

## **Advent**

Advent is such a delightful time. I think it is one of my favourite seasons although it is almost lost these days in our culture where Christmas celebrations seem to begin in early November. My Dad would have been horrified as I remember he was very strict in joyfully following his Advent devotions.

These four weeks are a time of joyful expectation leading up to the great Feast of the Word made Flesh. The early Christian writers down through the medieval period have written beautifully of this first season in the Christian calendar. They all point to three comings of Christ. This is a time when we not only celebrate the Nativity but where we also reflect on the Final coming of Christ in glory and majesty and also the birthing of Christ in our own innermost being.

So once again in this lovely season we pay attention to nurturing the deep and heartfelt longing for the experience of the presence of God in our daily lives. The readings for Mass in Advent speak powerfully to us of this longing in our hearts for the Living God. Through the selection of readings the liturgy invites us to reflect on the intense longing of our ancestors in the faith for a Messiah. They invite us as well to consider how the Divine Presence has already come into our lives individually and as a community of faith.

With these readings as a backdrop I invite you to take seriously this season of joyful anticipation by spending some time each day of Advent in a quiet few minutes of stillness and silent waiting so you can just become aware of God's intimate presence within each breath you take. Such a gentle waiting will enable you, like Mary, to experience once again the joyful awareness of God's birth within your own life.

May the lord bless you and grant you the gift of Advent longing for a renewed experience of the Lord's coming here and now in our own times.

**Fr. Patrick**