country. It was filled with the unexpected demands of an occupying Roman force which necessitated a journey so near to confinement.

A good Jewish Lass that she was, prayer would be integral to her being. Prayer was indeed already within her as she carried the Word in her being. Yes, she prayed for her son's coming. She prepared. She had to pilgrimage to find shelter in a strange town and undergo a difficult journey on a donkey. Yet she longed hoped and prayed.



Surely Advent should be like this for us: A longing for the coming of the Redeemer into our heart. But it is also a time of pondering on the mystery and the hope that it brings all of us. We live in challenging times with sometimes uncertain futures. We see many displaced and frightened. For many this Advent will be a time of worry and sacrifice, and perhaps fear. In every country there are different anxieties, some financial, some because of wars and for others the effect of climate change. But is nevertheless a time that should fill us with hope and love for each other. Advent should be a time filled with God, a time to pause, to wait on His Word.

Yes, Advent is a time of pregnant waiting. For the promises made to us will be fulfilled. For centuries the Israelites waited for the Messiah.

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Mary waited for His birth. We are privileged to know of His arrival.

Let us wait with hope for the fulfilment of all that He promised. And rejoice with open heart and gratitude.

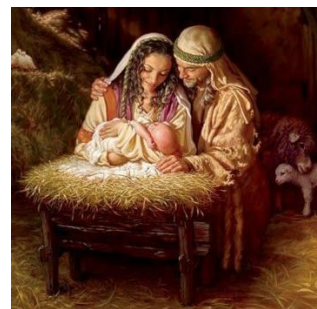
Halina Holman

Have a beautiful and peaceful Advent and Blessed Christmas.

Pope Francis

"Our relationship with God shapes us, accompanies us and sends us forth as individuals and, ultimately, helps us to "set out from our land", albeit in many cases with a certain trepidation and even fear in the face of the unknown. Yet our Christian faith makes us realize that we are not alone, for God dwells in us, with us and among us: in our families, our neighbourhoods, our workplaces and schools, in the cities where we live. No amount of difficulty can take away the joy of those who know that they are walking with the Lord ever at their side. Live out your vocation with enthusiasm. Never allow your faces to grow sad or gloomy; your husband or wife needs your smile. Your children need your looks of encouragement. Your priests and other families need your presence and your joy: the joy that comes from the Lord!"

AMORIS LAETITIA Rome 2021-2022



Feast Days in December

1st and 2nd Advent weekday week one

3rd St. Francis Xavier

4th Second Sunday of Advent

6th St. Nicholas

7th St. Ambrose

8th Immaculate Conception, Blessed Virgin Mary

11th Third Sunday of Advent

12th Our Lady of Guadalupe

13th St. Lucy

14th St. John of the Cross

18th Fourth Sunday of Advent

24th Christmas Eve

25th The Nativity of the Lord

26th St. Stephen, First Martyr

27th St. John, Apostle & Evangelist

28th The Holy Innocents

29th St. Thomas Becket

30th The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph

31st Octave of Christmas (New Year's Eve)