



"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 advent wreaths, nativity scenes, advent trees and prayer.

Did you know 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 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. *"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 at the Inn of our heart?

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 clean our heart so we are not embarrassed to let Jesus in. We make special preparations for receiving Jesus in the Eucharist by the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When Jesus knocks, will we be ready to welcome Him in?

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."* (Catholic Catechism, paragraph 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 by completely emptying the old home. By the last day, nothing is left...no possessions, no valuables, no decorations. We prepare for Jesus to move us from our Earthly home to our Heavenly home by emptying our life of worldly possessions and pleasing decorations. Remember, *"We do not know the day or hour of His coming"* (Matthew 25:13). If Jesus appeared in the clouds tomorrow, would we be ready to leave our home on earth?

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." (Revelations 22:13). Amen! Come Lord Jesus!

Meditation:

- The Inn keeper did not know Jesus was coming. What would he have done different if he knew who it was?
- What can I do during Advent to be ready for the infant Jesus to arrive at the Inn of my heart?
- What in my spiritual temple is embarrassing and would prevent me from letting Jesus in when He knocks?
- How can I welcome Jesus each and every day of my life as though He were a special, honored guest?
- What would I do different today if I knew Jesus was coming next week...tomorrow? Why am I not doing it now?
- What can I do to increase Jesus in my life and decrease myself?
- Does life just go back to normal after Advent? How can I keep advent with me and stay prepared all the time?