

## **HOMILIES FROM THE HERMITAGE NO. 37**

**Given that we are once again in lockdown, there will be some 'homilies' for Advent and Christmas: 1) start of Advent: 2) approach of Christmas 'O' 3) Christmas: 4) Proclamation of Christ.**

### **1. ADVENT week 1 & week 2.**

The word 'Advent' means '*coming*'. In these weeks of December we spend nearly four weeks in which we prepare to celebrate the Coming of Christ. This most common and easily celebration refers to the Birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. But there is far more to Advent: Three comings of Christ are reflected: i) in 6 BC at Bethlehem: ii) at the end of time, when Jesus will come again to complete the work of Salvation: iii) each day in our lives.

The first Sunday of Advent slips easily from the previous Sunday—Christ the King—in which we look for the second of Christ. The Gospel for Advent 1 continues the theme 'Stay awake.'! This echoes in the Second Reading, (St. Paul): to be steady and without blame until the last day. The first Reading, from Isaiah look back to the early times when God's People were awaiting the Saviour—pleading to the Redeemer to come.

On the Second Sunday, once again we see Isaiah with words of comfort—but the need to prepare the way for the Saviour—'Here the Lord is coming with power.' This is followed by the warning from St. Paul to be ready for Jesus' Second Coming. Finally in the Gospel we see St. John the Baptist—proclaiming penance and prepare for the coming of the Saviour.

Advent brings new each year the celebration and contemplation of our Salvation. Ever new:

a) the refreshment of the birth of Christ 'to reverse the doing of original sin', not with thud and blunder but in the reality of a gentle, helpless child, born in humble conditions, his bed in a stable and his home a migrant firstly from Nazareth to Bethlehem and then to Egypt. A humble and childless child, but nonetheless the Lord of Heaven and God the Son.

b) The second coming at the end of time, when the Redemption started at Bethlehem is fulfilled and all is to be put right. Jesus the King on the clouds of Heaven, but nevertheless the loving Saviour who was born in a humble stable.

c) The third coming—we meet and see Jesus in all around us. This is our daily work of Advent—that we treat everyone as Jesus, as He asks. If we love one another as He loved us, that we prepare to celebrate Christmas in the right mind and heart. Then truly can we offer welcome to Jesus at Bethlehem. The joyful re-enacting of the first Christmas and the hopeful triumph on Heaven on the final day will be achieved by the daily coming of Christ into our lives but our prayer and love of each other.

These Sundays give in a clear message that if we are to celebrate the coming of our Saviour at Christmas, we must also be prepared to ready for Him when He comes again. For any great celebration we prepare and if we are each ourselves the ones to receive the honoured guest, we would ensure that everything in our house and doings would be in perfect order—and it doesn't happen in a five minutes check over! Just imagine how you would prepare if you were told that The Queen or The Pope was coming to visit your home.....!!