

ADVENT – A TIME OF PREPARATION
(J.F.M.H. – 12.12.2019)

The word Advent comes from the Latin "*Adventus*" meaning arrival. There are two arrivals of Our Lord to remember: the first which took place just over 2,000 years ago, and the second which has not yet happened, but has been promised. This year, the First Sunday of Advent was on 1 December. It is the start of the ecclesiastical yearly cycle of prayer. Advent is a time of preparation, for getting ready for both comings of Christ. By getting us to prepare for the anniversary of the first coming, the Church prepares us for the second, when we will join the angels and saints' shouting out, "*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.*" Sinful mankind had to be taught what was required to achieve God's design for him before he died.

Men who were made in the image and likeness of God were going to be tested. Even before the second coming of Our Lord, we never know when, where, or how we shall die, but one thing we do know; if we die as God's children, then we are saved for ever; but if we die in mortal sin, then we are lost forever. That is why we must always live as God's children. Because then we are always ready for death whenever it should come. When we die, our soul becomes separated from our body. The body will go back to the earth, but our soul being a spirit can't die and so immediately after leaving the body, our soul will be brought before God to be judged. It will have to give an account of every thought, word, deed and omission. This will be a **personal judgment**, often called the 'Particular Judgment'. After this, the soul enters heaven, for eternity, or purgatory (a word that means "Cleansing Place") for a period, or goes to hell, forever.

It is not so difficult to imagine why Jesus, an infinitely loving **God the Son**; who died on the cross (to save us from our sins) gave His established Church not only the seven Sacraments, but a host of other aids to assist us before the time of our death. Indeed, we poor sinners would face meeting Him at the 'Particular Judgment' with utter alarm and despair. Preparation for our death is a serious occupation.

The penny catechism puts God's purpose in creating us very clearly; "*God made us to know, love, and serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him forever in the next.*" So the preparations at Advent must allow for our very first meeting {after death} with Christ our judge, to take place at the best time for the soul He died to save. One has only to think of words like suicide, abortion, terrorism, so-called mercy killing, etc to understand how often in the modern world do we think we are better judges than Christ.

Our Father.....
Hail Mary.....

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; He descended into hell; on the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from there He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen

O my God, I am sorry and beg pardon for all my sins, and detest them above all things, because they deserve Thy dreadful punishments, because they have crucified my loving Saviour Jesus Christ, and most of all because they offend Thine infinite goodness; and I firmly resolve, by the help of Thy grace, never to offend Thee again, and carefully to avoid the occasions of sin. Amen.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, hail, our life, our sweetness and our hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve: to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this vale of tears. Turn then, most gracious Advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Amen