



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

An Advent Carols Homily

It was the middle of December 1956. We sat around the fire in our little boatman's cottage in Polruan and my Mum helped me write my Christmas wish list to Santa. I had seen and set my heart on the most beautiful medieval fort we had seen in the window of the biggest toyshop in Cornwall. My Mum explained that Santa might have a job getting it down the chimney. What she didn't say was that the cost of the fort was more than my Dad's weekly pay of £4.10sh. We wrote it down anyway. I had every faith in Santa. My Mum seemed unusually agnostic. The letter was duly posted up the chimney and the days of longing and hoping and excitement began.

Early on a sleepless Christmas morning I scurried downstairs to find that, yes, Santa had drunk the glass of sherry and Rudolf had eaten the carrot and YES..... there on the hearthrug was an enormous package. A few rips of paper and there was the fort in all its glory. I could have wept for joy. Later that day Jane and Clifford, a childless American couple who often used my Dad's boat, joined us for Christmas Dinner and Clifford spent all afternoon helping me play with the fort. (I think I was in my forties before my Mum told me that in 1956 Santa was an American).

I have never forgotten it because I was so filled with hope and longing and excitement and expectation and faith that I could have burst. It's one of the little factors behind my love of Advent. Advent is that time when we rehearse our faith history, where we look back over the long journey of Man. In our Holy Book we see the Creation and Fall of Man. We witness God raising up a holy people, a people who often fail and then come again to His mercy. We share their longing for the coming of the Messiah, the great gift, the One who will set us free, the One who will reconcile God and Man, the One who will take our little fragile temporal humanity and transform it into His divine likeness and give us an undeserved share of His Eternity.

Advent is, for us who live in the aftermath of that stupendous gift of Jesus, the Son of God, a time to reconnect with that longing and hope and overwhelming thankfulness. We walk with our ancestors out of the darkness into the Light of Christ. But we also look forward to the Second Advent, when Christ the King of the Universe will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. To be ready we must recover that childlike heart of faithfulness and love and longing for His coming. Only our prayer wish list is now more mature. We want only what He longs to give us for then, truly, all our Christmasses will come at once.