

Advent...



Come, Lord Jesus

Happy New Year!

Advent is the beginning of a new Liturgical Year! So, Happy NEW YEAR!

Before you begin to sing *Auld Lang Syne*, let's think about the other important part of Advent - it's a time of preparation. It's a time, in a very real sense, about looking forward. It's about looking forward to the very real celebration of Christmas in all its glory.

And... I am going to tell you all something VERY bold. We don't really celebrate Christmas well. We don't. And, let me tell you that I don't, either. And now I will explain why this is the case.

It's because we don't celebrate Advent.

Advent is a quiet, pensive, peaceful time where we reflect on how Jesus is alive in us. And then, we turn to look for ways to make more room for Him in our lives.

Does that sound like the meaning of your Advent? No? Does it sound more like:

- Running around getting Christmas shopping done
- Christmas parties
- School Concerts
- Last minute school projects done before the holidays
- Decorating for the holidays
- Hiding Christmas presents
- Wrapping Christmas presents

Sound about right?

I long to have an Advent that is more peaceful than frenetic. And... I think (and this is totally my own opinion) the perfect symbol of Advent is the Advent Wreath.

The Advent wreath is round. It can symbolize the never-ending, infinite reality of God... and I think it conjures up a gentleness. Round things are usually void of sharp edges. There is a softness. And then if you have boughs of pines and other evergreens making your wreath, there is something about the smell and the lifegiving-ness that comes from the earth. It gives so much more than I am able to capture in words.

And then there are the candles. A candle gives us soft light. And yet the smallest candle flame dispels the darkest night. And is this not the great mystery of our faith? The God of the universe seeks to enter human history in a small and quiet way. Jesus – the Second Person of the Trinity, the one through whom all things have come to be – could have come as royalty, a military leader, or at the very least during a time when the world was more connected than it was 2,000 years ago. And yet, He didn't. For whatever reason, He came in the quiet. He came into poverty. He came to fight the battle of sin in our hearts – the very sin that mutes and tries to stifle the light of God in our lives. He came to do battle with the parts of our life that are addicted to the darkness. He came to bring light to those areas. And when we can see where we are going, we are free.

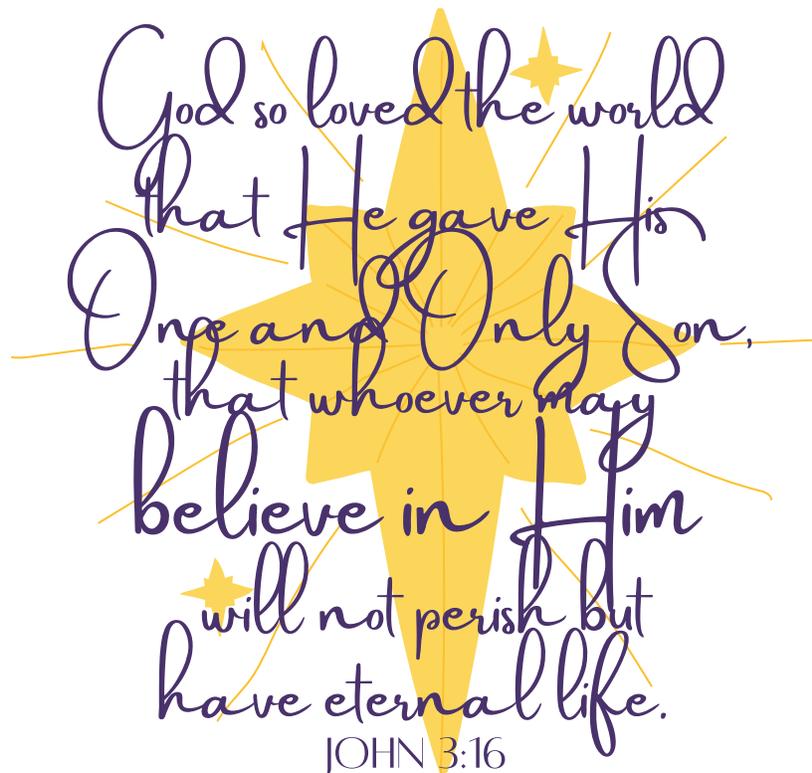
So, why not this year, take time to really allow the Light of the World to enter your heart. In doing so, we are transformed more into the image of God that we are called to be. And when we are transformed into His likeness, we become the Light of the World. We bring a little of Him into a world that is truly desperate for some light.

The Darkness has tried to seduce us into living for ourselves.

Yet, God has something even better for us.

He wants us to live for heaven.

And it begins with smallness... the smallness of a Savior who steps into human history to show us the way.



God so loved the world
that He gave His
One and Only Son,
that whoever may
believe in Him
will not perish but
have eternal life.

JOHN 3:16