

## **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 prepares is for Christ’s coming in a threefold manner.

First, we use the advent season as a time we prepare to celebrate the first coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ in human flesh (the incarnation), which St. John tells us in the prologue to his gospel that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (Jn 1:14). This first coming of our Lord is celebrated at Christmas, but we use advent season to prepare our hearts for this 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 today’s gospel tells us. However, the 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 for the Parousia whenever it happens. Jesus tells us in Mark 13:33,35-37 “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 see his face in the people we meet. He stands at the door of our hearts daily knocking and waiting to be invited in. He wants you to prepare him room in your heart. 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 do this namely: by going to confession, attending Mass daily, devoting at least five minutes of your time each day to prayer, forgiving someone this advent or asking for God’s grace to enable you to forgive, visiting a homebound person or someone who is sick, showing more love, writing or reaching out to an estranged family member, being an instrument of peace by helping to reconcile two people, giving to someone without expecting anything in return and many more ways.

Is anything preventing you from coming home to God’s embrace?

May the Lord strengthen you this advent season.

***--Fr. Anthony Ahamefule***