

A NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Parishioners,

I think that the “*spirit*” of the Season of Advent is captured in the Gospel passage this Sunday as we reflect on the words quoted from the Prophet Isaiah, “*Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.*”

Even as we begin preparations for this year’s celebration of Christmas, the Church again stands as a counter-cultural sign proclaiming that it is the Lord’s coming again in glory that should be our main focus, our deepest yearning and our expectant hope.

Advent as a spiritual season has two aspects. The initial weeks of Advent, that is until December 15th, are a time of intensified prayer and preparation for the Second Coming of Jesus. Later in the Advent Season the focus of the Church’s prayer changes by directing our attention to this year’s celebration of the birth of Jesus and our participation in that joyful event today.

Last week, in the opening prayer of the First Sunday of Advent we prayed, “*Grant your faithful, we pray. . .the resolve to run forth to meet Christ with righteous deeds at his coming . . .*” The Preface Prayer during the first two-thirds of the Advent Season makes it clear as we hear the priest pray that, “. . .*when he comes again in glory and majesty. . .we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which we now dare to hope.*” How can we watch and wait and yearn for his Second Coming if we are busy celebrating Christmas during Advent?

Granted, we all need to make preparations for Christmas but hopefully not at the expense of keeping a holy Advent. Yes, Christmas cards need to be written, presents need to be purchased, food needs to be prepared and all this can be done without neglecting the spiritual journey we are undertaking during Advent.

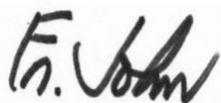
Recall that each time we celebrate Mass the priest introduces an Advent theme when he prays, at the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, “. . .*as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.*” And you say in response, “*For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. AMEN.*” Do you understand what you have just affirmed with your response? Is that what you are hoping for? Do you really want Him to come again? Yes, indeed! This is the hope and desire of the church, intensified during Advent.

The invitation given to us by God through the Church is to deepen our longing and yearning for Jesus to come again when He will bring to fulfillment all that He began in His public ministry and through His life-giving passion, death and resurrection.

I invite you to keep the holy season of Advent as we pray for Jesus to come again. Take a small step this year. If you’re not sure what you should do, then start by praying for the grace to desire and yearn for Jesus to come again in glory.

Let’s help each other to keep the spirit of Advent together. May Christ come again and not delay.

Come, Lord Jesus! Maranatha!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. John". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.