

THE BULLETIN

“So the faith was planted: so it must be restored.”

Eight Pond Place, Oyster Bay, NY 11771

December 2023

“Come, Lord Jesus...”

Adapted from a sermon by The Most Rev. Clarence Kelly
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During the season of Advent we look to the coming of Christ. We look to His coming in the past, and we look to His coming in the future. Looking to the past, we anticipate the celebration of Christmas, the anniversary of His birth at Bethlehem. Looking to the future, we anticipate His second coming in justice, judgment, triumph and glory at the end of the world. Advent is a time of joyful expectation and penance. The purple vestments which the priest wears at Sunday Mass tell us of the penitential spirit of Advent. The joyful expectation tells us that the penitential spirit of Advent is not exactly like that of Lent. The penitential spirit of Lent leads us to Calvary. On the other hand, the penitential spirit of Advent leads directly to Bethlehem, and thus the spirit of Advent is one of joyful expectation. This spirit of expectation begins on the First Sunday of Advent in a somewhat subdued way. It gathers momentum and strength as the weeks go by, and finally it “...rises to the fervent [gladness] of Christmas.” (St. Andrew’s Missal, p. 8)

But there is another theme which runs through the Advent season. It is the theme of repentance from sin and the purification of the soul. Joyful anticipation and repentance from sin go together like hand in glove. They cannot be separated if the joy is to be true. Many millions of people will celebrate Christmas. They will decorate their Christmas trees and exchange presents. Many will do this but hardly think of Christ at all. Many will do this who don't even believe in Christ. Worse

yet, there are many who believe in Christ and who will celebrate Christmas without Christ in their hearts because they are not in the state of grace.

You cannot separate Christ from Christmas. You cannot celebrate His birthday and exclude Him from the celebration. It is His birthday. It is His *party*, so to speak. He is the One Who is supposed to receive the presents. What present does He want for Christmas? He wants our hearts. He wants our love. He wants to see His charity in our lives. He wants to see reflected in our lives the qualities of His Most Sacred Heart. He wants to see husbands with a considerate and gentle love of their wives. He wants to see wives respecting their husbands. He wants to see children obedient. There can be no real joy at Christmas without the love of Christ. There can be no real love of Christ without the doing of His will, and there can be no real doing of His will without obedience to the Commandments. Repentance and obedience are essential conditions of “the fervent [gladness] of Christmas.” (ibid., p. 8)

In the Epistle for the First Sunday of Advent, St. Paul says: “The night is passed and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Repentance from sin and obedience to the Commandments, these are necessary for a true and joyful celebration of Christmas. This is what the