

Happy Advent!

It is truly remarkable that once again, we are encountering this season of joyful expectation. More than ever in this Jubilee year, the old adage rings clear that "Tide and time wait on no man." Many of us are still in disbelief that another year has passed yet here we are, and Advent is upon us.

The Advent Season marks the beginning of the new Liturgical year. It is a time of waiting in preparation for celebrating the birth and rebirth of the Saviour in our lives. This season provides the perfect opportunity to reflect upon that indelible moment in history when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Thus, Holy Mother Church calls us to make ample preparation for celebration of this remarkable event.

Consequently, the Christmas season for us does not actually begin until Christmas Eve and the Christmas season ends with the wonderful Feast of the Baptism of Jesus Christ. So the proverbial question just might be: - What are we supposed to be doing in the meantime? The answer in, large part, is depicted in the symbolism of the Advent wreath. This wreath is typically made of evergreens featuring three purple candles, one rose candle and one white candle

The evergreens in the wreath symbolize the continuous and everlasting love of God made manifest in Christ Jesus. The first purple candle, when lit, is symbolic of the virtue of **Hope**. The second purple candle when lit is symbolic of the virtue of **Peace**. The third candle, the rose candle is symbolic of the fruit of the spirit of **Joy**, and reminds us that the celebration of the birth of Christ is very near. The fourth purple candle is symbolic of the virtue of **Love**. A white candle appears on Christmas Day and is symbolic of Christ Himself, the light of the world and the light permeating our lives.

Hence, during the first week of Advent, we are challenged to bring **Hope** in a world filled with turmoil and sadness. The second week invites us to be bearers of **Peace**, demonstrating peacemaking in our homes, workplaces and wherever life leads us. The rose candle lit on week three of Advent, calls us to recognize the **Joy** in knowing we have a Saviour and that Saviour walks with us through the changing scenes of life, inviting us to bring **Joy** to all those we encounter daily. The fourth week we are mandated to be vessels of the unconditional love of our Lord and Saviour. Love may not always be easy, but it is always necessary.

As The Advent Season is upon us once again, let us make a firm resolve to exhibit more profoundly than ever the **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love** of Christ in action. Indeed, as St. Francis of Assisi once said, "Preach the Gospel always. Use words when necessary."

Wishing you a Blessed and Holy Advent!

The Bahamas Catholic Board of Education