

ENCOURAGEMENT

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THE HOST APOSTOLATE

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The Second Coming !

'What we are waiting for is what He promised: the new Heavens and the new earth, the place where righteousness will be at home. So then, my friends, while you are waiting do your best to live lives without spot or stain so that He will find you at peace. Think of Our Lord's patience as the opportunity to be saved' 2 Peter 3;13-15.

What a wonderful promise – a new Heaven and a new earth. Advent is a special time when we focus not only on the birth of Jesus and His first coming but also on our own mortality, birth and death are closely linked, but on His second coming. It is a time when we reflect on the wonderful foretelling of the arrival of the Infant King by the prophets of the Old Testament and the overlapping of these with the coming of Jesus' cousin, John The Baptist. His birth was well and truly indicated by prophets such as Isaiah, Micah and Zachariah, as was the place of His birth. This encourages us greatly but we find it much harder to focus on the second coming for it reminds us not only of our personal death but on the somewhat uncomfortable reality that the world as we know it will end. The world too is finite. We live in times when this potentiality is with us a little more acutely because we have weapons that could bring this about but also we are witnessing so many disasters and cataclysmic events. Always so, I hear some whisper. Perhaps and perhaps not but the reality remains. The world will end and we shall see the Son of Man coming on the Clouds of Heaven....



PREPARE THE WAY
FOR THE LORD,
SMOOTHEN THE PATH
FOR OUR GOD+

to show He is King and that we are made to be with Him for all eternity.

So what of this reality of the 'new heavens and the new earth'. As Jesus himself said – we do not know the day or the hour when He will return, only The Father knows this. Does this mean that we can simply forget it and go on as before? Most certainly not.

Jesus Himself told us that we must be alert, must be awake, aware that he will come. Preparedness is a great feature of Advent. We all prepare for the celebration of the Nativity but are we ready for the second coming?

It is a sobering thought that He could come at any time. We simply do not know. Yet He did warn us and perhaps a chilling reminder is the words 'when He comes back will He find any faith on earth?'

We must therefore not only be prepared but retain our faith, hope and charity and be the light that points out to others that He will return.....!

Is this news something that fills us with Joy? Well it should. The Shepherds were told by the Angels who brought tidings of great Joy that – 'A Saviour is born to us' (Luke 2 vs10-16) and so the Saviour will come back for us. We will be with Him for all eternity. We simply cannot grasp what this would mean – a new heaven and earth.

New – renewed with Peace, Freedom, Liberty, no tears, work, pain- How spectacular this is! Surely this should be a hope-filling aspect to our faith and a means of evangelisation, to fill the earth with Good News that the world so needs.

But let us turn for a moment to Jesus' Mother for she lived with expectant hope.

As the months rolled by and like any other mother she wondered what this child would be like. She had her days of struggle and tiredness. She is our mother in so many ways- she knows our troubles.

We live in times where motherhood is underrated and debased- but as someone said, there would be no Christmas without mothers. Can we remember what they did and do for us? Their nurturing and love goes on through our lives.

Today many mothers suffer greatly from the lack of respect and love from their children and indeed many an adult reject their birthright, a new phenomenon.

How sad to hear a mother say – oh they don't keep in touch, or visit, about their children.

People in retirement homes are unloved and lonely, grandparents often do not even see or know their grandchildren. We live in a disjointed world and where many people suffer in silence. Christmas is often such a time.

A time of happiness is often a great trial for others who do not have the comfort of family or friends for many and varied reasons.

Mary travelled to visit her cousin knowing that she may need the help of someone younger and clearly Mary put herself out quite substantially to offer help to her cousin. Maybe as we prepare for Christmas we could think of someone who needs a kind word or action. To be prepared for the coming of Jesus requires us to be prepared spiritually as well as practically which means being charitable and thoughtful.



The following prayer reminds us that especially at this time we must pray for families. We must pray for our own families, the family of the Church, our parish family, and many throughout the world who suffer want and poverty. This prayer was written by Pope Benedict at the request of grandparents in Ireland (Catholic Grandparents Association) and is especially apt at this time...

Lord Jesus

Help families and society to value the presence and roles of grandparents.

May they never be ignored or excluded, but always encounter respect and love.

Help them to live serenely and to feel welcomed in all the years of life You give them

Mary, Mother of all the living, keep grandparents constantly in your care, accompany them on their earthly pilgrimage, and by your prayers, grant that all families may one day be united in our heavenly homeland, where you await all humanity for the great embrace without end.

AMEN

Pope Benedict XVI

Suggestions for Prayer-

As we prepare for Christmas maybe we can allow ourselves some time to reflect on both the first and second coming of Jesus. We can pray through Scripture, spend some time in silent prayer or perhaps attend a Carol Service or make a special gift for someone or contact a person who we have not spoken to for some while.

И.И.

Christmas Blessings.

May This Christmas bring Joy and peace to all. May the Holy family be a witness for us as model of a unity of purpose and a sharing of a way of life that leads to contentment and hope as well as happiness.



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