

FROM THE ARCHBISHOP

The mystery of Advent

What do I need for Christmas?

It occurred to me a few years ago that perhaps that is the question I should ask every year as Advent begins. It is an interesting question because it calls me to a change of perspective during a season of wishes and gift lists. Even as folks ask me what I want for Christmas, I should be asking myself what I need for Christmas.

It is also an interesting question, however, because Scripture proclaims that in Jesus I already have everything I need. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens" (Eph 1:3). "His divine power has bestowed on us everything that makes for life and devotion, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power" (2 Pt 1:3). "In times past God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, through whom he created the universe" (Heb 1:1-2).

If in Jesus I have already received "every spiritual blessing in the heavens" and "everything that makes for life," what more could I want or need?

Too often we settle for skimming the surface of our relationship with Jesus, unwittingly assuming that it is possible to exhaust the potential of one stage of that relationship and move on to the next. Sadly, perhaps we sometimes suspect that Jesus is not everything and go



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looking elsewhere for fulfillment, as if there are gaps to fill. Or maybe we wonder if there is something God is holding back from us until he sees fit to reveal it. Will there be another word from God some day?

The gift of depth

Commenting on the passage from Hebrews I quoted above, St. John of the Cross recognized that it is not uncommon for us to ask God for "more," for another word, as if Jesus is not enough. He wrote:

"In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word — and he has no more to say ... because what he spoke before in the

prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would

be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty." ("The Ascent of Mount Carmel," 2, 22, 3-5)

Advent is the season to go deep so that we might appreciate even more what God has given us in his Son.

DO YOU HAVE AN INTENTION FOR ARCHBISHOP SARTAIN'S PRAYER LIST?

You may send it to him at Archbishop Sartain's Prayer List, Archdiocese of Seattle, 710 Ninth Ave., Seattle, WA 98104.

If in Christ the Father has given everything — said everything — and there will be no other word than he, what could I possibly need for Christmas?

I need the gift of depth, that I might plumb the inexhaustible gift who is Jesus my Lord. I need a slower pace to savor the richness of the Gospel, patience to let go of the desire for quick fixes to my problems. I need boldness to travel trustingly the long road ahead, contrition for my failure to live a truly Christian life. I need strength to love more courageously, discipline to pray more devotedly. I need generosity to swallow my stinginess, humility to soften my pride, gratitude to overturn my thanklessness, grace to conquer my self-assurance. I need to admit that I need a Savior.

Advent is the season to go deep so that we might appreciate even more what God has given us in his Son. We will never respond properly to our Lord if we remain on the surface. We will never appreciate his gifts until we put them to use. We will never understand the Gospel unless we try to live it. We will never know Jesus unless we take everything we have placed ahead of him and put it under him, ready to abandon it if in his light we see it to be false or harmful.

The wonderful mystery of Advent is that in Jesus, God has rent open



WELCOMING THE NEW ROMAN MISSAL

This Advent we are also marking an important liturgical transition to a new English translation of the Roman Missal.

Our priests, deacons and liturgical ministers have been preparing for well over a year to implement this beautiful translation, and in recent months they have also helped our parishioners to prepare to receive it. This issue of *The Progress* features a special insert to further familiarize you with the new translation.

These are not "new words" — they are the same words of the Eucharist translated into an elegant English form that will raise our awareness of the mystery we celebrate.

Welcome the new translation with an open heart! We will all be brought to deeper prayer by its rich biblical imagery.

Archbishop J. Peter Sartain

the heavens, done awesome deeds we could never have imagined, revealed what eye could not hope to see, spoken the Word that says it all. The task for you and me is to prepare a place deep within, a humble stable at our very core where Jesus will be born in us anew. We have only begun to know him.

*Give me Jesus, give me Jesus.
You may have all the world
but give me Jesus.*

(Traditional African-American spiritual)