



A Newsletter from the Missions Office/Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States
Catholic Diocese of Columbus, Ohio

O come, O come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel

To monthly mission donors: Thank you for your support!

On behalf of His Excellency Robert Brennan, the Bishop of Columbus, and Very Rev. Father Andrew Small, OMI, the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, I would like to thank you for your prayers, sacrifices and financial support for the missions.

Like nature, the Church's liturgical seasons are beautiful. In late autumn/ early winter, the Church celebrates the Advent season. It is a beautiful celebration of change, of longing and of expectations.

We light candles on our Advent wreaths to remind us that Jesus is the true light of the world. Jesus is the light that dispels the darkness that blankets our fallen world. The lit Advent candles symbolize our ongoing commitment to come out of darkness and enter into God's marvelous light.

During the Advent season, the Church invites us to reflect on Christ's coming; the first coming that happened more than two thousand years ago at the stable in Bethlehem and His second coming at a time and day we do not know.

At the first coming we participate. His second coming we anticipate. The comings of Christ

(first and second) are the foci of the Advent season.

Advent is an affirmation that Christ has already come; that Christ is already present with us today.

Advent is also a preparation of His second coming at the end of time. We do not know the day and the hour of His return. And so we must be prepared. We need to repent for whatever hinders our readiness for His return.

In Old Testament times, God through the prophets, taught Israel to expect a Messiah to set them free from sin and injustice.

This longing and yearning for the Messiah was present through the centuries. As sin and injustice prevailed in their lives and in their land, they cried out to the Lord.

As slaves in Egypt, the Israelites yearned for deliverance. All the victims of injustice around the world echo their cries to the Lord today.

The Israelites hoped in God to deliver them from their bitter oppression. God heard their cry. God delivered them.

This hope in God is what our world needs today. God is the world's only hope, however distant God may sometimes seem.

It is this hope, it is this God that brings to the world the anticipation of a King; a King who will

rule with truth, with justice and with righteousness over His people and over all His creation.

The light will then break through, like the dawn, when the hungry are fed, the poor are cared for and justice is established (Isa. 58). Charity, equality, and mercy are marks of God's Kingdom.

When Christ returns, it will be to complete the work that we, His followers, have begun in His Name. At the end of time, Christ will make whole that which we have accomplished in part.

During Advent let us make Israel's cry our own. Yes. Christ has already come. Yet we know that sin and injustice still have their terrible effects both in our lives and in our land. We are still in much need of the Messiah to set us free.

Let us acknowledge, especially during the Advent season, our need for God's saving work. Let us long for our glorious freedom - the freedom that belongs to the children of God. We know that God has begun His saving work in us. Now let us long for its completion.

While there is a profound joy in the celebration of Christ's coming, there is also a sober warning to prepare for His second one. But even then, the prayer of Advent is still "O come, O come Emmanuel and ransom captive Israel".

Do not forget why Christmas happened

For many people, Christmas is a time for parties. It is an occasion to renew friendships that seem to fade away. It is an opportunity to reminisce of events that happened a long time ago. It is an excuse to eat much, to sing loudly and to spend more money than usual.

But for us Christians, it is a time of awe and wonder as the story of Jesus' birth is again read from the Gospels for all the world to hear.

Every Christmas season we are thrilled to unpack the old decorations stored in the attic or in the basement. We are happy to see again the old Christmas lights and the garland. We become excited when we put up the nativity scene along with the animals, the angels, the shepherds, the wise men and all.

But the familiarity of Christmas sometimes causes us to overlook the true meaning of Christmas. We have heard the Christmas songs since childhood that sometimes we fail to appreciate their poetic eloquence and meaning. We have heard many times Joseph's and Mary's difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, but because we are so busy, we have not stopped to ponder exactly how and why it happened.

We almost have memorized the Bible story, we have sung the carols, we have hung the holly and we have roasted the turkey. We have done them all.

Yet, along the way, we may have lost touch of what happened on that first Christmas night, which is the heart of Christmas itself.

We love giving our loved ones extravagant gifts, especially on Christmas. Yes. We give gifts

throughout the year - on birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions. But at Christmas time, we put a little more effort in finding that extra special gift for those special persons in our lives. Whatever the gift maybe, we want it to be a bountiful expression of our love.

Why? Maybe this has something to do with the lavishness of the gift of the first Christmas morning – the extravagance of God's love for us in giving His only Son to us.

Consider what Jesus did. He swapped the spotless throne of Heaven with the smelly and filthy stable in Bethlehem. He exchanged the worship of angels in Heaven for the company of sinful people on earth. Jesus, who could hold the whole universe in His palm, chose to become a helpless baby.

If you were God, would you sleep on straw, nurse from a breast, and wear a diaper? If you knew that only few would care that you came, would you still come? If you knew that, those you love would laugh in your face, would you still care? If you knew that, the tongues you made would mock you and the mouth you made would spit on you, that the hands you made would crucify you – would you still make them? Christ did!

Why? Because that is, what love does. Love puts the beloved before one's own self. You are more important than His Blood. Your eternal life is more important to Him than His own earthly life. Your place in Heaven is more important to Him than His own place in Heaven. Because of it, He gave up His own place so you could have your place.

God's love is a love that knows no bounds, no limits, and no end.

This is the type of love that we are commanded to give to one another. "So I am giving you a new commandment. Love one another just as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

A joke a priest can tell...



Holy Smoke: There is always a right way and a wrong way to proceed: Two Jesuit novices both wanted a cigarette while they prayed. They decided to ask their superior for permission. The first asked, but was told no. A little while later he spotted his friend smoking. "Why did the superior allow you to smoke, but not me?" he asked. His friend replied, "Because you asked if you could smoke while you prayed, and I asked if I could pray while I smoked!"

Quip: Never pick a quarrel even when it is ripe.

Quote: The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid it.
~ Dale Carnegie

Quest: ~ I expect to pass through this life but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer it, for I shall not pass this way again.

Pope Francis' December prayer intention:

That every country determine to take the necessary measures to make the future of the very young, especially those who suffer, a priority.

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