

My Friends in the Lord Jesus,

Advent begins next weekend! Can it be that Christmas is only few weeks away! The First Sunday of Advent is also the start of the new liturgical year of grace, 2021. Advent is a four week season prior to Christmas. Most of us recognize this season as preparation for Christmas. Certainly, shopping and house decorations are a part of this time of year. A hectic, joyful, and prayerful season too!

The Season of Advent has three dimensions. The first three weeks of Advent focus our attention on the Second Coming of the Lord. This is usually expressed in the first reading and in the gospel of Mass. We prepare our hearts to meet the Lord at a time unexpected. The readings help us to prepare for this inevitable encounter, as we wait and prepare ourselves to meet the Lord.

The second dimension is our present relationship with Jesus. Advent helps us to reflect on our dignity as sons and daughters of God. The Lord abides within us, making us his dwelling place. Everyday we encounter the Lord in the depths of our being. It is within our hearts that we develop a deeper prayer life, a closer walk, a strengthening of trust in Jesus, who became a human person out of love for us.

The third dimension of the Season of Advent begins on December 17. The shift in focus is dramatic. The liturgy directs our attention acutely to Bethlehem. This last week of Advent is an immediate preparation for the celebration of the birth of the Lord Jesus. It is during this week that we will once again contemplate the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, husband and wife, who have responded out of love to God's request. Mary, ever virgin and mother of God, and Joseph her chaste spouse, who by the Holy Spirit have formed the Holy Family. We will hear voices of angels, and declaration of shepherds proclaiming glad tidings of great joy, the birth of the Savior, Christ the Lord.

Let us enter Advent prayerfully. Although a season of festivity, let us also take time to reflect on its purpose, preparation for the celebration of the birth of the savior, Jesus Christ. Advent is that annual season of preparation for encountering the Lord, at Bethlehem, in our hearts, and when he comes again in glory.

Fr. Ron