

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT, Year B

“ADVENT PRESENCE”

This morning we enter a new liturgical year and a new season on Advent. Today’s Gospel message is clear: **“Be watchful! Be alert! ... You do not know when the Lord of the house is coming.”**

Advent is often described as a period of preparation for Christmas, the celebration of the moment in which our Lord first came to dwell with us, sinners. Benedict XVI provides the following interesting reflection on the nature of the Season of Advent:

“Advent” does not mean “expectation,” as some may think. It is a translation of the Greek word *parousia* which means “presence” or, more accurately, “arrival,” i.e., the beginning of a presence. In antiquity the word was a technical term for the presence of a king or ruler and also of a god being worshiped, who bestows his *parousia* on his devotees for a time. “Advent,” then, means a presence begun, the presence being that of God.

Advent reminds us, therefore, of two things:

First, that God’s presence in the world has already begun, that he is present though in a hidden manner;

Second, that his presence has only *begun* and is not yet full and complete, that it is in a state of development, of becoming and progressing toward its full form.

[God's] presence has already begun, and we, the faithful are the ones through whom he wishes to be present to the world.

Through our faith, hope and love, [God] wants his light to shine over and over again in the night of the world ... That night is “today” whenever the “Word” again becomes “flesh” or genuine human reality. “The Christ child comes” in a real sense whenever human beings act out of authentic love for the Lord.’ⁱ

Here are a few practical suggestions for Advent, based on the thoughts of a Catholic mother of six children:ⁱⁱ

- **Sacramental confession.** Bring your family to confession.
- **Practice detachment.** Go through your closets and drawers and give away generously to the poor.
- **Give up some activities** in order to give yourself some peace.
- **Send religious Christmas cards** with religious postage stamps.
- **If you write a Christmas letter**, use your correspondence to remind your friends and family just how special they are in the eyes of God, especially in relation to the Mystery of the Incarnation.
- **Adopt a family** from the parish giving tree. Welcome the stranger.
- **Place lights on the outside of your house** as a reminder that Christ is the Light of the World. Light an Advent wreath during meals.

May Advent be a new beginning of the presence of God among us!

ⁱ Taken from *Benedictus: Day by Day with Pope Benedict XVI*, Edited by Rev. Peter John Cameron, O.P., Ignatius Press / Magnificat, p. 364

ⁱⁱ Based on the ideas presented by Julie Musselman, see <http://www.wf-f.org/12-4-Musselman.html>