

SandalPrints

Issue #160 ... Christmas Joy ... 2015AD

Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis of Reconciliation - Palm Springs, CA

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ADVENT

Preparation for Christmas is an important theme for Advent, but more is involved. Advent gives us a vision of our lives as Christians and shows us the possibilities of life.

The vision of life that Advent gives us is twofold; it looks back to the first coming of Christ at Bethlehem, and it looks to the future when Christ will come again. In the interval between these two events we find meaning for our life as a Christian.

First we celebrate Christ-become-human. We view his life and experience his presence as a human being in our history. Christ came to show us what life can and should be. He gave us true and valid principles by which we can live true and valid lives. But Jesus knew that the human heart could not live in isolation. He formed the Church around the concept of a people held together by love. In that

community we discover unlimited possibilities and meaning. Alone we can do nothing. Together we find real meaning.

When Christ left this earth, he did not abandon us. He remains with us in his Spirit, the Church, the sacraments, the Scriptures and each other. He lives in community with us and keeps his vision of life before us.

When Christ comes again, his presence will no longer be hidden behind the signs and symbols of the liturgy or the words of the Scriptures. His presence among us will be revealed in all its fullness, a presence that will never end, a presence that will perfect and complete our community.

This is the "greater significance" of Advent. In these few short weeks we take in the sweeping panorama of time - from Christ's birth to his Second Coming. The season of Advent brings us the magnificent vision of life and hope for the future given to us by Christ.

Advent is our time to become more involved, more caught up in the meaning and the possibilities of life as a Christian community. Thus we are preparing not only for Christmas but also for Christ's Second Coming. This means that when he comes again, we will be awake and watchful. He will not find us asleep.

Christ is the Morning Star, who, when the night of this world is past, gives to his saints the promise of the light of life, and opens everlasting day.

Venerable Bede

FRANCIS OF ASSISI, EVERYONE'S SAINT

By Richard Brakefield, J.D., S.F.O., KGCHS

Of all Christian saints, St. Francis of Assisi is certainly the most well known and easily recognized. So popular is this saint among Christians and those of other faiths that when Pope John Paul II called for an ecumenical peace conference of the world's religious leaders, the one location where all could agree to meet was Assisi.

What it is about St. Francis that evokes such universal appeal is more easily sensed than articulated. Perhaps it is the dichotomous quality of his impulsive rejection of wealth, success and social position for a life of abject poverty and stolid adherence to a literal emulation of Christ's earthly life. Perhaps it is his intense love of God's creation and his continual celebration of life and Christian love without inhibition. Early in his conversion, Francis was viewed as a fool - a mentally unbalanced religious fanatic whose abandonment of earthly pleasures and comfort was sure proof that his public image was accurate. Later, as his sincerity, charitable works and spiritual purity became more visible, Francis was seen as a holy and supremely courageous model for the many thousands of faithful who crowded to him seeking to find Christ by living a simple life and helping to rebuild Christ's church.

To whatever can be attributed the rapid change in the public view of Francis of Assisi, one thing seems clear - he symbolizes a universal sense of the need and value of peace among nations and individuals, the necessity for all of us to hone our appreciation for the earth and its gifts, and the essential of developing a serious sense of custodianship of this planet.

Societal restrictions and modern laws fairly well preclude Christians living as itinerant mendicants but we are surrounded with plenty of evidence that life styles need to change

dramatically. Greed, selfishness, wanton spending, and disregard of our obligation to protect and care for our planet may all lead to collapse of economies, destruction of life and liberty, and the proliferation of want and misery throughout the world. So, how does one live a Franciscan life in the modern world? I think one way is to do those very things that Francis and all the saints have done internally. That is to reject and abandon old ways and adopt new ones.

'Change' is a word popular in the political arena but true change seldom occurs in the world of politics regardless of the how often it is called for. 'Change' in the spiritual life is an absolute essential and there can be no spiritual growth without it. Each time we renew our commitment to an ongoing conversion, we realize that to grow we must change the focal points of our lives. We can do that by sloughing off old attitudes that confine our vision in grumpiness, pessimism and selfishness. We have to reject our prejudices and narrow mindedness. If we find harshness in the way we treat others or ourselves, we should get rid of our grudges and soften our point of view. On the other side of this coin, we have to embrace forgiveness. It's very good medicine for stress and anger and is more becoming a Christian than a grudging attitude. We need to become compassionate and deal with people with greater understanding. If we do, we'll find ourselves with more friends and family life will be far more enjoyable. When confronted with violence, we can learn to be gentle. Yes, some people will see us as weak and wimpy but when we try it, we discover a bravery that will enrich our life and our personal character. Perhaps most of all we have to develop the ability to see things as others do. We may not agree with others' opinions but we only limit ourselves to the confines of our egocentrism without reviewing those opinions with an open mind.

