



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

2nd Sunday of Advent-Year C-December 5thth 2021

***Readings: Baruch 5: 1-9, Psalm 125, 1 Philipians 1: 4-6. 8-11,
Luke 3: 1-6***

ADVENT - the season of longing.

In what now seems a lifetime ago the first credit cards were introduced to a society already familiar with 'Hire Purchase' or the 'Never Never' as it was unaffectionately known by those who were never likely to be free of its remorseless compound interest tyranny. The slogan, I believe it was for the 'National Provincial Bank' card, was the cheery and seductive line 'TAKE THE WAITING OUT OF WANTING'. It has become the motto of our time.

In an age hooked on the 'hit' of instant gratification – and its inevitable subsequent disappointment – Advent seems a strange and old fashioned season, largely buried now under the perversely secular obsession with Christmas, a Christmas which for most has little or nothing to do with either Christ or the Mass and, in other years has begun sometime in late July.

Whilst preparations for modern Western Christmas involve little or no spiritual preparation but rather the idolatrous accumulation of material goods, the idea of wishing and wanting and waiting has become wholly attached to the unsatisfying agglomeration of pre-agreed 'stuff' – much

of which, the festive wrapping recycled, will join the heap of gifts now in cupboards awaiting a reprise at the next jumble sale. The process of months and huge expenditure is reduced to a day of material glut, gluttony and the hollow celebration of a festival whose core has been reamed out by secular attrition.

For me, Advent has always been the most exciting and profoundly moving season of the Christian year. As a child, I learnt early that the most exciting time was the hoping and the longing and the knowing and not knowing what the festival would bring. Hope and expectation and excitement that kept you awake at night, all gathering around the event, the night time secret arrival of the gift, the dawning of the day when all would be revealed.

The more the heart was stretched out by longing, the greater the conviction of hope, the more wonderful the fulfilment, the more lasting the joy in the gift.

(With our own children we would stagger their gifts over the whole Christmas season. This meant that each gift was fully appreciated, played with and enjoyed rather than ending the one day with a confusing heap of discarded 'stuff'. Each day brought its own treasure, each subsequent feast honoured by anticipation and excitement.)

For most people, often even those who still attend Christian worship, the season of Advent is in danger of being overwhelmed by its outcome and its outcome diminished by the ignorance of the glory of its fulfilment. Christmas is not an isolated event coming at the end of a few weeks of vaguely familiar prophetic readings, notable for their linguistic resonance in the more poetic translations but not necessarily cohering in our historical vision.

The Coming of Christ is not a cheery blip in the brief history of Man. His Coming, His Advent, His Appearance in time is the summation of the

long history of God and Man and the climactic moment of the long prepared plan of salvation. The Second Advent of Christ, at the end of time, will see the revelation of the eternal destiny of every man who has walked this earth. We live between these Advents.

Part of our longing is summed up in the beautiful hymns that accompany this season. Who cannot be moved – and have his penitential vision of the season restored – by the lone cantor intoning the heart-rending *Rorate Caeli*, from the fall of the Holy City to the final redemption by God?

Whose tongue can resist the cheerful simplicity of the imminence of the Immanence in ‘Hark a Herald voice is calling’?

Which of us can be immune to the mighty gathering swell of the quintessential hymn of longing, ‘O come, O come Emmanuel’?

Who cannot be re-energised for the long pilgrim journey by that great neglected hymn, ‘The God of Abraham praise’ or fail to have his spiritual vision restored by the beauty of the summation of salvation history in ‘Of the Father’s heart begotten’? Who stand under the infinity of the heavens and not hear the gentle lilt of ‘Creator of the stars of night’ or refuse to rejoice at the joyful thunder of hooves as the outriders of the Universal Church converge in triumphant celebration on the climactic conclusion of the Incarnation in ‘Hills of the North rejoice’?

We have much to assist us on our penitent and joyful way.

It is the waiting, both personal and historical, that transforms mere ‘wanting’ into the deep longing of loving hearts, our arms outstretched to the Christ Child, to the Lord of all.

In order to appreciate just what The Feast of the Nativity declares and to live in the light of that and of the end of all things, we need the Advent season to penetrate deep into our hearts and our consciousness that we may have both thankful hearts, renewed hope and, encouraged by those

who have gone before us on this Pilgrimage of Grace, a steely resolve to follow Christ in the resolute pursuit of the eternal hope of Man.
'Come thou long expected Jesus.....'