

ADVENT

NEWSLETTER

Key players of Advent

John the Baptist. He was missioned by God to prepare for the coming of the Messiah.

Key players of Advent

Mary, the unknown, young, powerless and poor woman who believed and trusted in God.

Key players of Advent

Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist, gave their yes to God's work.

Key players of Advent

Gabriel, the angel, sent by God. We know nothing except the job description. This is God's worker.

WE NEED THE STORY OF SALVATION

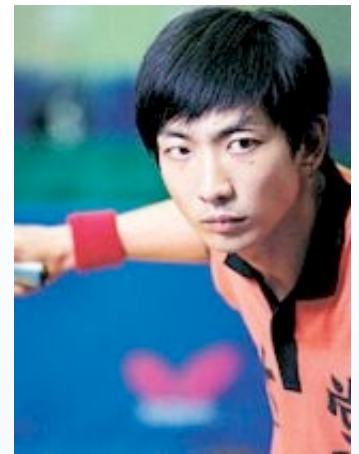
On a radio interview sometime ago, an elderly man told of the tragedy of his personal life. He was brilliant and wrote many, many creative radio scripts. Looking back on his life he commented: "I was never very good with relationships. I have been married three times." When I heard this I asked, 'what do you talk about? You cannot say 'Well, with the first wife we did this. And with the second wife, we did this.'

The only safe conversation is talking about what is happening today and what is happening in the world at large. Anything from the past could be walking in a mine field!

We need to have a shared story. Only as we have a shared story can we build a relationship. When we tell the stories of our family life we are speaking of our identity, how we belong to each other and how we are committed to each other. Story telling works like glue. It binds us together.

In our Christian faith, we tell the story of God's work to bring the people to salvation. There are ups and there were plenty of downs. There were people of great fidelity and people who betrayed God flat-out. Through all this, God did not give up on this people.

During Advent we want to give attention to the working of God in the past. We want to hear how persistent God was toward his people. We learn our identity and how we live, walk and struggle with the God who is always faithful.



You learn your identity by living it. No one can give you your identity.

Remember the time your Mother scolded you in anger: "I never want to see you do that again!" She meant business. There was no second-guessing her identity. Now, she was making it clear who you were supposed to be! The same with our faith. You learn by living it.

ADVENT 2014

THE FEELINGS OF ADVENT:

FAITH

People who have been brought up in a Church take it for granted that they believe.

It comes too easy. It is just like the highway. It is only when there are potholes after the Spring thaw that we recognize how important this highway actually is.

Faith is what happens after we have experienced God coming into our lives and we have said a yes to the person and the message of God. There can be no intellectual proof that God has come into our lives. But once we have experienced God we know with our hearts of his presence, his compassion and his mercy. This is not something that you can know with your head. You know with your body and soul, and you believe.

Faith is to believe what we cannot see but we know is more real than the paper this bulletin is printed on.

We want to walk with the young Mary (about fifteen years old, illiterate and certainly without social power in that society) who is asked by God to become mother. She struggles with the request. She accepts and walks with faith that God will provide and protect her.

As we once again tell her story this Advent, may your faith and trust grow to become like her faith.

THE FEELINGS OF ADVENT

EXPECTATION

There is no one more boring than the person who has everything, has done everything and intends to tell you about everything! Pray that you never get caught with such a person at a party and you can't find an escape from such a bore. There is nothing to look forward here!

Now, put yourself in the shoes of a early-thirty some woman, interviewed on CBC, who was planning to visit her birth mother and five step brothers and sisters for the very first time. There would be a lot of anticipation, hesitation and questioning. Will they accept me? Will I like them? How different are they from me? Such a woman has a strong sense of expectation.

Advent carries a very strong feeling of expectation. First, we stand with our Hebrew ancestors who wanted deliverance from Babylon. They looked forward to the day when God would deliver them from being exploited in a foreign land.

Then we stand with Mary, who longs for the fulfillment of the promises of God. She accepted to be mother and to bring forth this child conceived of the Holy Spirit. Stand in her shoes in expectation.

Thirdly, we stand with all the believers throughout the ages who longed for the fullness of God's promises. They long for the time when all humans will truly treat each other with the respect that only God has for human beings. The expectation is strong among the believers.

THE FEELINGS OF ADVENT

WELCOME

Does it not feel good when you are carrying your plate of food, the tables are completely full in this fast food restaurant (there is not one empty place) and a stranger pushes over and invites you to sit down to eat you meal? You are welcomed.

God is a God of welcome.

When the Church first began the big difficulty was with the embrace of Jesus Christ. How could God be inviting the Gentiles (those who worshipped the wrong God) into the life and work of Jesus? We know that there were serious questioning and some definite push-back to the pagans now included in the new People of God.

