

THIRD SUNDAY

Advent: Why Bother??? Every year, we observe Advent for the 4 weeks before Christmas. But we are no longer waiting the coming of the Messiah, so isn't this observance just a pretense and an unnecessary bother?

Why Bother??? St. Paul says that Jesus came and saved us "once for all" (Rom. 6:10). He won't be coming as a little baby again! So all the Old Testament readings for the Masses of the Sundays of Advent seem rather irrelevant – they basically talk about preparing for something that already happened! Or did it??? If it already happened, is it rather foolish to prepare for it. Yet the Church has been observing Advent for centuries. ***So for what are we preparing?***

The Old Testament essentially is the story about how God tells us humans what to do to be happy – and for awhile we do what He tells us and are happy. But gradually we think we know better ways of being happy and try them. So He lets us do our thing and experience the consequences of our decisions – one of the best ways to learn! When we have realized that following our own ideas didn't make us happy, we are again ready to learn from our mistakes, God forgives us, and we do His will and are happy again. That process was repeated with the Israelites multiple times as Scripture tells us. Jesus' coming as a man was supposed to be the turning point so we wouldn't repeat our same mistakes over and over as the Israelites had done. But we still do, personally and as groups.

Indeed, Jesus not only became man, He died, rose, and saved us. And He stayed with us – physically in the Holy Eucharist – to help us do His will. He is already here. So why bother preparing for His coming at Christmas by observing Advent? It seems quite illogical. Of course, lots of things God has done may seem illogical to us because He is infinite and we are limited, as He told us, "My ways are not your ways, nor are My thoughts your thoughts. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so are My ways above your ways and My thoughts above your thoughts" (Is. 55:8-9). To get a more graphic idea of this, look on the Internet for "Powers of 10". That shows just how finite we really are. But maybe we can stretch our finite understanding to grasp why the Church has us observe Advent.

Because ... In addition to telling us that the Messiah would come to save us, Scripture also tells us that Jesus will come again, but not as a Child as He did the first Christmas. The Book of Revelation is a kind of special summary of that promise. So if Jesus is coming again, observing Advent makes sense. In fact, Jesus will come again for all of us as Revelation tells us, and also for each of us at our death. And He told us to be ready (See Mt. 24:36-44; Lk. 12:35-40).

Such being the case, in effect, our whole life is a kind of Advent – or should be.

We should be observing that Advent by living as Jesus taught us: Love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. He even gave us some specifications of how to do this in the Commandments and the Beatitudes.

So Advent, our life, provides a great time for us to practice all those things to be ready for when Jesus comes again, individually and for the whole of creation. Because of that, we Lasallians remind ourselves frequently: ***Let us remember that we are in the holy presence of God.*** That reminds us to love Him and one another as He wants us to. If we do so, we will be happy and well prepared for our final Christmas! And observing Advent, Christmas, and all the other feasts of the liturgical year also remind us we are always in Advent in our lives – and we will be happy if we follow the guidelines and follow our Lasallian greeting: ***Live, Jesus, in our hearts.*** (Now and) ***Forever.***

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