

Dear Friends,

Sunday 29th November is Advent Sunday, and once again we begin the annual and holy season of Advent, which as you know, is the beginning of the Christian Liturgical new year.

There are four Sundays in Advent as the preparation for, and count down to, Christmass. At one time everyone knew the meaning of this holy season, but, sadly outside the very active Church few people seem to have a clue what it is all about. There are so-called Advent Calendars available in some shops but very few, if any, are really about Advent, which is a Christian Season. Advent means coming - the preparation for the coming of Christmass and the celebration of the birth into the world, as a human being, of Jesus the Christ, who is the only true Saviour of mankind.

Advent should be a time of self examination and preparation for the annual celebration of Christmass, but also for the Second Coming of Christ. It reminds us in no uncertain terms that Christ promised to come again in judgement to close off the age, and reward each person for the way he or she has used God's gift to them of life.

If one is a Christian at all, or rather a practising Christian, and though there should not be, there is a difference, then one should be thinking of 'the future in the eternal present.'

What do I mean by that? As Christians, people who believe that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, and in obedience to His command, are baptised into Him, we live in the eternal present because we are 'in Christ' who was and is and is to come.

Although in our human flesh, we are, of course, living in time - 2009 A.D., yet because we are 'in Him' who is outside time, eternal, so are we. In other words because we are part of His true Body the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, we are beginning to experience now, in spite of the pains and sufferings of this present world, the joys, bliss and fulfilment of the world to come. The experience of the 'then in the now' is made very real when we worship with fellow members of the true Church and most especially in the active participation in the Eucharist or Holy Communion, commonly called the Mass. We meet God through our prayers and the reading of Holy Scripture, and in the fellowship with other members of His Body the Church, both those still living in this world and the Faithful Departed.

Christmass is about the coming of the Creator God into His world in the form of a human baby Jesus, so that He could not only experience the human life but could be a living example of true humanity. In Advent, therefore. Holy Church tries to help us understand the reason and meaning of our existence, and why Jesus came, why His Presence is with us still, and why, under the outward forms of consecrated Bread and Wine, He continues to come to us in the fulness of His Being to prepare us for, and keep us in, eternity with Himself.

Life is for living and living is for God; He is the only source of life, apart from God there is no real life and no true living.

So in Advent we are reminded that as created human beings each of us will experience death, and that we will have to give an account to our Creator of the use we made of our earthly life. The world does not want anyone to remember that there will be a Judgement of our attitudes and actions while we lived in the flesh, and most of us don't want to remember this either. Is this the real reason why folk ignore the Season of Advent and try to eat and drink themselves into false pleasure for Christmas?

Let us, as Christians, not fear The Judgement for the Judge is none other than the same Christ Child who came to earth to save us from sin and death. Let us look forward to Christ Jesus coming again in His glory, and pray that we may be worthy to receive Him.

Then comes Christmass Day itself, the Mas of Christ, the true rebirth of real life. The Child of the Virgin Mary, the Jewish maid is none other than God Himself, born into His own world in order to bring life first to His chosen people the Jews and through them to all the world.

As we have often said before, don't be deceived when you hear, through the influence of the Evil One, that Christmas was a pagan festival that the Christian Church deceptively took over and deliberately Christianised for its own purpose. Jesus IS an historical Person born in time the word of God Incarnate, and the greatest who ever lived, and continues to live after His Resurrection from the dead and Ascension into Heaven, where He live and reigns at the right hand of God the Father in the Unity of the Holy Spirit, as the One God, the Most Holy and undivided Trinity. Christmass is the celebration of Christ's birth and of our sure and certain hope of Life Eternal beyond the grave.

God wants everyone to follow Christ, and be free to live forever with Him in heaven. Invite your family and friends, and even the stranger, to come with you to a traditional act of worship especially at Christmass, and the Lord shall bless you and them.

My wife and family join me in wishing you all a holy Advent and a Merry Christmass.

Your Priest & Friend,

Fr. Brian