The change that is required for spiritual growth is not easy. We come into this world pre-programmed for false pride and apparent

self interest but true self interest requires that we do change and become more the person Christ has called us to be. Therein lies real health, happiness and fullness of life. Francis of Assisi made the changes he had to make and as he changed himself, he also inspired others to do the same. Even after all the centuries since his death, this universally loved Francis of Assisi remains one of the best examples of continuing conversion and can be a great help to us as we travel our own individual path to Jesus. And there is no time like this very moment to begin or renew the journey.

A CHRISTMAS REFLECTION

Christmas calls a community back to its origins, by remembering Jesus' own beginnings as a human child, a prophet of God's reign, a judgement on the world and its projects. What the parish celebrates during this season is not primarily a birthday, but the beginning of a decisive new phase in the tempestuous history of God's hunger for human companions. The social concerns of the season are thus rooted in Jesus' proclamation of God's reign: the renunciation of patterns that oppress others (holding, climbing, commanding) and the formation of a new human community that voluntarily embraces those renunciations. It is an *adult* Christ that the community encounters during the Advent and Christmas cycles of Sundays and feasts: a Risen Lord who invites sinful people to become church. Christmas does not ask us to pretend we were back in Bethlehem, kneeling before a crib; it asks us to recognize that the wood of the crib became the wood of the cross.

Brother Nathan

Franciscan Saints, Blessed and Holy Ones December 2008

6. Second Sunday of Advent
8. Immaculate Conception of Mary
12. Our Lady of Guadalupe
13. Third Sunday of Advent
15. Blessed Mary Frances Schervier, III Ord.

18. Mother Alfred Moes, III Ord.
20. Fourth Sunday of Advent
24. Vigil of Christmas
25. Nativity of the Lord
30. The Holy Family

Today the virgin is on her way to the cave where she will give birth in a manner beyond understanding to the Word who is, in all eternity. Rejoice, therefore, universe, when you hear it heralded: with the angels and the shepherds, glorify him who chose to be seen as a newborn babe, while remaining God in all eternity.

Website Watching

Have you stumbled upon a great website recently that you'd like to share with the readers of SandalPrints? If you have, please mail it to: Anthony@FranciscanCanticle.com and we'll put it into the next issue under Website Watching. Looking for a Christmas gift with meaning, go to: www.FranciscanCanticle.com

advent

**like the long awaited flowers
of springtime
like the mountain snow
melting to the sea
we await the coming of the lord
in glory
we await his son
who is to be**

**the rivers run the endless
race of ages
the sun has warmed the earth
from all time
the lord has made a promise
with his people
his words are written
on the hearts of all**

**we offer all the gifts
we've been preparing
the paths on which the lord
will walk someday
we await the coming of the lord
in glory
we are ready for his son
to lead the way**

**like the burning candle
placed in the window
and the desert sands
crying for the rain
with the songs of prophets
dancing in our memories
we apply his words
like balm to our pain**

**we offer all the gifts
we've been preparing
the paths on which the lord
will walk someday
we await the coming of the lord
in glory
we are ready for his son
to lead the way
we are waiting for his son
to come today**

Fr. Edd Anthony

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Let us pray for the intentions of those who asked us to pray for them.

Two monks on a pilgrimage came to the ford of a river. There they saw a girl dressed in all her finery, obviously not knowing what to do since the river was high and she did not want to spoil her cloths. Without more ado, one of the monks took her on his back, carried her across and put her down on dry ground on the other side.

Then the monks continued on their way. But the other monk after an hour started complaining, "Surely it is not right to touch a woman; it is against the rules to have contact with women. How could you go against the rules of monks?"

The monk who had carried the girl walked along silently, but finally he remarked, "I set her down by the river an hour ago, why are you still carrying her?"

God is light;
in him there is no darkness.
If we walk in light,
as he is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another,
and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses
us from all sin.

SandalPrints

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A BLESSED
CHRISTMAS

TO
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ALL

