

### **Advent, a Time of Spiritual Preparation and Vigilant Waiting**

The New year of the Church starts with Advent, a time to get ready to receive Christ who is about to come. We get ready to receive Him when He comes at Christmas (first coming) and when He will come again at the end of the world (second or the final coming). Yet these two, the first and the last coming of Christ are by no means only visits Christ pays to us. Just as a farmer does not limit his going to the field to the time when he plants the seed and to the time of reaping harvest. He visits his field daily, his field being precious to him and takes every precaution to ensure a good harvest. Christ too visits us regularly. He does it whenever we have recourse to Him in prayers, in sacraments and in every happening of our life; be it sad or joyful. Thus, we can say that the life of a Christian is a continual advent, a time to receive Christ who comes to us. Each visit of His should prepare us for the next, till our salvation is accomplished in His final coming.

The message contained in the readings in the season of Advent is that God wants to save everyone. There is a message of hope, love, joy and peace; all centering on Jesus who came down from heaven to share with us on earth. Indeed, we all have a great hope in our God who loves us and will save us. A new day dawned on us when we received baptism, it's always day time with the life of a Christian and never night time again. We are called therefore to live out our baptism daily, keep on doing good at the thought that soon Christ will complete the work of salvation which has already begun at our baptism.

Advent is a time of spiritual preparation and vigilant waiting for the coming of Jesus on our part that we may meet Him as our Judge both at the end of our lives and on the day of the Last Judgment. Jesus invites us to live life in watchfulness because He wants to offer us salvation. He reminds us that the unrepentant, ill-prepared evil people were destroyed by the flood in the time of Noah. He invites us to introspect our lives daily. He urges us to remove all the unwanted baggage we carry that are unbecoming of God's children. Just as we take so much care to clean and decorate our houses and churches for Christmas, we are called to do that with our inner life. We should not become so engrossed in the material and external affairs of life so as to forget what really makes us children of our heavenly Father who sent us His only Son who is Emmanuel, God with us. Spiritual preparation of the heart counts more than external preparation.

Jesus wants us to go through life watchful, active and joyful in doing our Christian duties, waiting for the moment when we will celebrate His coming joyfully and shall gather the harvest of salvation. As Franciscans, it's our vocation to take Emmanuel to everywhere we go. Take Him and His love to the peripheries of the society. Share our joys of Christmas and gifts with the less fortunate among us. Recreate the first nativity scene in our own life that St. Francis of Assisi first created years ago in Greccio. Fall in love and awe with this mystery of God's love for us humans.  
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