

What is Advent for you?

For that matter, why do we celebrate Christmas?

Is it just a memory?

A recollection or recognition of Jesus' birth?

His birthday

While it is these things

It has to be even more

Because if that is all it is, it can lose its luster

When we look at birthdays, their meanings vary

For the little babies

It is more about the parents, grandparents, siblings

Then we hit an age where they are all about me

What I get, what I do

I think there comes a time where we enjoy them

But it isn't about me so much

They are important to recognize for others

And then we come to a time where we realize

Grandma or grandpa may not have too many birthdays left

They become important to the family

But the birth of Christ is different

If the above is all we celebrate

We risk missing the entire point

Christmas isn't just a celebration of a past event

It isn't just an expectation of a future event

But even more, it is a current event

His coming to life within us in a new and vibrant way

An expectation that God desires to do something in my heart

And Advent is a time to prepare our hearts for God's greatest gift

Isaiah can help us

The Israelite people had wandered from their covenant with God

They had become like unclean people

The Israelite people had turned away

They had become like the pagans

But they were still His Chosen Ones

They were still his children

They were still the clay in the hands of the potter

He will form them anew

He will form us anew

But we cannot just sit back and wait for it

We have to actively desire it

We have to actively seek him

St Paul tells us in our second reading we already have all we need

The Corinthian's were a people in confusion, much as we are today

Immorality, liturgical chaos, doctrinal confusion

But St Paul tells them and us

God is faithful

He calls us to fellowship with his son, Jesus Christ

God desires our hearts more than we desire him

He has done everything for us

Our work is to seek him

To use the gifts of baptism and confirmation

To embrace our call

To be awake and watchful

Jesus tells us three times in this short Gospel

Watch; stay awake and alert

Like servants left in charge of the household

Waiting for the return of the master

Each with their own job

They are warned that he may return at any moment

What will he find on his return?

Servants awake and busy with their tasks

Or servants who have grown tired

Indifferent in their work

Falling asleep

So, yes Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ

But it is more than a recollection of a past event

His actual birth as a child in Bethlehem

Even more than the recognition of some future event

When he will return in glory

It is his entering into our hearts in a new and mysterious way

This year

In a way he has never entered before

And Advent is a time for preparation

Turning back to him

Preparing the soil

How do we do these things?

Take some time in the silence of your heart

Take some time with your families

He speaks to us in Sacred Scripture

At the celebration of the Mass

Is Sunday the only day we hear the Word of God?

How about reading a bit of Sacred Scripture each day?

Or taking advantage of daily Mass?

He is present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist in a way like no other

Perhaps there are relationships that need rebuilding

Perhaps more structure or regularity to prayer

Finding a good book to read

Seeking ways to separate ourselves from certain attachments

Even things that may be good in themselves

But not leading us closer to Christ

Try to become more aware of how he is moving in our lives

Each week we light one more candle in the wreath

It reminds us that the light of Christ is getting closer and closer

Brighter and brighter

He has torn open the heavens

He has come down to our world

Now he desires to come into our hearts in a new and unique way

In Word and Sacrament

Watch and be ready

May this time of Advent be a time of preparation for each of us

So our hearts will welcome Christ as never before on Christmas morning

May God bless all of you and your loved ones this Advent