

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We continue to move through Advent. We remember the constant cry of “*Marana tha*, come Lord Jesus” (*marana tha* literally means “Come, our Lord”). He is coming! I again invite you to enter into prayer with me for that coming.

Lord Jesus, in this weekend’s Gospel, we see how our way of thinking is so often clouded by the struggles of this world. Your cousin, St. John the Baptist, was so sure of Your identity when You were Baptized, when he witnessed the Holy Spirit come down upon You. When he ended up in prison and the Kingdom of Heaven did not come as he expected, however, he started to doubt. We, too, start to doubt because You are not always the Messiah we expect.

O Jesus, why is it that when we face adversity, pain and suffering, we so often begin to doubt Your existence, or at least that You are *good and loving*? And yet, when we look at how You endured Your Passion and Cross for us, when we look at the suffering that those closest to You endured – Mary, the disciples, all of the saints throughout the centuries – why do we think that suffering is a sign that You are angry or non-existent? *Marana tha*, come Jesus, and heal our way of thinking, give us strength to endure our trials, and faith to trust in Your love!

Jesus, when Your Kingdom doesn’t come in the way we expect it to, help us to see the truth of Your love. When our politicians, our bosses, our Church leaders, our family members, our friends don’t meet our expectations, help us to see how *You are in charge*, how Your hand is reaching out and leading the world. *Marana tha*, come Jesus, and conform our expectations to Yours!

Jesus, very often our way of thinking about is skewed. Our understanding of justice, mercy, and joy is so often different from what You have revealed to us is at the heart of who You are. Jesus, when our hearts cry out for vengeance and retaliation, give us the gift of being able to forgive – Your true justice. When we justify our wrong and evil actions by saying, “God will understand,” give us a true understanding of Your mercy, which requires a true repentance, trust and surrender to Your Will. When we seek after happiness by seeking pleasure and the passing things of this world, give us the grace to see how joy comes not from *taking*, but by generously giving, not by seeking immediate gratification, but by delaying the immediate for the eternal good. *Marana tha*, come Jesus, and renew our minds, how we think about the world.

*Marana tha*, come Lord Jesus.