

“*Advent*” is a Latin word that can be translated as “*presence*” or “*coming*.”

In the ancient world, it was a technical term, denoting the arrival of a person such as a king or emperor (or the anticipated arrival of such a person, say through birth—think of all the excitement generated at this past July’s birth of Prince George in Britain). “*Advent*” could also indicate the coming of a deity, in which case the god’s advent was his emerging from concealment and making his presence known in power or else having it solemnly celebrated liturgically in an act of worship. Christians took over the word “*Advent*” in order to express their particular relationship to Jesus Christ. For us, he was and is the king who entered this earth and the fullness of our human condition, albeit without sin, and continues to remain with us especially in our celebration of the liturgy.

This truth was reinforced and newly proposed fifty years ago this month when the Second Vatican Council issued its first document: *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. Through the liturgy the Council Fathers reaffirmed, God-in-Christ “*advents*” into our collective and individual lives in this particular time and place through his word in the Scriptures and through physical sacramental symbols. When the Scriptures are proclaimed, the Council reminds us, it is God himself speaking; it is Jesus himself instructing. Because the Scriptures are God’s divine word, that word is effective, causing what they proclaim when joined to physical reality employed in the sacramental rites -- bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ; water becomes the means through which a person passes through Christ’s own death and resurrection and is brought into personal union with him; the oil of Chrism seals this relationship through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; personal sin is forgiven; the laying on of hands accompanied by the anointing of oil communicates healing grace to one who is ill; the laying on of hands and the prayer of the bishop who succeeds to the ministry of apostle, consecrates a man as a deacon or priest in conformity to Christ as servant and/or priest; words of commitment between a man and woman unite them as man and wife and they become the sacrament of the unbreakable union of Christ and, his body, the Church. Therefore, whenever the liturgy is celebrated we can affirm in truth that it is Christ himself who speaks and acts.

In the liturgy, we encounter Jesus, “*Emmanuel*”—“*God with us*”. Every celebration of the sacraments is an “*Advent*” in the truest sense of the term.

Perhaps we all have at one time or another thought or said (or someone has expressed to us) “Why doesn’t God do something about all the evil, suffering and death in the world?” Well, God *has* done something about it. God created you and me, given us the grace of faith and membership in the Church. Our mission, our vocation is to be the **Advent of God**. Advent is not primarily some kind of Church “warm up” for Christmas, much less some kind of historical reminiscence of the centuries before Christ or a looking to the heavens with some type of helpless longing for God to “do something” or a type of heavenly astronomy in which we read “signs” and predict the end and wait for God to come again and “finish up” his work. Yes, Advent does prepare us to commemorate the birth of Jesus and does remind us that at some point, true to his word, Christ will come again. Given these two realities **Advent is also, and I would submit primarily, the call to each of us to live the mission of our baptism: to be the light and presence of Christ in the world today. WE ARE TO BE THE ADVENT OF JESUS NOW!**

Today’s Scriptures call us to task. Saint Paul in the epistle and Jesus in the Gospel warn us against succumbing to complacency in our lives of faith. Here at St. Cecilia, “*Alpha for Catholics*”, “Man-Up” especially for the men of our parish, and other programs of life-long faith formation, all invite us to “stir into flame” the life of Christ received at baptism so that we can be the “**Advent**” of God for our families, community, world. This season is traditionally a time for each of us to examine how the presence of Christ mediated to us in word and sacrament is affecting our attitudes, words and actions through the sacrament of Penance as we prepare to experience a renewed birth in him at Christmas. I urge you to make use of this sacrament as part of your Christmas preparation.

Who is God calling you/me to be his **Advent** today?