

FROM FR. CHRIS ALIMAJI'S DESK

REFLECTIONS ON ADVENT SEASON 2020

Welcome to Liturgical Year B in our Church's calendar, and good-bye to Liturgical Year A! We are now entering the Advent Season that begins with Saturday Evening Prayer or Vigil Mass. The Liturgical Year B will end this time next year. Again, for liturgical expediency, I would like to indicate from this onset that the Gospel Readings in Year B would predominantly be taken from Mark, especially when we enter the Ordinary Season. Christmas and Easter Seasons are mostly exempt from that liturgical arrangement. Advent is the season for preparation as we await the coming of the Savior, Christ the Lord. Advent season is for the period of four weeks. During this time, we look at the reasons for our separation with God and human eviction from Paradise and reflect on our need for reconciliation with God. Yes, all humans sinned and lost the glory of God, the companionship with God, (cf. Gen. 3:22-24; Rom. 3:23). **We needed redemption and salvation which the coming of the Messiah finally brought us back to God. In preparing for his coming, it is necessary currently to look back at our failures in the past and find ways of amending our lives for a better future.** I consider that our reflection should be on two levels, at least. One level is on the word of God proclaimed in this Season of Advent. Take note that, in this Liturgical Year, Cycle C, the Sunday Gospels would predominantly be taken from Luke. The other level is on how we indulged ourselves in matters tantamount to our degradation and liable to our failures or near failures. It is at this level that, with the light of the word of God, we make new decisions that would guide our lives as we step forward into the future.

Once again, we begin the season of Advent, this time of preparation for the coming of Christ-Emmanuel into the world. We call it Christmas Day (or Christmas Season). Although Christ is in the world and among us all the time, for he said, "And behold I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt. 28:20). His physical arrival to live among us as man is the reason for our preparation. "Christ is the reason for the season." All the Bible passages we read in this season remind us just that. In the first two Sundays this Advent, the readings are from the prophet Isaiah and from the Gospel of Mark. **After living lives devoid of godly standards, there comes a moment in life when there is nostalgia in the life and experience of the child of God who meditates on God night and day, and longs to live obediently before God. We do not have to wait for wonders to happen in the sky, or in the sun and the moon before we seek God in new ways. The COVID-19 coronavirus this year is enough sign for this age and people of this era. See how people vanished so quickly when their lives withered as a result of the virus. What another sign are we to wait for? Count the number of deaths caused by the coronavirus in USA alone. Count the cases reported each new day. Other parts of the world have their own cases and experiences too. Also, count the miraculous recoveries. All these are warning signs to the wise.** Hence the prophet wrote: "In an acceptable time I heard you, and on the day of salvation I helped you." (Is.49:8). Continuing, St. Paul wrote: "Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day (season) of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). Our joy and hope for this season is as God said: "I will live with them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. ... "and touch nothing unclean; then I will receive you and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:16b-18).

We are challenged to keep watch and stay alert to welcome the Messiah in full preparedness. "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come." (Mk. 13:33). It is the same warning sign we receive from Luke's gospel: "Stand erect and raise your heads because **your redemption is at hand.**" (Lk. 21:28). **We are in daily anxieties these days, frightened by climate warming, financial worries or economic crunch all over the world, wars between nations and even instability in our family lives**

and relationships. These are almost enough to distract and mislead us. But if we remain focused and reflected, we will recognize them as signs of the judgment of God on our worldliness. Let us, therefore, reflect on how to make genuine efforts! The Savior, Jesus Christ, is being revealed among us. That is what the Advent Season is preparing us for. Watch the commercials, visit the shops, look at the decorations, listen to the Christmas carol already filling the air. This is the season for repentance and change of live style. Do not be caught unprepared. Begin now to plan how you are to amend your life for Christ the King in a new way.