



MESSAGE FOR ADVENT 2019: GROWING IN HOPE

The four Sundays of Advent, symbolized by the four candles on the Advent wreath, are often considered a time to prepare for Christmas, a time to accompany Mary who will give birth to our Lord Jesus. And yet Christmas is an event from the past that we express so well when we sing "He is born, the Divine Child". When we sing "Come Lord Jesus" during Advent time, we expect Christ's coming in the present of our lives and our world but also his second coming, his return in glory at the end of history. And the least we can do to actively await this announced return is to watch and be on the lookout by recognizing the signs of His coming into our lives and on our land. For Saint Basil, "the Christian is the one who remains vigilant every day and every hour, knowing that the Lord is coming".

The time of Advent is therefore a time of waiting, a time to grow in hope. And how can we grow in hope? In his homily at his morning mass on November 28, 2016, Pope Francis spoke of three ways or means: being vigilant in prayer, active in charity and jubilant in praise. To hope is to live in expectation of the coming of the Lord, the God of surprises who calls everyone "to take to the water and leave the comfort of his sofa" (Pope Francis). This is in line with our pastoral theme: "With charity, we step out! ». Indeed, those who work to build the Kingdom of God and to bring Christ into other's lives, stop crying over themselves and focusing on their problems. On the contrary, they come out of themselves and reach out to their brother, their sister, especially to the poor who shout their misery and loneliness. And this is how we find the enthusiasm to do the good and joy of the Gospel. To hope is to witness joy, not by staying with your hands in your pockets, but by being active in charity. Advent offers us many projects or opportunities to open horizons of hope: a food drive for Christmas baskets, visits to the sick, welcoming people alone or on the move, fundraising campaigns for international aid projects, etc. We must be inventive and opt for the new. To live in joyful expectation and hope is to desire that the Lord may bring us something new. "We are not made for quiet sleep but for bold dreams," says Pope Francis so well.

When lighting the candles on the Advent wreath, let us remember that the flame of these candles represents the light that illuminated the night of God's people in expectation of the true Light (Jn 1:9); it is also a sign of the Christian's hope and vigilance. On our diocesan website, you will find a calendar whose windows will open every day on the beautiful nativity scenes created in the churches of our diocese. The expected opening of a hut makes it possible to reaffirm and activate our expectation of Christmas and the coming of the Lord in an attitude of discovery, trust and vigilance. Finally, on the grounds of the Diocesan Centre, wooden structures in the shape of Christmas trees will be planted and toques, mittens and scarves will constantly be hung on them for people in need. This is a project that can easily be carried out in our parish communities. Together, let us take advantage of Advent to grow in hope.

Your Bishop Noel