

What is Advent all about

c-c-1st Sunday of Advent 2021

Advent is a time of watchfulness.

We are waiting for the coming of Christ at Christmas,
and the coming of Christ at the end of time.

Since we don't know when that will happen,
we should live in a way that we are ready to meet the Lord at any moment.
The question is how!

Take a moment to reflect on what is happening in our society.

Last Friday was Black Friday, the day after American Thanksgiving,
and symbolically the first shopping day of Christmas.

In the next four weeks, billions will be spend on Christmas presents.

Many businesses depend on "The Christmas Rush" to get them through the year.
With so much at stake, the business world does not take this season lightly.
They have already been preparing for months.
Creating the most enticing ads imaginable.
Hiring the best in the business to set up displays.
Making their wares—just that much better than the competitor.
All just to get just a little bit bigger piece of the pie.

And it is interesting--come December 26, and all the boxing day sales,
and maybe a last minute attempt to secure some of the golden coins,
from our friends who celebrate the Julian calendar...
the commercial world is into the next push.

New Years, with a focus on champagne, and party hats.
Then onto Valentine's Day, chocolate hearts and mushy cards.

Would that we as Christians,
would spend a tiny fraction as much energy preparing for the coming of Christ.
Let imagine the CEO of a huge gift making company.
Shortly after Christmas, he or she calls their team together, and asks the questions.
How did we do this year?
What do we need to do next year to be even better?

Compared to this type of hype, flare, energy,
what are we doing to prepare for the greatest event in the history of the world since creation?
I say this, because I gathered the liturgical committees of parishes together on October 28,
a mere month ago,
to outline a way to celebrate the Advent and the Christmas season,
to make it as meaningful as possible, for all of us.
And I know talking with my brother priests, our preparations were weeks ahead of theirs.
My bet is most people didn't realize it is a new liturgical season
until they opened the old blue missal

and realized that there are no readings for November 28th, the first Sunday of Advent.
And so they are cracking open a brand new green missal for year C,
starting with the season of Advent.
Now don't get me wrong, I think our liturgical committees are doing a fantastic job.
One need only to look at the beginning of their decorations...
knowing full well the decorations will be added too, as the weeks go by.

So where does all this leave us.

It is hard not to get caught up in all the commercial hype
that millions of advertising dollars have immersed us in.
In the next few weeks we will all be caught up in a frenzy of
shopping, baking, mailing, phoning, travelling, and partying...
to the point where we are so fed up with celebrating Christmas,
that we are eager for the day to over...so we can get back to normal.
What can we do to break out of this commercial enterprise,
and spiritually prepare for the moment when God enters into full communion
with his creation by becoming a human child.
A truly amazing miracle--worthy of choirs of angels!

First, we need to be, as serious about preparing for the coming of the Christ child,
as the advertisers who prepare for the coming of Santa Claus?

What lessons can we learn from them?

One thing that we can do is make a conscious decision
to distinguish the difference between preparation and celebration.
We cannot forget that in the liturgical year, a Christmas Season follows the Advent season.
That the Church actually has a season dedicated solely to celebrating the incarnation.
There are three weeks following Christmas...which contain the Sunday's of:
1) The Holy Family, 2) Epiphany, the coming of the kings,
3) and the Baptism of the Lord.
Three weeks to celebrate—that which cannot be contained in a single day.
We need to use these days to prepare and those days to celebrate.

Second, just as advertisers spend time and energy devising plans for when to launch their campaign.
We need to spend time and energy devising ways to prepare for the coming of Christ.
Just as consumers spend hours and hours running around from shop to shop.
We need to spend hours and hours in prayer and charitable work,
dedicating an equal amount of time to preparing for communion with Christ

The readings for the first Sunday of Advent, reflect the type of preparations people have made—
as they prepare for the coming of Christ.

There will be signs in the sun and moon, tidal waves, wars and famines.
And as terrible as these signs will be, there will also be people who faint from fear and foreboding.
But is that a proper response...fear and foreboding...for the coming of Christ.
It is...if we have connected our preparations to the sun, moon...the natural order.
If we have connected our preparations to military or political might.

If we have connected our preparations to science or medical technology.

The natural order, political, military, of scientific leaders cannot save us.

Only Jesus Christ can save us,
and if we have placed our trust in Jesus Christ,
if we have prepared ourselves to be one with Christ...we do not need to be afraid...
we may not know what will happen, when it will happen, or how it will happen,
we only know that when we place our trust in Jesus Christ—we do not need to be afraid.

I know that there are 28 more sleeps before Christmas will be upon us.

I have no idea when Christ will come again in all his glory,
but on this day, when we celebrate the beginning of a new liturgical year;
when we celebrate the beginning of Advent;
I know that...even though we are preparing for his coming...
Christ is already manifesting himself to us.

He manifests himself when we love, forgive, share,
are compassionate, generous and sacrificial to one another.

These actions may not be as grand as dancing suns and tidal waves,
but the heroic love of a parent for a child,
the love a spouse for their sick partner
and the compassion of a first world sharing with the third world,
are spectacular enough for me-- to believe that Jesus' kingdom comes every day,
every hour, at every moment.

As we prepare for the coming of Christ,
at Christmas, at the end of time,
let our actions be just as spectacular.