

ADVENT 2024

Without God we are too poor to be able to help the poor. (St. Teresa of Calcutta)

I love Christmas but I hate all the commercialism that leads up to it. It starts months before with ghoulish adverts that make a mockery of Halloween, the eve of All Hallows which, of course is the feast of All Saints. This is a wonderful feast which celebrates the lives and deaths of all the holy and courageous saints who lived and died in outstanding service to God. The following day is the commemoration of all the faithful departed, All Souls, when we remember all the ordinary people who lived good and ordinary lives but whose souls may still need our prayers. Why do we have to spoil it with all sorts of monsters and teach our little ones to trick or treat. After the fire works on Guy Fawkes night, we have all the so-called Christmas adverts which seem to get more nonsensical every year and have nothing to do with the real meaning of Christmas.

Towards the end of the last liturgical year, the daily readings, from the book of the Apocalypse, I found were disturbing. It takes those who are more learned than I am to really understand their meaning but they seemed to me to be a mixture of warnings and promises. The warnings seem to reflect what is happening in our world today. Climate change is affecting the whole world and causing dreadful floods terrible earthquakes and devastating fires. So many nations are at war and we seem to be on the brink of another world war. There is a growing conflict between east and west, despotism and democracy. On the other hand, there are the promises of what we can look forward to after death. In the Gospels, Jesus tells us we have nothing to fear if we remain ready and faithful to him.

I think our society has become more materialistic, utilitarian and less spiritual. The world today is so filled with noise people have little opportunity to experience silence; they are so busy they have no time to reflect on what is important; many have forgotten how to pray and as Mother Teresa says without God, we are too poor to be able to help the poor. Our world is in such a troubled state that only through prayer can we bring justice and peace. That is why I love my early morning routine. I get up a little before seven, make a cup of coffee and sit for an hour in silent prayer and reflection. I then get ready and go to church for morning prayer before the Blessed Sacrament after which Mass is celebrated and Holy Communion is received. I call this my pilgrimage each day for it is not always easy. These cold dark mornings make it harder to get up and I do not always have a lift to church but I try to be strong and make my own way to church. This is not a boast, more an acknowledgement of God's beneficence for each morning when I first wake, I ask my Lord to give me the strength and the will and the means to carry out this pilgrimage.

I believe that man cannot be fulfilled without silence and prayer. What is most lacking in our time, in this civilisation is the spirit of prayer. David Maria Turolo (1916-1992)

We are now into Advent, a time of preparation to celebrate the birth of our saviour; a time to be ready for his coming. Let us pray, but not just with words, let us close our eyes and ears to all the noise and hype that surrounds us and let us sit in silence and listen with our hearts and minds to what Jesus is saying to us. Let us look forward to his first coming and ever ready for his second coming. May he bless us and grant us a happy and joyful Christmas.

Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to stand with confidence before the Son of Man