

Encouragement Encouragement

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Recollection Restoration and Rejoicing....

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It seems that Christmas comes around ever the faster in these days of commercial exploitation and removal of much of the Christian symbolism of great feasts. It is a time of rejoicing, but do we still remember what it is all about in the deepest sense? In truth how many ponder the mystery of God made Man. The Creator of all things takes the external form of a small child at first known as the carpenter's son in a small village called Nazareth. The wonder of this should cause us to reflect on this in awe. It is such an amazing event that we celebrate and reflect or recollect with a time of great anticipation, with a time of preparation for this coming event. We call this time Advent which merely means 'coming'... Advent thus leads us to think about the days to come in many different ways. We have Advent wreaths with their four candles and a central white one representing Jesus Himself. We have Carol services focused on the Good News of His coming and telling the story of His birth. We have gatherings and parties. We have special liturgies. But all of them tell of the Joy of a new birth and all of them point out that this event was prophesied and predicted for centuries before His arrival. Never in the history of Mankind has any event had so much forewarning as the birth of Jesus.

In times past retreat days or days of special prayer or though were called days of 'recollection'. This is a good word for Advent for indeed we are called to recollect all the thoughts about this time. Though seldom used it is a useful tool for thinking of the coming of the Messiah, of Jesus. We oft think of recollecting an event. I recollect the birth of my children, two in December, I think about it and it brings me Joy. I recollect the circumstances and the things that happened surely so true of the Nativity. We should put together all the things that happened prior to His birth. Advent is just such a time of

recollection of remembering, of bringing to mind these events and happenings.

We just have to think of the four advent wreath candles representing the Prophets, John the Baptist, the Shepherds and Our Lady. In some traditions they represent Hope, Faith, Joy, and Peace. But there is an assortment of ways including the Waiting for Joy, Forgiveness, the Newborn Son. The Advent Wreath traditionally holds four candles which are lit, one at a time, on each of the four Sundays of the Advent season. Each candle represents 1,000 years. Added together, the four candles symbolize the 4,000 years that humanity waited for the world's Saviour—from Adam and Eve to Jesus, whose birth was foretold in the Old Testament. Similarly the Jesse Tree so named for Jesse was the father of King David whose line can be traced to St. Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. It is used as a symbol to explain the Old Testament's generational connection between Adam, Abraham and Jesus as explained in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.



It is this perhaps that we do not recollect upon enough. There is often a dismissal of the Old Testament in favour of 'solely' the New without any real understanding of the vital link between the two. Jesus was Jewish. He came from that tradition and was steeped in it. At Mary's knee he heard the stories from the Old Testament and was able to quote them as part of his upbringing. When returning to Nazareth and reading in the synagogue he open the scroll at the prophet Isaiah who so explicitly referred to the coming of the Messiah and his death in such graphic detail. Quoting from Isaiah He reminded people that 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me and that he has chosen Me to give Good News to the Poor'.... that the time has come to save His people.... Ending with His own comment.. "This passage of scripture has

A good conscience is a continual Christmas

Benjamin Franklin

come true today as you heard it being read"...(Luke 2. 18-22) . We also see the genealogy of Jesus. How carefully recorded was the line that Jesus descended from. All the way through the Old Testament there are references to the coming of the messiah with the twists and turns of doubt and disbelief or frustration the He had not arrived, But Jesus makes His own position clear. He declares who He is in so many ways and challenges the mockers and scoffers. He quotes from the Old Testament in order to remind the people that he has come to bring about or fulfil the words spoken through the prophets. The Old Testament reveals and incredible truth of the great wisdom of God to teach us, oh so carefully, what his power, mercy and wisdom has destined for His people. The links therefore with the New Testament are vital to our understanding of the crucial nature of the purpose and manner of Jesus birth in Bethlehem.

In the same way Our Lady was schooled on the Old Testament. When she heard the news that she was to conceive a son her response was that of a young woman well versed in scripture. She uttered the words that she would have known from Hannah (1Sam.1:13) and made them her own. She also would have known of the coming of a Saviour. The synagogue was familiar territory for her and she observed all the precept of it hence the dedication of her son and going to Jerusalem to the Temple. It is rather strange to simply pluck Jesus and his family out of the context of their time and space and forget their heritage.

As we recollect this Advent we could try to bring together all the things that brought about the birth of Jesus. We should look at the prophets including John the Baptist and who he was and what he had been sent to do to prepare the way of the Lord. All things that have happened to Jesus were foretold and his coming as a little child born of a Virgin. There is a wonderful tapestry of events which not only verify who Jesus was but bring together History and circumstance. Jesus was a verifiable person, a point to remember and proclaim to those who doubt that He ever existed. But surely one point of rejoicing is that he was like us in ALL THINGS except sin. He was born as we are and suffered as we, in our own way do. He understands us in a way that is beyond our comprehension and loves us totally. We should prepare for his coming into our heart daily through

prayer and Holy Communion, through the recollection of His life in the Gospels and for his second coming. For as surely as He came the first time, He will come again. His words never fail and He is truth. Let us bring all these thoughts together this Advent and we will truly have a blessed and joy filled Christmas.

Halina Holman

Pope Francis

"When God meets us he tells us two things. The first thing he says is: have hope. God always opens doors, he never closes them...The second thing he says is: don't be afraid of tenderness." Just as Jesus' earthly father surely loved Him and opened his heart to his Son, our heavenly Father does the same for us—we need only be open to that love. I will expound on our understanding of a tender, loving God, thus: 'The Book of Deuteronomy says that God walks with us; he takes us by the hand like a father does with his child. This is a beautiful thing.'

Advent 2013, Pope Francis, Rome

Feast days in December

3rd First Sunday in Advent (cycle B)

6th St Nicholas

8th St Ambrose

8th Immaculate Conception of the Bl. Virgin Mary

10th Second Sunday in Advent

12th Our Lady of Guadalupe & St Frances de Chantal

13th St Lucy

14th St John of the Cross

17th Third Sunday of Advent.

23rd St John Kanty

24th Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve

25th Nativity of the Lord, Christmas Day.

Holy day of Obligation

26th St Stephen

27th St. John Apostle

29th St Thomas a Becket

31st The Holy Family



Thank you for all the support that The Host Apostolate has received this year.

Thank you too for your Encouragement.

May the peace of Jesus be with you always.

Blessings of Joy and Peace... Love and Prayer.

Happy Christmas to all

H.H.