



Spirituality for Today
Dec. 1, 2015

THE JOURNEY TO CHRISTMAS
by Father John Catoir

Advent is like the breaking dawn; while Christmas is the Sunrise. Lord knows we need a sunrise in this violent world in which we now live. We need to keep hope alive, and we need to live joyfully in spite of everything.

The shopping malls were ablaze with Christmas decorations even before Thanksgiving Day. They turn themselves into bustling citadels of commerce. This is good, but they miss the essential point: Jesus Christ, who comes into the world to save us.

Christians try to approach Christmas with a spirit of reverence and quiet joy because they know that “Jesus is the reason for the season.” The word “Advent” is from the Latin, meaning, “The Coming” of Jesus at Christmas time. Advent also anticipates His Second Coming.

“The Son of Man comes to save what was lost,” (Luke 19:10).

Advent, which lasts for four weeks, helps us to anticipate the celebration of the mystery of the Incarnation- God became man in order to bring us out of the darkness into his eternal light. During Advent we stress four great themes: hope, light, joy and surrender.

On the **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT** the theme is hope. Hope is an expectation with certitude.

On the **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT** the theme is Light: Jesus said, “I have come to bring Light to the World, so that no one who believes in me is left in the darkness.” (John 12:44).

The Light of Christ dispels the darkness of sin and confusion. “John the Baptist went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. (Luke 3: 2). The skeptic says “What good is religion, don’t you see that the world is in such a mess? Yes, but the light of Christ and the call to repentance are intended to purify us for the coming of the Lord. “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from .carousing and drunkenness, and the anxieties of daily life,” (Luke 21:34).

On the THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT-the theme is Joy, which is the simplest form of gratitude. This is GAUDATE Sunday, and the liturgy takes a slight break from the somber mood of penance, as it reintroduces the notion of joy. We await the coming of the Lord. Joy is the by- product of love, that’s why we increase our joy by our loving service to one another. **“Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice! The Lord is near, there is no need to worry,” (Phil. 4:4).**

On THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT the theme is surrender. The liturgy brings us back to Bethlehem where Jesus was born. It reminds us of when Mary accepted her vocation to be the mother of the Messiah. She later proclaimed, “My soul magnifies the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior,” (Luke 1:47). Joy and surrender are two facets of the same diamond. Along with hope and light they complete the dynamics of human holiness.

Advent is the prelude to Christmas, and I want to take this opportunity to wish you a merry Christmas. In that spirit I send warm greetings for God’s choicest blessings upon you and yours during this holy season. I pray, that “your joy may be full”, and that your home may be at peace.

May the Lord be your strength and your joy?