

### Living the Spirit with Advent Joy

The Church's prayer at the start of Advent is that we may live with *steadfast faith, joyful hope and untiring love*. Faith, hope and love are united in a Christ-like life. Hope for the Catholic theologian is described as an expectation that the promises made by God will be fulfilled. We possess this spiritual habit or virtue of hope because God is faithful. He also cannot deceive nor be deceived. Of His goodness we have all received.

Jesus proclaimed frequently the good news that became the foundation for the faith of his followers. He presented himself as the fulfillment of the promise made long before his coming on earth that there would be a Messiah, a Savior for His people. With His coming the long Advent of the Old Testament had come to an end. We can imagine the thrill He must have felt when someone recognized Him for who he is. I think here of Peter saying to Him: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*"

Because we have the faith I wrote about last time, we can have hope. As we look about us we have choices everyday to activate this virtue or to allow it to become distorted. We can really hope, or fall into despair or presumption. Perhaps there is just a touch of both of these distortions in our lives. We manage somehow to hang on to just enough hope.

We have taken to heart the response given to the question: how much hope is enough. It is simply: Enough.

In Advent this hope of ours is meant to cast out fear. We are to be joyful in our reliance on the Lord's promises. Recently the Christopher News Notes had this very theme. It reminds us of the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: "I have said these things to you so that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete." (John 5:11) The Lord could be joyful even as he faced His death. This is because joy comes from love, and Jesus as God is Love.

We hear the command: "*Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I say, Rejoice!*" Today and tomorrow in your Advent days there is a chance, a good one, that you can find joy around you. While many of our traditions are too materialistic, even commercially exploited, I think I find in the observance of them a spirit of joy. The joy may be emotional or find expression in a general good feeling that this time of year can bring. It is joy!

The Spirit calls us to find in our very human joy some of the deeper meaning He brings into our lives. Our infused virtue of hope is made to work and bring us happiness. Jesus has come to us over and over again – a reason for spiritual happiness. His coming brings to us a joyful hope that will not be disappointed. That hope leads us to a perfection of spirit whereby we respond by loving God with our whole heart. That hope helps us to see Jesus as our friend.

*We should share with one another our personal faith and our joyful hope. I admit that at times, like most people I have known, I get a bit down. Perhaps I even get a bit presumptuous. I find there is an antidote. It is to do what that song tells us to do: Count your blessings. How many I have been given. Reason enough to be happy. I often think, too, of how Msgr. Sacks has said to me: "You are only as happy as you allow yourself to be." Then I believe and hope that what lies ahead will be the joyful fulfillment of the promises of Christ. Won't it be to find that God is Love?*

Living the Spirit in Advent  
With "Untiring Love- A Reflection

I have written and spoken often about love. Were I to have the responsibility for teaching our young people the content of their faith, it would be a subject that I could not avoid. Today the word "love" has been cheapened in so many ways. It has often been made unrecognizable by slogans that tend to be without any deep meaning. Does love mean never having to say I'm sorry? This is not the love I know, or I suspect, that you know.

Love that springs from our common humanity, with a reminder that we have been made in the image of God, includes a theology of the body that enhances and enriches our understanding of what love truly is. All love comes finally to being a reflection of God. The Scripture tell us simply: "God is love." His love is an active one: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son to be our Savior. His love is eternal, full of mercy, full of compassion, full of life and grace.

When the Church prays during Advent that we be untiring in our love, it refers especially to our love for God. We love God because He has first loved us. I know that for some it is not easy to believe that God could really love them, but the fact is He does. So many saints have preached the good news that it matters less that we love God than that He loves us. Blessed Mother Teresa noted that it "may seem absurd, but that is the logic of love."

I received a small booklet of her sayings. She wrote: "Love and faith go hand in hand." Our first Advent theme was to be steadfast in our faith. If we are succeeding, then we are loving in the spirit of Christ. She also sees that in Jesus she finds the "Joy she wants to share and the Peace she wants to sow all around" her. We need not be called to the highest sanctity of a Mother Teresa to find in Jesus the same happy effect of our love.

Love makes us want to share our very selves with others. Spiritual love calls forth our desire to be united in pure and chaste love with those who have not been loved. That is why in Advent we spend so much time seeking out ways to help the poor and needy.

There is much more to think about in this time of waiting for the coming of the Lord. I speak not only of Christmas. I speak of that coming that touches us now so intimately – in our Holy Communion with the Lord Jesus. In that Sacrament He shares His own life, and nourishes that spark of eternal life that awaits a conflagration. Let us also not fear to think of the doorway to sharing love eternally with God, and accept with faith and hope the death that will be ours in God's own good time.

Advent will surely be a time for being open to God's love and grace through making atonement for our failures and sins, our lack of being faithful even in small things. I urge you to consider how and when you will approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession). Make the time, and think it too important to be put off for the sake of other less fruitful activities. Come prepared to the Lord and let Him through his anointed priest absolve you of your sins, and give you that peace the world can never give.

*God love and bless you with steadfast faith, joyful hope and untiring love!*

*Monsignor Morrison*

**COME, LORD JESUS, DO NOT DELAY! SAY ONLY THE WORD,  
AND WE SHALL BE HEALED.**