Very shortly, through prayer and the push of the Holy Spirit, the people of the Church were brought to see that God wanted everyone. He wanted especially the poor and those who get cast aside. God is truly a God who embraces all languages and cultures, all colors of skin, all genders and just everyone.

Advent takes us to the very heart and the openness of God. As God-become-flesh in Jesus, so now each believer is to have the same spirit of welcome as God gives us in Jesus.

St. Paul makes it clear: "Welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you." (Rom. 15,7)

Advent is a season of entering into this spirit of welcome to all peoples.

ADVENT 2014



One of the goals of Advent is to help the believer see with new eyes the presence and working of Jesus among us. In the final judgement (Mt. 25) Jesus clearly identifies himself with the poor and the suffering.

Deepen your sense of the presence of Jesus living among us. Jesus clearly identifies with the poor. This prayer will help us love and respond to Jesus in the poor, with their many faces.

Jesus is the Sacrifice offered at Holy Mass

For the sins of the world and mine.

Jesus is the Word - to be spoken.

Jesus is the Truth - to be told.

Jesus is the Way - to be walked.

Jesus is the Light - to be lit.

Jesus is the Life - to be loved.

Jesus is the Joy - to be shared.

Jesus is the Sacrifice - to be offered.

Jesus is the Peace - to be given.

Jesus is the Bread of Life - to be eaten.

Jesus is the Hungry - to be fed.

Jesus is the Thirsty - to be satiated.

Jesus is the Naked - to be clothed.

Jesus is the Homeless - to be taken in.

Jesus is the Sick - to be healed.

Jesus is the Lonely - to be loved.

Jesus is the Unwanted - to be wanted.

Jesus is the Leper - to wash his wounds.

Jesus is the Beggar - to give him a smile.

Jesus is the Drunkard - to listen to him.

Jesus is the Little One - to embrace him.

Jesus is the Blind - to lead him.

Jesus is the Dumb - to speak for him.

Jesus is the Crippled - to walk with him.

Jesus is the Drug Addict - to befriend him.

Jesus is the Prostitute - to remove from danger and befriend her.

Jesus is the Prisoner - to be visited.

Jesus is the Old - to be served.

To me Jesus is - my God.

Jesus is - my Spouse.

Jesus is - my life.

Jesus is - my only love.

Jesus is - my All in All.

Jesus is - my Everything.

MOTHER THERESA'S PRAYER FOR THE POOR

Who is Jesus to me?

Jesus is the Word made Flesh.

Jesus is the Bread of Life.

Jesus is the Victim offered for our sins on the Cross.

ADVENT 2014

What I missed in past Advents.

We all have regrets about what we missed doing. Looking back over past Advents I regret not wasting time with God. As the old sage said, 'doing what you enjoy is never time wasted!'

Oh, that I had just spent more relaxed moments just being in the presence of God. How I wished there had been more time spent savoring the many blessings that God has given us over the years.

Oh, that I had not missed the many blessings that God had given to the lives of my fellow believers. Too often I was over-focused on myself. I missed so much of the gifts of God in their lives.

What I did not miss during Advent.

Thank goodness I heard the call to be alert to the voice of God. It rang out in the voice of the prophets calling the Hebrews to turn their lives (and the practice of justice) toward God.

I was made more alert to the birth of Jesus. Not only was the child born of the faith and the body of the Virgin Mary, but now, Jesus must be born in the lives of each believer. Each one of us must now bring forth the very Son of God in our practice of justice, our compassion for the poor and our respect for all human beings.



Prayer for the second Sunday of Advent

Lord, we began this Sunday with the words of Isaiah: "comfort, give comfort to my people."

We stand in great need of encouragement. The world looks like such a vicious place and the ebola plague is ever threatening. Give us faith to face the future with courage and not to despair that evil might triumph.

When all my co-workers are indifferent to the Gospel give me steadfastness to be your witness among them. May my life speak clearly of your love, mercy and forgiveness..



Waiting: is it full or is it empty?

Every pregnancy is a time of waiting. No one knows that better than the mother who experiences the baby moving within her womb. She knows it is very alive and waits with anticipation for the day of birth. This is waiting with meaning and with purpose. The time is long but it is very worthwhile.

To appreciate what it means to wait with meaning try to imagine waiting for nothing to happen! What would it be like to be confined to a jail cell, with only a half hour of exercise and fresh air per day, and there was nothing to look forward at the end of the year. When you do this exercise you understand how full the waiting of the young mother is for her child to be born.

Advent is always a pregnant time of waiting for the coming of Jesus among us. We are not remembering a long far off event at Bethlehem. Each one of us must now be a Bethlehem and Jesus, his spirit and his life, must come to birth within us.



Come, Jesus, in our space and within our time, December, 2014