

## *Ad Orientem*

### *To the East*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we begin the holy season of Advent let us turn to the *East* in eager anticipation of the Lord's coming to us in glory. The *Sacred Mysteries* will be offered as they were for nearly two thousand years. Today, while the ordinary form for offering the *Sacred Mysteries* has the priest facing the *sacred assembly*, this season of Advent and into the season of Christmas, we will follow the ancient form of the *Holy Offering*, the priest and the people together, raising their eyes to the *East* from where the Lord will come at the end of time.

Today it is imperative that we remove all distractions that veil the *sacred drama* unfolding on the *Altar of Sacrifice*. The sublime mystery of God's presence among us, incomprehensible to be sure, begs from us attentiveness.

The Gospel of Mark, read at all *Masses* throughout the Catholic world this first Sunday of Advent, carries one theme: "*Be watchful – Be alert – You will not know when the time will come – May the Lord not come suddenly and find you sleeping – What I say to you, I say to all: Watch!*"

The word *Advent* literally means, "*to come to*", referring to the coming of Christ. The season of Advent precedes and prepares us for Christmas, the joyful celebration of Christ's first coming. Advent also calls us to eagerly anticipate and prepare for His second coming. Mysteriously, as St. Paul reminds us in the second reading in his first letter to the Corinthians, there is a third coming between the first and second. The third coming of Christ is meant to "*keep us firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

Jesus Christ comes to us in a third way through Sacred Scripture, through the Sacraments, and through the Magisterial Teachings of the Church. The season of Advent is meant to reawaken us to these comings of Christ lest we forget that life

in this world is a dynamic journey toward something that *no eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love Him.*

Our responsible and attentive participation in the Holy Mass is to consciously step away from the mundane in this world that is passing away and to throw ourselves into the sacred yet incomprehensible mystery of the Lord's coming.

As I say so often: Be enveloped by this *Sacred Mystery* and you will be free. Our turning to the *East* is our mutual quest for the God who comes in spite of our unworthiness. Our quest and the offering of our lives to the Father in Christ Jesus is a profound and sacred expression that we are a pilgrim people *keeping vigil – awake, watchful, and alert.* It is an expression of our gratitude to the Father that Christ Jesus came to us and remains with us and will indeed come again!

A Blessed Advent,

Fr. Anthony Bus C.R., pastor