

Faith Sharing 1 – Advent 2019

Make Advent Count



Christ the King

to

Christmas Day

Presents before Christmas

Pray and Say: Almighty Father, teach us to quieten and prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, to realise that all else is human distraction. Through our example, may we and many souls return this Advent to a faithful love for him and for all humanity.



Ponder (1): We are at an important crossroads whether we are teaching the young, caring for the elderly or simply being alive in God's World. All of us must make Advent count. What does this mean?

"We have to withdraw from time to time to be silent and still, to gain perspective, to look beyond this world to search for the origin and purpose of it all." (Basil Hume)

This can be difficult but do we kid ourselves that Advent or Christmas is too busy a time for self-reflection? Is there one with the power to heal? Is there a teacher who will speak to me of truths my mind cannot discover? Who will show me the way through life's pressures, and not just the pressures of advent?

- How responsible am I for what I do and say?
- Am I too quick to blame others for my difficulties?
- Do I always put myself first?

Answer (1): "Come to me, all you that are weary..."

Ponder (2): Jesus himself, wholly divine and wholly human, whose birth we celebrate on Christmas day, was steeped in the Old Testament. Sacred Scripture, or in other words, God, tells us “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name, you are mine” (Isa 43:1). This has to be the best Christmas present we can get. Can we imagine how our lives would be without this good news, especially in practical terms?

We may want to ponder this promise of redemption and restoration!



Christ the King: On this Feast, we give thanks to God the Father for enabling us to inherit the light... “Because that is what he has done: he has taken us out of the power of darkness and created a place for us in the kingdom of the Son...and in him, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins”(Col 1:12-14). What are the key ideas in this? If time, ponder the following.

- Our eyes are opened from darkness to light, like the Colossians, to become God’s chosen people.
- Life is no longer lived in the shadows of doubt or ignorance.
- We have been transferred into the Kingdom of Father/Son.
- Through redemption we have moved from slavery to freedom.
- We have moved from condemnation to forgiveness.

Pause: So far we have considered God's "Christmas presents before Christmas" to us. You can define them as the Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). Paul lists these "Fruit" and states that living for the sake of others frees us from slavery, setting us free. How hard is that?

But...



- **Can we hide, escape from God, especially when things get hard?**

- **Psalm 139:** This whole psalm has been described as a meditation on the first line: "O Lord, you have searched me and you have known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up..." God knows all the details of my daily life, warts and all. Amazingly, "you knit me together in my mother's womb..." When time, this psalm is worth reading.

- **But let Matthew have the final word** from *The Message* translation:
- "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly"(Mt 11:28-33).

Concluding Prayer: Lord, when two or more are gathered in your name, you are present with us. We thank you for your presence today. Amen.