

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today begins the holy season of Advent, a time of preparation and anticipation. We await with joyful expectation the dawning of a new age in human history: the Incarnation, the coming into the world of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This time of preparation is a graced opportunity to reflect more deeply and ardently our desire and longing to have Our Lord more present to and manifested in our lives.

During a recent Confirmation Class with our school eighth graders, we reflected on today's readings. In asking them to describe what Advent means to them, one student said, "Advent is a time of waiting for something new to appear on the horizon." This is one of the most excellent descriptions I have heard about this season. This is very powerful imagery to connect the Old and New Testaments. I asked the students to highlight themes Isaiah is speaking about in the first reading. Their thoughts included Isaiah telling the Jewish people to re-connect with God. By moving towards and standing on the mountain, the Chosen People are placing God as a priority in their lives. Violence will give way to reconciliation and peace. Isaiah the prophet and herald invites the people to see the world in a new way, a way more reflective of God's presence in their lives. "Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths." This invitation of Isaiah is given to us as well; may we experience spiritual exercises which invite us to listen more attentively and keenly to the Word of God and then to follow Him.

This past summer, I had the opportunity to read a wonderful book which considers the power and necessity of silence in our lives. His Eminence, Cardinal Robert Sarah and Nicolas Diat, in their book [The Power of Silence: Against the Dictatorship of Noise](#), offers an excellent insight which can help provide a foundation to how we can approach this Advent Season in a more efficacious manner. "Yet even if daily life is as difficult as it can be, God nevertheless remains present in each one of us. He is a patient, faithful, and merciful God, who waits untiringly. The most difficult thing is probably to come to our senses, to be quiet, to turn toward the Father, to repent and say: 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants.' And he arose and come to his father.' (Lk 15: 17-20). The journey toward heaven consists of rediscovering our silent interior life in which God dwells and waits for us, watching the horizon." Advent, then, is a season which encourages us to "come to our senses" through silence and reflection, seeking longingly for that horizon where God makes Himself most present to us.

May we follow the exhortation of St. Paul to the Romans: "For our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light." Let us pray for one another in mutual support and encouragement as we await, in joyful hope, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Fr. Tom