

## E-BULLETIN #98

*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)*

item 183

### anticipating Christmas..



Advent is the anticipation of Christmas. **Firstly**, it gives us a vision for our lives as Christians and shows us the possibilities of life. That vision is twofold – it looks back to the first coming of Christ at Bethlehem, and it looks to the future when Christ will come again. **Secondly**, it is a season of joyous expectation of the feast of Christmas. **Thirdly**, it is a time of preparation in which we are invited to renew our Christian faith, to become more attentive to that gift, and to explore the implications of what it means to believe in the person of Christ and above all to become more grateful for the presence of God’s love which is fully manifest in the person of Christ. **Fourthly**, it is a living and unending symbol of God’s love and faithfulness. God sends his only son into the world as an everlasting symbol of love and, choosing Mary against all human expectation, he chooses those considered powerless and weak to show forth his faithfulness to his promises.

Pope Francis explains the meaning of the season of advent as ‘a new journey of the people of God with Jesus Christ, our shepherd, who guides us in history towards the completion of the Kingdom of God.’ He exhorts us:

“Let us rediscover the beauty of being together along the way. In today’s world we find it difficult to walk together because of our egoism. It is at this juncture that the new evangelization shows us the way we have to work”

Pallotti’s understanding of the incarnation does not stand in isolation but is closely intertwined with his understanding of redemption. He repeatedly states that it was God’s infinite love and mercy that moved him to undertake the work of creation, and conserve it in the act of existence. He wrote that ‘it was because God was moved by his infinite mercy towards us that he undertook the Divine Work of creating all his creatures and conserving them in being’. God created man in his image and likeness. But Adam’s sin marked a point of departure from the state of blessedness that God offered to humanity. However God does not abandon man in his fallen state. He gives him a second chance:

“God, as if moved with love of man, who is so ungrateful and miserable... promises a Savior. This Savior is God’s divine Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who became man for us in the womb of Blessed Virgin Mary by the virtue of the of the Holy Spirit... Oh, what an infinite, immense gift.”

Pallotti speaks of incarnation as two dimensional viz., objective and subjective. Considered *objectively* the incarnation is an act of God's sending. God sends Jesus to reveal his love and mercy. It is also a means by which God, the master pedagogue, teaches humanity how to perfect its image:

“God moved by his infinite love and mercy became man to teach us in his blessed humanity how we should live in order to perfect our souls as living images of God... he is the perfect exemplar of the heavenly Father...He is the divine model of the whole human race.”

Thus the incarnation portrays God's sending of Jesus as being both impelled by love and revealing his love and mercy at the same time.

Treated *subjectively*, the mystery of the incarnation for Pallotti is an act of *Kenosis* and it is the visible testimony of Jesus' obedience to the Father. Pallotti remarked that Jesus emptied himself by becoming a man and by being born in the poverty and discomfort of a manger. The *kenosis* of Jesus is further demonstrated in the episode of his fast in the desert and in his public ministry. The height of the *Kenosis* is his death on the cross. Pallotti therefore writes:

“through the mystery of the Incarnation, our Lord Jesus Christ entered into this world in the spirit of sacrifice, and lived and died on the cross in that same spirit.”

If we were to draw a few insights for *New Evangelization* from Pallotti's understanding of the incarnation, the first would be: “love is the basis for evangelization.” As Pallottines, it is appropriate to remember that the obligation to be apostles/evangelizers emerges from the fact that each and every one is created in the image of God. It is because we are created in the image of God we cannot but move towards others with love, as apostles of love, like Jesus who was the apostle of his Father's love. If we are faithful to God it will be reflected in our love towards others. The commandment of love is the basis for evangelization.

Secondly, Pallotti's understanding of the incarnation insists on a radical living of the Gospel. All the good-will to effect the *New Evangelization* may, otherwise, remain just gymnastics of language and thought. The need for conversion is rooted in our Christian vocation. We have received a personal calling. We stand in relation to God who is also a Person. Hence, *New Evangelization* represents not only collectivity but also contains a personal response. And it must begin with self-preaching viz., preaching to oneself.



Thirdly, *New Evangelization* in effect contains the hope of a renewed Church. We are hopeful because Jesus' movement in its primordial reality was not a mass movement. However, it became a trans-continental mass movement within a short span of time. Hence we entrust our destiny to God who directs the course of history with a purpose. No criticism, no polarization and no fragmentation can extinguish the fire lit up in our hearts with the light of the Gospel.

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item 184

## thoughts at the end of another year

**the approach of the end of another year is often a time for pause and reflection**

Do we find anything amongst the embers of the year just passed that encourages us to maintain Christian hope? In times of tragedy, disaster, greed, or personal hardships it is often difficult to find reasons to hope. Integrity, honesty, decency and respect for the human person can, at times, seem to be things of the past.

Yet in the often small, even insignificant actions of ordinary people in ordinary ways it is possible to see the Reign of God break into our world.



As events unfold across a year we can wonder 'where is God in this?' The tragedies, violence, injustice, and despair we see around us either leave us less able to live in the light of the Lord, or more determined in whatever way may be possible for us to spread light into the dark places of the world, and particularly among those around us.

Just a short time ago, in the Preface of the Mass of Christ the King we heard what seems to me to be a description of what the reign of God is like – the world as God meant it to be – *a kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love and peace.*

Advent, more than any other season is rooted in hope – we wait in joyful hope. In Advent we await God's coming – usually interpreted as the second coming. For many of us, in many aspects of our lives, I suspect we haven't yet completely come to grips with the first coming. Advent can be a good reminder of the promises of God.

The call of the Gospel is to bring about the reign of God, to work to spread faith, light, holiness, grace, justice, love and peace - to live courageously, to be all God called us to be, open to discovering the seeds of a new world already present around us.

Hope is about believing the reign of God is possible, that we can live differently to bring about the future God intends.

In these weeks in the lead up to the celebration of Christmas we are exhorted to walk in the light of the Lord in our own lives, and be bearers of the light in our world. We are exhorted to stay awake, repent, be prepared, for God is with us.

As Joan Chittester reflected in her piece entitled 'The Spirituality of Hope', broadcast on January 12, 2003:

*The spiritual task of life is to feed hope. Hope is not found outside ourselves, but within. The whole purpose of wrestling with life is to become the person we are meant to become, to step out of the confines of our false securities and allow our creating God to go on creating in us.*

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**08.12.13**

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**sac asia oceania e-bulletin**

**you commented...**

**on #97**