



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent-Year A-December 1<sup>st</sup> 2019

***Readings: Isaiah 2:1-5, Psalm 121, Romans 13: 11-14,  
Matthew 24: 37-44***

I have probably said this before. In forty years of preaching it becomes harder and harder to avoid repeating oneself. There are two bits of good news in this process. One is that the truth of the Gospel always bears a reprise. The second is that many of you will share my increasing perception that memory is increasingly like a shot regimental flag hung up in some country church – full of holes and tattered edges, redolent of forgotten battles.

Anyway.....to repeat myself :- ADVENT is my favourite season.

At the risk of repeating myself, Advent is my favourite season.

Thus I was sorry to note that this year, Christmas falling where it does, this wonderful season is effectively reduced to three weeks. Only a little earlier this year I was joshing with some clerical colleagues that if the Holy Father wanted a suggestion for drastic reforms, I would write suggesting that the glorious journey of Advent be extended to six weeks and the interminable misery of Lent be commuted to four (regardless of good behaviour).

Lo and behold I was recently at a Convent and discovered from Mother that they had long ago adopted the Eastern practice of the six week

Advent and had found it a wonderful bounty. (I need hardly add that Mother was less than enamoured of my plans for Lent)!

So why favour ADVENT? Why not the beautiful feast of the Nativity? Why not the arduous pursuit of holiness in Lent? Why not the sparkle of the Epiphany? Why not the great festivals of favourite saints? Why not the all consuming emotional rollercoaster of Holy Week and the Triduum?

The answer, I suppose, is memory.

We cannot truly know and proclaim that Jesus is the answer unless we first know what the question is.

The Advent season, in all its brevity, obliges us to rehearse that long journey of Faith that is Salvation History.

Advent puts us in the context of God's universal and eternal plan for Man's redemption.

Unless we know the reality of the created order and its origin and purpose, we are effectively atheist.

Unless we take cognisance again of the Fall of Man, and our consequent Human condition, we need never know our need of salvation.

In the Advent journey we return to our origins. We rehearse our history, cosmic, terrestrial and personal. We do this in the great company of the Patriarchs and Prophets, the saints of God, the Forerunner John and Our Lady.

With Abraham we set out from home, led by the Lord, to become a people. To stand under vast dark yet star-bedazzled skies, gazing into the infinite and waiting on His Word. We walk the lonely trudge and heartbreak to Mount Moriah and the offering of everything we have – only to encounter redemption. We follow through alien cities, pilgrims through wars and destructions, laying the fragile foundation that will become the People of God, the Church.

We hear the cry of the Prophets. The bringers of God's Word to a rebellious and headstrong people. Often rejected, resented, frequently in

exile, always under threat, a minority in a land where power lies with the enemy. At the long end of the cohort of these eccentric, tough, uncomfortable witnesses to the One True God, comes the Baptist, the desert dwelling ascetic, coruscating corrupt rule and calling all men to repentance. The first witness to the new order – as He leapt for joy in his mother's womb – and the last of the old order whose whole raison d'être was about to be articulated in Jesus Christ, the Word of God Incarnate. And at the summation of all these doughty male warriors for the Almighty comes a woman – young, virginal, dedicated to God by her parents, Immaculate in preparation for the unspeakable gift that would endanger her life, puzzle and amaze her, pain her and provoke her deepest ponderings, glorify her soul and lift her to the heights of Heaven where we love to come and rest in Her Presence and call her Mother.

In all this long and often tortuous journeying, the Advent season reminds us that we are not alone. That obscurity was often the lot of the faithful. That earthly success was no measure of the mystical and eternal importance of their faithfulness. That they did not see the future but journeyed in faith, the Faith that God would see that His Sovereign purpose is fulfilled.

When we think we are too old to make a difference, we recall Abraham.

When we seem to be fighting a losing battle with a bewitched society, we remember Moses.

When there seems to be less and less of the faithful, we remember Elijah.

When we are called to witness against the prevailing powers, we remember the Baptist.

When we are called to risk all for the love of Jesus and our desire to present Him to the world, we remember Mary.

We never walk alone or unaided through a darkening world and, in recalling both our history and our solidarity and our companionship on the Pilgrim Way our hearts are both strengthened for what lies ahead and

stretched with longing for the Coming of the Christ, the ADVENT of  
Jesus.

I rest my case.