

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We begin Advent. We begin a new liturgical year. Advent has a specific motion – seen in the readings and prayers – moving from preparing for the second coming of Christ to a remembrance of the Incarnation of Christ (His first coming, coming in the flesh). One of the constant cries throughout the centuries has been “*Marana tha*, come Lord Jesus” (*marana tha* literally means “Come, our Lord”). He is coming! In Advent, we prepare for that coming. Throughout Advent this year, I will use this space to enter into prayer about the coming of Jesus and what He asks of us in this season. I invite you to enter into prayer with me.

Dear Jesus, You love us so much, so tenderly. You want what is best for each of us. You have gone to prepare a place for us in the Father’s house. Your one desire is that we love You in return. O Jesus, this is the gift of freedom You have given to us – the ability to love You... and the ability to choose NOT to love You, for love is not love if it is not free.

Jesus, we so often break Your Heart by choosing not to love You. You tell us that You respect our freedom so much that we can choose to be away from You for all eternity in Hell. You warn us over and over again that the end is coming – that we must prepare to see you face to face, that we know not the day, nor the hour.

Dearest Jesus, please give us the courage to throw off the works of darkness. Jesus, for all of our anger, rivalry and jealousy, please forgive. Give us the courage to look to You, how You are meek, forgiving, grateful and desire the best for each person. Give these graces to us. Jesus, for all the times when we dehumanize others, making of them objects for our pleasure and use, instead of the precious sons and daughters of God that they are, for all the times that we disrespect the incredible gift of human sexuality which points to the very Heart of the Trinity, please forgive. Transform our hearts, soften our hearts so that we may truly love each person made in Your image and likeness. Jesus for all the ways that we abuse the gifts of this world – especially food and drink – Lord, forgive. Help us to look to you as the only final satisfaction for our desires and longings. Jesus, for all the ways that we waste the incredible gifts You have given us, especially the gift of *time*, forgive, and help us to use each gift, each moment in ways that draw us to You. Help us to throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light!

We know, Jesus, that there will come a day when everything in this world will end. May we not be so focused on the chaos of the here and now, on getting only the most for *me* in this world, but to invest in that which will last for eternity. We know that we may not get warning, but that the “thief” will come for a reckoning of our lives on an unknown day and at an unknown hour. Help us always to be prepared.

Jesus, we love You; we trust in You! We know that Your coming will be joyous, if only we are on watch for You, placing our lives at Your service. *Marana tha*, come Lord Jesus.