

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Dear Parishioners,

I'm sorry I missed giving a reflection last week, as things open up it's been a bit busier.

Firstly, today is the end of the liturgical year, and I'd like to thank you all for your faith and support of our Parishes. It's been a very difficult year, and continues to be so, so I thank you for your faith and love of Jesus Christ and your prayers for each other. Please continue to pray for all in our Parishes who are in need. Thanks to all who have been thoughtful in dropping off donations and giving electronically during the restrictions too. All of that keeps our Parishes operating and, thankfully, both Parishes are still in a good financial positions.

Advent is upon us! This Sunday we begin the liturgical year.

As we know, Advent is a time of spiritual preparation for Christmas, so it's a time to focus on our spiritual life. But we can say more about it than that.

The season of Advent represents the time of the Old Testament where God was preparing Israel for the coming Christ. So during the time of Advent, the particular grace that is offered to us is to get our souls ready for recognising the coming Christ, believing in Him and receiving Him anew. God worked for a long time throughout the history of Israel, but He pours all those graces upon us over just four weeks. Over four weeks, God works in a particular way to increase our desire, our expectation, to see the adorable face of Christ, so that when we finally see Him in the manger we are overcome with joy- an experience of love and peace that overflows in our soul as joy.

Repentance is a part of this preparation as we'll hear from John the Baptist. As God moves our soul with His grace to prepare for Him, we want to do all we can to rid our lives of evil habits. Yet we are also moved to a sincere and renewed sorrow for past sins in our life that have been forgiven and are in our past yet remind us still of how the love of God has redeemed us. A reminder to try to get to confession before Christmas, which is offered half an hour before each Mass.

So, in Advent we prepare for the coming of Christ, but not only His coming as a baby. Christ not only came as a baby, but also comes to us now into our soul and in the Blessed Sacrament, and who will come again at the Second Coming. That is why this week's Sunday Gospel speaks about when "they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."

At Christmas time I like to draw the parallel between the baby Jesus in the manger and the Eucharist. I think it's a very fruitful meditation. When we see Christ as a baby we see God becoming totally vulnerable. So too in the Eucharist we see Christ become totally vulnerable to us. God is defenceless in the Eucharist. At every Mass Jesus is the most silent, the smallest, the weakest, and the humblest. And yet as a baby, and in the Eucharist, He is holding the whole world in existence. Let's remember this when we receive Him in communion. A 'handle with care' sticker would be an understatement. By loving us, and making us free to love or reject Him, He makes Himself vulnerable to us. Which also means the kind of love Jesus has for us, revealed as a baby and in the Eucharist, is easy to ignore and be indifferent to. So, let's use Advent, the time when God offers us a particular grace of increasing our desire for Him, to increase our love for Him in the Eucharist and never take Him for granted.

Lastly, as we hear in this Sunday's Gospel, He won't always reveal Himself as vulnerable, but in the end will come in power and glory. Which is good to remember if we think evil has the upper hand in our lives and in our world. What a happy sight it will be indeed for us to finally see Jesus in all His

glory, and be standing alongside countless others who love Him as He should be loved. Something indeed to look forward to!

God bless,

Fr John Paul