

Season of Advent: The word "advent" comes from the Latin "adventus" meaning "arrival" or "coming," particularly of something having great importance. Every year at this time we keep up the feeling of expectancy and joyful anticipation. Advent is a period of spiritual preparation in which many Christians make themselves ready for the coming, or birth of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Celebrating Advent typically involves a season of prayer, fasting, and repentance, followed by anticipation, hope, and joy.

The Liturgical year begins with Advent and ends with the Solemnity of Christ the King. Advent means the Coming of Christ. The Fathers of the Church speak of three advents of Christ: These are the comings of the Lord: the first in the flesh, the second in the soul, and the third for the judgment. In his Book the Spirit of the Liturgy, Cardinal Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) points out that while the season of lent tells us what we have to do, the season of advent tells us what God wants to do with us. So in a certain sense advent tells us what our attitude should be – an attitude of communion with each other and an attitude of being the Church. The Blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman explains this very well, "... So we all around, each in his place, look out for the great Advent, [...] Each in his place, with his own heart, with his own wants, with his own thoughts, his own intention, with his own prayers, separate but concordant, watching what is going on, watching its progress, uniting in its consummation – not painfully and hopelessly following a hard form of prayer from beginning to end, but, like a concert of musical instruments, each different but concurring in a sweet harmony [...] There are little children there, and old men, and simple labourers and students in seminaries, priests preparing for Mass, priests making their thanksgiving; there are innocent maidens, and there are penitent sinners; but out of these many minds rises one Eucharistic hymn, and the great Action is the measure and scope of it." (Newman in Loss and Gain).

Let us celebrate Advent not only by thanking God for Christ's first coming to Earth as a baby, but also for his presence among us today through the Holy Spirit, and in preparation and anticipation of his final coming at the end of time.

This year we will begin the Season of Advent of 3rd December. And it is also the start of the new liturgical year.

The Readings for the Liturgical Year 2017-18: Sundays: Year B and Week Days: Year II

Pope Francis says: "Mass is not a Show": The Eucharistic Celebration is "to redo Calvary", not theatre. Significant words that emphasize the risks of "do-it-yourself liturgy" and chattering in church, along with the risks of the aesthetic spectacularization of those who end up defining the ritual by the sumptuousness of the garments.

One of the things that strikes the most in observing Pope Francis as he celebrates Mass - whether it be pontifical Masses in St. Peter's, the great celebrations during his journeys, or the weekly liturgy in the chapel of Casa Santa Marta - is his attitude. Such an absorbed attitude that, it might lead to think, the Pope is not in his usual mood because he looks too serious. As it is well known, Bergoglio did not want to change the master of pontifical ceremonies, confirming Monsignor Guido Marini, who had been chosen by Benedict XVI. The papal liturgical celebrations have not undergone significant changes, unless we consider among them the fact that Pope Francis prefers simple garments.

Of "What is Mass and its importance", the Pope said it quite clearly on November 22, 2017 during the general audience. His words sweep away, once again, and after the official denials, all the biased speculation about a phantom commission that would have been tasked with "reforming" the Catholic Rite in order to bring it closer to the Protestant one.

To understand the value of the Holy Mass, Pope Francis explained, “we must first of all understand the biblical meaning of “memorial”, which is more than a mere remembrance of a past event; it is the making present of that event, which enables us to share in its saving power. The Eucharist “always brings us to the apex of God’s action of salvation: the Lord Jesus, making Himself broken bread for us, pours out his mercy upon us, as he did on the cross, in order to renew our hearts, our lives and our entire world”.

The 50th Anniversary of my Sacerdotal Ordination: I am pleased to inform you that I will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of my Priestly Ordination on 6th December 2017. On this occasion, I thank God for his abundant blessings and for all the favours and graces he has so generously bestowed upon me and the Archdiocese.

I will be offering a Thanksgiving Holy Mass on 6th December at St. Francis Xavier’s Cathedral at 5 p.m. Kindly participate in it and pray for me so that I may continue to serve the Lord with increased zeal and dedication. I will pray for all of you at this Holy Mass and also pray for more Priestly and Religious Vocations to the Archdiocese.

Christmas Greetings: Christ, the Saviour of the world, is born for us and hence let us rejoice in the day of our salvation. —Let us open our hearts to receive the grace of this day, which is Christ himself. Jesus is the radiant day which has dawned on the horizon of humanity.

It is a day of mercy in which God our Father has revealed his great tenderness to the entire world; it is a day of light that dispels the darkness of fear and anxiety; it is a day of peace, which makes for encounter, dialogue and, above all, reconciliation; and it is a day of joy: a great joy for the poor, the lowly and for all the people (cf. Lk. 2:10)

Christmas is an event which is renewed in every family, parish and community which receives the love of God made incarnate in Jesus Christ. Where God is born, peace is born. And where peace is born, there is no longer room for hatred and for war. Where God is born, hope is born; and where hope is born, persons regain their dignity. May our closeness today be felt by those who are most vulnerable in our society. Where God is born, mercy flourishes. Mercy is the most precious gift which God gives us and in which we are called to discover that tender love of our heavenly Father for each of us. Today, then, let us together rejoice in the day of our salvation. As we contemplate the Crib, let us gaze on the open arms of Jesus, which show us the merciful embrace of God.

I convey to all of you my prayerful wishes for a meaningful celebration of the holy season of Advent and Christmas that all of us may receive the grace of God in abundance.

May I also, with great joy and love, wish you and all your relatives and friends: A Merry Christmas and a joyful Celebration.

Reflection: There is a story about a father and his young son who were walking through the mountains. Suddenly, the son fell, hurting his leg on a rock. He screamed, 'AAhhhh!'

To his surprise, he heard a voice repeating, 'AAhhhh!'

This made him even more curious. So, he yelled, 'Who are you?' Back came the same answer, 'Who are you?'

Feeling a bit perturbed by this response, he yelled out, 'Coward!' Back came the same reply, 'Coward!'

He looked at his father and asked: 'What's going on?' His father smiled and said: 'Son, pay attention.'

Looking across the valley, his father yelled to the mountain, 'I admire you!' The voice answered: 'I admire you!'

Again the man cried out: 'You are a champion!' The voice replied, 'You are a champion!'

The boy was amazed, but he was very confused. So, his father explained...

'You are only hearing an echo, the sound of our voices bouncing back from the mountains.

However, this really is how life works. It returns to you what you think, say and do!

Our lives are a reflection of our thoughts and actions. If we want more love in our world, we should create more love in our hearts. If we want to be treated with kindness, we must treat others with kindness. If we expect more competence from others, we must try to become more competent.

This relationship applies to everything, in all aspects of our lives. Life will give to us, everything we give to it and it will give us even more in return. Our life is not ever a coincidence. Each moment is a reflection of us!

The son listened and grew in understanding, and through the following years, he witnessed the truth of these words in his life! The Bible says: "Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you." (*Luke 6:38*)

With best wishes and God blessings,

+ Bernard Moras
Archbishop of Bangalore