

NOVA COMMUNITY - FALLS CHURCH, VA.
First Sunday of Advent

Introduction

During this past week, over the Thanksgiving break, I spent several hours writing Advent cards to friends and family. This is a yearly custom of mine and it involves a short meditation on the liturgical season we begin today.

As I wrote about the "already and not yet" that is Advent, the truth that Christ has already come and the realization that he has not yet come again, I wondered how many of those who would read my words actually live that dynamic. How many are truly "Advent People". Or, have they/we become so much concerned about what Jesus calls in the Gospel we just heard, "the anxieties of daily life" that they/we have forgotten his coming and his coming again.

I

Then I learned about the theme for Advent which this NOVA Community has chosen for this year: "Meeting Christ at Bethlehem and on the Beltway, and I was truly consoled, impressed, edified.

This theme gets it exactly right, I think. It is precisely the attitude needed to begin Advent: the yesterday of Bethlehem and the today, the tomorrow, of the Beltway with Christ present in both. NOVA is saying, In other words, we live with the memory of Jesus birth so long ago and far away; we live equally with the realization that Christ walks with us in the here and now and the future.

II

If by chance any of us has foregotten or ignored this double vision that is the Advent Season, we must remind ourselves of the opening song of today's liturgy: "God of Second Chances". God does continue to work with us and it is never too late to enter the Advent spirit.

Conclusion

Let me conclude this short homily with two quotes and then give us all some few moments to "practice Advent" - sitting in meditative silence.

The first comes from an obscure little letter of St. Peter `way at the end of the New Testament. The apostle is speaking of the Second Coming of Christ and says in that regard: "What sort of people ought you to be, waiting for the day of the Lord and TRYING TO HASTEN IT" [emphasis mine]. (II Peter 3:11-12) We have a role to play, therefore, in Christ's coming. By doing our part to fashion a world more amenable to all God's people we "hasten" the day of his coming.

The second quote comes from a great figure of the 19th Century, John Henry Newman. Speaking about Advent, Newman once wrote: "...we must not only have faith in the Lord but must wait on him; not only must hope, but must watch for him; not ony love him, but must long for him; not only obey him, but must look out, look up earnestly for our reward, which is himself..." And Newman concludes with words which seem entirely appropriate in these days of "Black Friday" [day after Thanksgiving] and "Black Saturday, Sunday and all the days before Christmas]: "We must not only make him the Object of our faith, hope and charity, but we must make it our duty not to believe the world, not to hope in the world, not to love the world."