

The Holy Seasons: The Catholic Church has designated the four weeks preceding Christmas as Advent, a time to prepare the way of the Lord for His coming as our King and Saviour. In addition, the Church teaches that when she celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, and also the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. In the seasons of Advent and Christmas, we should engage ourselves more fruitfully to make these celebrations not only meaningful for each one of us but also for others.

It seems fitting that Advent is the beginning of the liturgical calendar, for it is a season of spiritual preparation marked by an eager longing for the Birth of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. There are age-old Advent practices, which will help our children and families live closer to Christ. The practices are time-tested and proven. They teach us the doctrine of redemption and develop a sense of generosity towards God (cf. Catechism, nos. 2222-26).

To observe this Holy Season of Advent and also to prepare well for the Birth of Christ in our hearts, homes and society,

- Let us repent for our sins and ask for forgiveness of God and our neighbour;
- Let us try to understand the in-depth meaning of these holy seasons;
- Let us make known the importance of these holy seasons to our non-Christian friends;
- Let us reach out the love of God to the needy and the poor by giving them alms and clothes;
- Let us make peace with one another, especially with those who have hurt us and vice-versa; and
- Let us try to live a peaceful and joyful life.

World AIDS Day, which is observed on December 1st each year, is a day when people around the world raise awareness about HIV/AIDS. They assert their duties and responsibilities in order to increase human cooperation and possible homogeneous correspondence between the mass and the HIV affected people. On this day the individuals and organizations come together to bring attention to the global AIDS epidemic and introduce ways concerning how AIDS can be treated, how it can be prevented from spreading and how the world can ensure that a pandemic never happen.

The main aim of the World AIDS Day is to bring people's attention to the worldwide challenges and consequences of the epidemic in order to create change. World Aids Day was initiated following a summit of Health Ministers in London (1988). In the meeting, the leaders realized that a united global effort was required to check the spread of HIV and AIDS.

The World AIDS Day provides governments, national AIDS programmes, welfare organizations, community organizations and individuals an opportunity to focus on the global AIDS epidemic. Each year a theme is chosen to highlight different aspects of the problem and ways in which different groups of people are affected by HIV.

The theme for World AIDS Day 2016 is: Hands Up for HIV Prevention. According to the AIDS by the numbers 2016 Report from UNAIDS, 1.1 million people worldwide died of AIDS-related illnesses in 2015. By the end of 2015, an estimated 36.7 million people around the world were living with HIV.

Misericordia et Misera: At the Closing Ceremony of the Year of Mercy on the 20th November, Pope Francis urged Christians to imitate Jesus, embracing "the scandal of his humble love." The Pope's repeatedly appealed to the faithful to reject "the comforts and certainties offered by the

world". His Holiness also included a warning to the Church he leads: "The lure of power and success seems an easy, quick way to spread the Gospel," he said. "We soon forget how the Kingdom of God works."

At the conclusion of the Sunday's Mass, Pope Francis signed an apostolic letter closing the Year of Mercy, and it is called "Misericordia et Misera" ("Mercy and Misery). To symbolize that he was entrusting it to the entire People of God, Pope Francis handed the copies of the letter to a few representatives from different walks of life that were present at the Closing Ceremony. Unless Pope Francis or a future Pope calls another special jubilee in the meantime, the next regularly scheduled Holy Year would take place in 2025.

On 6th December, I will be celebrating the 49th anniversary of my Priestly Ordination. While I thank God for his abundant blessings and for all the favours and graces he has bestowed on me and the Archdiocese, may I request all of you to keep praying for me so that I may continue to serve the Lord with increased zeal and dedication. I will pray for all of you when I offer the Holy Mass on that day.

Reflection: A gentleman once visited a temple under construction where he saw a sculptor making an idol of God. Suddenly he noticed a similar idol lying nearby. Surprised, he asked the sculptor, "Do you need two statues of the same idol?" "No," said the sculptor without looking up, "We need only one, but the first one got damaged at the last stage."

The gentleman examined the idol and found no apparent damage. "Where is the damage?" he asked.

"There is a scratch on the nose of the idol." said the sculptor, still busy with his work.

"Where are you going to install the idol?" the gentleman questioned. The sculptor replied that it would be installed on a pillar twenty feet high.

"If the idol is that far, who is going to know that there is a scratch on the nose?" the gentleman asked.

The sculptor stopped his work, looked up at the gentleman, smiled and said, "**I know it and God knows it!**"

Dear Friends, the desire to excel should be exclusive of the fact whether someone appreciates it or not. Excellence is a drive from inside, not outside. Excel at a task today – not necessarily for someone else to notice but for our own satisfaction. And, therefore, let us do whatever we are supposed to do with utmost care and devotion.

May I wish all of you a Holy Season of Advent and a Merry Christmas. And I also invoke the blessings of the Infant Jesus upon all of you and all your dear ones.

+ **Bernard Moras**
Archbishop of Bangalore