



A New Look at Advent

Prepare ye the way of the Lord! - Isaiah 40:3

Each year, we begin Advent on the fourth Sunday before Christmas, and begin to prepare for the coming of our Lord's birth. Preparations often include wreaths, nativity scenes, advent trees and special gatherings.

Did you know that Advent is more than just Christmas? The word advent comes from the Latin word *advenio*, which means "to come to". The Church teaches that Jesus comes to us in three ways.

Jesus comes to us in his birth. Consider a couple expecting their first child. They do more than decorate the house as a reminder a child is coming. They prepare a room. They buy a bed, blankets, and clothes to make the child comfortable. They clear out junk and put away breakables to make the home safe. Advent is more than a time to remember our Lord's birth. We want to make the infant Jesus comfortable, by our words and deeds. We put away breakable feelings. We make room for Jesus in our heart. "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16) When Jesus comes, will there be room in your life?

Jesus also comes to us daily and in Holy Communion. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him" (Revelation 3:20). Consider preparations made for a special guest. Clutter is removed and the house is swept and dusted. A special meal is prepared for the guest to enjoy. We are ready to welcome them when they knock. Advent is a time to look for clutter in our life and to cleanse our heart so we are ready to let Jesus in. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is a good way to remove the clutter of sin in our life and to clean our house so we can welcome Jesus. When Jesus knocks, will you be prepared to welcome him and let him into your heart?

Jesus will come to us one last time on the clouds of heaven (Matthew 26:64). The Church teaches that Advent is also a time to prepare for the second coming of Jesus. "By sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their desire for his second coming" (Catechism 524). On the last day, Jesus will come to take us to our new heavenly home. Consider preparations made to move from one home to another. Little by little, we completely empty the old home. We often take a discerning look at all our possessions and get rid of things we don't need in our life any more. We prepare for Jesus to move us from our earthly home to our heavenly home by emptying our life of worldly possessions and self-pleasing decorations. By the last day in our earthly abode, nothing should be left: no possessions, no valuables, no decorations. "We do not know the day or hour of His coming" (Matthew 25:13). If Jesus appeared in the clouds tomorrow, would you be ready to move?

As we consider ways to celebrate Advent, let's remember the words of St. John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). This Advent, let's look for ways to make less of our self so Jesus can increase in us. Advent begins the Church's new year. It is a good time to make spiritual New Year's resolutions of repentance, fasting, prayer, and charitable works. Let's be ready for all three ways Jesus comes to us.

Behold, I am coming soon! - Revelation 22:13

Amen! Come Lord Jesus!

Meditation:

- If the Inn keeper knew Jesus was coming, what might he have done different? What should I do?
- What in my spiritual temple is unclean and would embarrass me from letting Jesus in?
- If I knew for sure Jesus's second coming was next week, what would I start changing now?
- How can I use this Advent to permanently change my life to love and serve Jesus better?