

Maranatha: Come, Lord Jesus!

My dear friends in Christ,

Today marks the beginning of a new liturgical year with the start of the Season of Advent. Advent comes from the Latin word “Adventus,” which means “Coming” or “Arrival.” It is a time the Church celebrates Christ’s coming in a threefold manner.

First, Advent season is a time we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ in human flesh (the incarnation). This first coming of our Lord is celebrated at Christmas, but we use Advent Season to prepare our hearts for this great celebration.

The second coming of our Lord is known as the “Parousia,” when he will come again in glory to gather all God’s children into the peace of God’s kingdom where we will see God face to face. The Parousia will be unmistakable because it will be accompanied by unprecedented signs as the gospel tells us. However, we are called to avoid pointless speculations about the time, the details of the signs, the nature of the difficulties that may accompany the signs. Instead we are invited to use the Advent Season to focus on the need for living the Gospel so as to be prepared. Jesus tells us in today’s gospel “Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. ... Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’” We are watching and waiting not with fear, trembling or sadness but with joy. That is why we use rose color vestment on the third Sunday of advent to signify that we are waiting in joyful hope for the second coming of Christ.

At his first coming, Christ was wrapped in linens, laid in a manger, and endured the cross, heedless of its shame; at his second coming he will be robed in glorious light surrounded by the angels. Thus, let us not stop at his first coming but look forward to his second.

For the people of God there is a third coming that lies between the first and the second, namely, his daily presence in our hearts. Christ appears in our hearts when we read and listen to his words in the scripture, when we receive him in the Eucharist, and when we strive to do good, grow in virtue and see his face in the people we meet. So, Advent is a time of conversion; a time when we clean the house of our hearts. In as much as Advent is allowing God to “arrive” once again in our hearts, it is also a time to find our way back to God’s embrace. It is a two-way process of “coming/arriving,” that is, coming home once again to God so that his presence permeates our whole being.

There are many ways we can find our way back to God’s embrace. When was the last time you went to confession before receiving Communion? Do you plan to make a retreat this Advent (virtual or in-person)? Try attending more than the weekend Mass, devote at least five minutes of your time each day to prayer, forgive someone this Advent or ask for God’s grace to enable you to forgive, think of and pray for a homebound person or someone who is sick and those more vulnerable to this pandemic, pray for our frontline workers during this pandemic, showing more love, be a part of the solution, write or reach out to an estranged family member, don’t let politics take the place of God between you and a loved one, be an instrument of peace by helping to reconcile two people, give to someone without expecting anything in return and many more ways.

Do not let anything prevent you from coming home to God’s embrace? Make this year’s Advent Season more enriching and fruitful than last year’s.

Nothing should separate us from the love and mercy of God.

May the Lord strengthen you this Advent Season.

--Fr. Anthony Ahamefule