Let Us Go to Meet Christ: Advent and Other Seasonal Blessings

Description

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord, I was recently rereading some books I have had for some years, one of which is entitled ***THE WORD MADE FLESH: The Meaning of the Christmas season.*** It is a collection of homilies given by Karol Cardinal Wojtyla (later Pope John Paul II) in the years when he was the Archbishop of Krakow. The book has special meaning to me because the homilies were all translated into English (from the Italian) by a good friend of mine during my years in Rome, Leslie Wearne. Leslie was one of a series of official translators for the words of Pope John Paul II and other documents of the Holy See. She typed my doctoral dissertation (in the days in which that was done), and I would often walk from the Casa Santa Maria to the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (near where she lived) with chapters of my dissertation for final form. We became good friends and she obtained a copy of the above mentioned book for me. In his homily for the First Sunday of Advent (which we just passed) then Cardinal Wojtyla said on November 30, 1974 said *"Let us go with joy to meet Christ. This describes the atmosphere of the mystery of the Incarnation and of Christmas, and also that of the period of waiting for him, which the Church enters on the first Sunday of Advent. All of this finds it meaning and confirmation in each one of us. We all know that meeting with our Lord is the source of joy in the emotional sense of which Christmas and Advent tradition is full…This makes Christianity the religion of the Lord's coming, inasmuch as, while waiting for the Lord's coming, we actually experience it. His coming unceasingly fills and satisfies our 'now.'* These reflections of then Cardinal Wojtyla help us to realize that Advent is about the various "comings of Christ": He has come, He will return again, and how He enters our lives daily. This Advent, as other Advents has so many opportunities to experience Him coming to meet us: The Novena for Our Lady of Guadalupe, and the actual feast day itself, The "Posadas" and "Simbang Gabi", the symbolism of the Advent wreath and calendar, and as the season nears the Christmas season, the **"O" Antiphons** which are chanted before the Magnificat each evening at Vespers. This Advent this year, however, there is even another profound opportunity to meet the Lord, in the Year of Mercy, which opens on December 8th. I will write more about this this coming week. How and when are we going to find time and space so that the Lord can meet us, in the midst of this beautiful but exceedingly busy and occupied season? The words of the opening prayer for Mass this past First Sunday of Advent give us some thought on this matter: ***"Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming, so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom."*** Let us run together to meet Christ this Holy Season. He comes to meet us in expected and not so expected ways! **MARANATHA – COME LORD JESUS!** – *The Most Rev. Kevin W. Vann, Bishop of Orange*

Date Created

December 1, 2015

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