



Advent: A Favourable Time

Advent invites us
to a commitment to vigilance,
looking beyond ourselves,
expanding our mind and heart
in order to open ourselves up
to the needs of people,
of brothers and sisters,
and to the desire for a new world.

It is the desire of many people
tormented by hunger,
by injustice and by war.
It is the desire of the poor,
the weak, the abandoned.

This is a favourable time to open our hearts,
to ask ourselves concrete questions
about how and for whom
we expend our lives.

(Pope Francis)

The Sacrifice of Love

How do we know when someone loves us, and how do we know when we truly love someone? Love is easy in good times, but in hard times, the proof of love shows itself. Then there are the sacrifices made for those you love. Love is shown in the trust that is held between those in love and in their commitment to the hope of a life-giving relationship together.


Love risks itself to the beloved who, even though known intimately, always remains a mystery. Such love is not, or not just, a sentimental feeling, or not just a sense of duty based on mutual obligations. There is a mysteriousness in love that is awe-inspiring: both attractive and fearful at the same time.

In Advent we prepare to welcome the manifestation of God's love for us in human form: that God knows us and trusts us and cares for us even more than we care for ourselves. And to prove that, God takes the risk and becomes a human being, one of us. Like us, Jesus is born as a baby, weak and vulnerable, dependent on human beings for the basics of life. God does that because more than us, God knows we are loveable, capable of giving and receiving love. God knows we are created to love, as Jesus is, even though we might doubt this for ourselves.
God risks loving us this way.

And when we love, we too risk. We risk our lives to this mysterious God whom we are invited to trust in the midst of the continuing disorder in the world, with the pain, suffering and death every human endures, and which Jesus himself endures. Jesus does this to show that humans are born not for death but for resurrection. It is truly human to live life encountering death but to remain in love with God no matter what. God does not take away death but endures death to reveal, beyond death, resurrection. The baby Jesus comes with a mission to reveal God's love for all. His life opens the path back to the fullness of life which is God's gift to us. Advent is recognizing, and accepting, that gift which opens us to a new life.

What are the sacrifices of love others have made for you?
List some of these and sit with that gift
...and the gratitude you feel.

What are the sacrifices of love you have made for others?
Sit with some of these and experience what it means to be human.



We are never fully at home in this world.
Something is always missing, but over time
we resign ourselves to what is given, are grateful for that,
and settle down to live the life we have
with its joys and sorrows, births and deaths.
We are aware that time passes and that one day -
we know not when - we, too, will be gone.

It is precisely into such a world that Christ comes.
Christ's birth, death and resurrection did not happen
in two worlds: this one and the next. It all happened
in the one world we live in now. And while historically it happened
two thousand years ago, spiritually it is happening here and now.

We pray for the grace to see the goodness of the Lord in the life we
lead now. Too often we live out of our hurts; this closes us off from
celebrating the gifts of life given to us in this life.

We may even consider it naive and sentimental to do this...
if we do, we indulge ourselves in this season
with the fantasies we treat ourselves to at Christmas.

But Advent offers us another gift.
It is the gift of having our eyes opened to a love that is present not
just in the excitement of the season but in the commonplaces of
our daily life. It is the often unnoticed work of love by those we
take for granted who keep life going. It is present in those who
have sacrificed their lives to make sure we have a better life.

Advent invites us to become aware that our lives are possible only
because we are interconnected within all the dimensions of
creation. We are here because of those who have gone before us,
because of those whose lives support us now, and because of those
with whom we share and give life to. Holding all these connections
together is Love who gives life.

It is the Christ whose coming we are preparing to celebrate.

Ask God to show you the previously unnoticed people
and things in your life that have made your life worth living.

Ask God to show you how your life
gives life to others, by the work you do
and by the way you live your life.