

Homily 1st Sunday Advent Year C 2021

Keep the words of St Paul in your minds before listening to the Gospel. 1 Thes 13:

May the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you. And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his saints. **(Repeat after the Gospel)**

Themes of the Advent song are *Waiting* and *Patience*.

Let's go back to March last year and the first Lockdown. It was severe and painful but it provides us with the perfect preparation for Advent-waiting. We were forced to stop everything and wait for much more than four weeks. For many, and I hope for you, it became a blessed time but in an oddly different sense to our normal understanding of blessing. Mass was suddenly off limits except to those who had access through streaming. This showed us how important the Mass was to us, to our lives, to our families and to our communities. The daily exercise reminded us of the beauty of our surroundings, the flora and fauna on our doorsteps. In that brief time, with traffic at a minimum, nature gained new life, new energy and its beauty more vibrant. New flowers have appeared since, showing us how quickly the planet will spring back to life if only we will allow it!!!

We had more time for reflection. To reflect on God and the importance of loved ones sentenced to isolation and cut off from family. It brought into better perspective what is truly important in life: family, people, creation. We reflected more deeply on our faith, the place of God in our lives, the importance of the Church. Not all reflections or experiences ended positively and for good reason.

If we are not too busy, the time for Advent reflection - our waiting for the rebirth of Christ into our lives, our families, our Church, our world – allows us to revisit what happened during lockdown and discover new riches, new expectations and new blessings.

Almost by accident, or was it by design? Pope Francis has called us to reflect together on our journey of faith through this time and speak to each other face to face in what is called a synodal conversation with an emphasis on listening which is the major element of any meditation or conversation. We are invited to listen to each other, and be inspired by what we hear even in our disagreements and misunderstandings. Just as in the lockdown when no one knew where we would end up, so too, in this synodal way of being Church we do not know where the Holy Spirit will lead us, which makes it both frightening and exciting. Liverpool Diocese has already made its synodal journey. Both sceptics and doubters who accepted the challenge and participated in it emerged renewed and energised in their faith. Joining in the synodal conversations will allow you to live Christmas in a new way, renewed and reenergised and, in so doing, you will be renewing and reenergising the Church.

Happy Advent! Happy Synod!

Afterthought:

An elderly man in Leeds calls his son in New York and says, "I hate to ruin your day son, but I have to tell you that your mother and I are getting divorced after 45 years of marriage... we've had enough!" "Dad, what are you talking about?" the son yells. "We can't go on any longer," the old dad explained. "We're sick of each other, and I'm sick of talking about it, so you call your sister in Hong Kong and tell her!" Frantic, the son calls his sister, who explodes on the phone. "They are NOT getting divorced," she shouts, "I'll take care of this." She calls her elderly father immediately, and screams, "You are not getting divorced. Don't do a single thing until I get there. I'm calling my brother back, and we'll both be with you tomorrow. Until then, don't do a thing, you hear me?" she yelled as she hung up the phone. The old man puts his phone down and turns to his wife. "Okay, dear", he says, "it's all set. They're both coming for Christmas and paying their own air-fare."