

HOPE FOR PEACE, SOW PEACE!

Bishop Alain's Advent Message for 2025

Were you surprised by the early arrival of winter this year? Not really, because in Quebec, we know that it will come sooner or later, once Halloween and All Saints' Day are over. It's something we get accustomed to. The light fading, the cold setting in... yes, winter is coming, whether we like it or not.

But in recent years of climate change and global warming, we've also become accustomed to its late and, above all, timid arrival. We say to ourselves, "First we'll have a few warnings in December. Alternating rain and snow. The boots will have to wait. The serious stuff will start after the holidays." But no! At least, not this year. Already there have been several heavy snowfalls, sleet and freezing rain. Winter shock! The winter we weren't expecting, at least not yet, has disrupted our daily lives.

It reminds me a little of the Advent season that comes around every year. It prepares us not primarily to celebrate Christmas, the first coming of the Lord Jesus into our world two thousand years ago, but above all to prepare us for his second coming, his return in glory, a day without end that will make his reign of justice and peace visible to all.

We Christians should be accustomed to waiting, to hoping for this "coming" of the Lord of glory. We should be ready. We should know that Jesus, like winter, will come one day or another. But in these recent years of change, in society and in the Church, we have also become accustomed to saying: "The Lord's return is not for tomorrow, if it ever happens at all!"

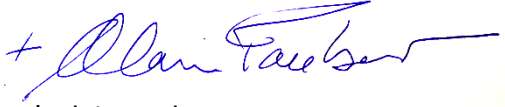
So many of us have begun to "shrink" our hope: "If my loved ones and I can be happy, if we can get by, be protected from the violence and harshness of the world. Get by, until death takes us away." And if we still hope for "paradise at the end of our days", we hardly dare to hope for the world of justice and peace that the Lord God promised on the night of the first Christmas: "Peace on earth to the men and women he loves!"

During this Advent season, in this jubilee year of HOPE, with the Word of God awakening us and setting us on our way, brothers and sisters, on pilgrimage, let us rekindle our hope, as vast as the world, as deep as our desire to live life to the fullest! It is this hope that the Lord Jesus came to fulfill with his birth in Bethlehem. It is this hope that he comes to fulfill with his return in glory. It is this hope that he already kindles when he says to us today: "I AM WITH YOU TO SOW PEACE." In our beautiful diocese of Valleyfield, this word of hope from the Lord is the theme of our 2025-2026 pastoral year.

So let us have CONFIDENCE, the Lord is coming! His presence at our side, in our daily lives, leads us to sow peace with him, around us. Through simple gestures: words of gentleness that "calm" heated discussions; steps towards forgiveness and reconciliation with those

we have hurt; sharing our resources with families who are struggling financially and emotionally as Christmas approaches. Little by little, before it fully blossoms, the new world is sprouting around us. Thanks to him, and thanks to his Spirit within us!

Happy Advent to you, Sowers of peace! The Lord is coming; let us prepare ourselves! He will surprise our expectations, like winter at our doorstep, like the spring we are already hoping for!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Alain Faubert". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small cross-like mark at the beginning.

† Alain Faubert
Bishop of Valleyfield