



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We have entered the Season of Advent, the beginning of the liturgical year. Every year, we walk through the mysteries of Jesus' life. Advent is the time of waiting, like the ancient Israelites, for the coming of the Lord. With great joy, we celebrate the coming of the Lord at Christmas, punctuated by the Feast of the Holy Family, the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God (New Years Day), Epiphany, and the Baptism of the Lord. After a short jaunt into Ordinary Time (more on that below), we enter Lent, a time of penance and fasting and prayer, to prepare ourselves for the Easter Mysteries. At the end of Lent, we have the Triduum – the three days – Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday, leading us into the 50 days of the Easter Season. These mysteries of the Lord's suffering, death and resurrection draw us into the heart of the person of Christ Himself. We remember these each year so that we can always be mindful

of the great and saving grace pour out from God to us, that we may be with Him forever in heaven. Easter concludes with the celebration of Pentecost – the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birthday of the Church.

We then enter Ordinary Time. These 34 weeks are not simply "ho-hum, blah, ordinary time." Rather, ordinary in this context means "ordered time" – that we have a method by which we walk in these 34 weeks following the life of Christ. We walk with the Gospel writers into the Mystery of who Jesus is. We have 33 weeks, remembering the 33 years Jesus spent in His earthly life, and then we celebrate the Solemnity of Christ the King (last weekend), and have this 34<sup>th</sup> week celebrating Jesus in eternity.

As we enter this new liturgical year, we begin focusing on another Gospel. Last year, our Sunday lectionary readings were mostly from the Gospel of Mark (and, at times, from John). This year is "Year C," and we will be reading through the Gospel of Luke. Luke has many stories that are not in the other Gospels: the pre-birth and birth stories of Jesus, as well as the Presentation in the Temple; the parable of the Good Samaritan; the story of Martha and Mary; the parables of the Prodigal Son, the Rich Man and Lazarus, and the Pharisee and the Tax Collector; the story of Zacchaeus, and many more. At the Cross, Luke tells us that Jesus forgave those who killed Him, He welcomed the repentant thief into Paradise, and commended His spirit into His Father's hands. After the resurrection, we hear about the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. St. Luke also focused on the role of women in the Church. Enter into the Gospel of Luke this year!

As always, at the beginning of Advent, we are invited to remember the end of the world and to be reminded to "Be vigilant at all times and pray..." (Luke 21:36). We are invited to enter into a time of preparation. We never know when our end will come, when we will come before the judgment seat of God. Therefore, the Church wants to remind us that we are to prepare ourselves. And what strength we need during these trying times! God invites us to surrender to Him, even when inflation is skyrocketing, even when we still have COVID floating around, even when our core morals and Faith are denigrated and mocked by the world. We can trust our God to provide for all our needs... if we entrust ourselves into His hands.

May our Advent be a time of preparing our hearts for the Lord.