



Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

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Bishop's Advent Message Advent 2021

I hate waiting! There I admit it!

Perhaps my intense dislike for waiting comes from living on Bell Island, where you have to wait all the time when you want to get off the Island. You're in a lineup for hours waiting for the boat to arrive, and then you are hoping your car will be able to get on the ferry. As a result of all this waiting, I have developed a habit of being early - sometimes way too early - to events.

Not many of us like to wait. But waiting is not always a bad thing. Sometimes it allows us to anticipate, prepare, and expect.

Like when you are waiting at the airport for a loved one to arrive back home. You haven't seen this person for a long time and, although you have to wait for the plane to land, that waiting is one of hopeful anticipation. That is because you know that when you see that person once again, it will be a time of great love and joy. The waiting will have been worth it.

This Sunday, we enter Advent - the Season of Anticipation, Preparation, and Expectation. In these weeks leading to the celebration of the Lord's Nativity, we take time to remember the expectation of the People of Israel and the prophets' call to repentance and the preparation for the coming of the Messiah. And we turn our thoughts also to His Second Coming, at the end of the age.

That is one of the great Advent themes. Just as we look forward to the Christmas holiday, we also look forward to our ultimate communion with God at the end of the age - which is what Christmas is about anyway - Heaven coming to Earth in the person of the Christ Child born of Mary at Bethlehem.

We look forward to the mystery of Christmas, but not without the understanding that He was born to die and that He will judge us in the end. That is the purpose of Advent. To put Christmas in its proper context, there is no Easter without Lent; there is no Christmas without Advent.

Getting ready for Christmas - the Coming of Christ as a baby in a manger - has to be more for us than checking off the items on the shopping list. It has to be more than sending out the Christmas Cards. It has to be more than picking out the perfect tree or baking the Christmas puddings. This, in itself, is not wrong, but it is the "why" that we cannot forget. Why are we standing in those long lines at the stores picking up a present for a loved one? Why are we putting up that tree? Why are we having those get-togethers? The "why" of Christmas is and must always be for us, Christ.

But amid the Christmas readiness, we have Advent. And in an age of instant gratification, setting aside a season to wait and watch and wonder is getting harder and harder to do. It seems Advent is getting lost in the busyness of Christmas.

So, perhaps, this year, we will take that time to make Advent a holy one. Many churches will hold Advent Lessons and Carols worship. This beautiful liturgy sets us in the right mood for Advent. The Lessons tell us the story of our Salvation with the Prophets' call to return to God and the coming of the Messiah. The carols we hear call us to focus on the coming Redeemer of the world, the babe of Bethlehem, who is also the Christ of Calvary. But overshadowing all of this is the hopeful future that awaits us all - when we sing:

*"Lo! He comes with clouds descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending,
Swell the triumph of His train:
Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
God appears on earth to reign."*

And as the Advent carol beckons us:
*"People, look east. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the guest, is on the way."*

Our guest is coming. He will be here soon. As Christ himself said, *"And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."* (Mark 13:37)

Episcopal Priest and Blogger Michael Marsh wrote: "Jesus commands us to 'Keep awake.' Darkness is not our enemy as much as falling asleep. We fall asleep whenever fear controls our life when hope gives way to despair when busyness is equated with goodness, when entitlement replaces thanksgiving when we choose what is comfortable rather than life-giving. Whenever we think our life is over, that darkness is our absolute reality, that we have been abandoned, or that loss and darkness are our only reality, then we have fallen asleep."

Too often, we allow the darkness to deceive us into believing there is nothing worth waiting or watching. So, we close our eyes. We fall asleep, and we become part of the darkness. We refuse to see the One who is always coming to us. The danger in the dark is that we do not give our eyes time to adjust. We do not trust our night vision. Night vision is not about the light around us but the light within us, a light that is never extinguished."

In the darkness of Advent, we move slower, and we listen more than we speak. We hold questions rather than answers. We wait expectantly but without specific expectations. Waiting in darkness is an act of faithfulness and surrender to the Coming One. Waiting becomes our prayer, a prayer that is and will be answered by God's presence." (Michael K. Marsh - <https://interruptingthesilence.com/>)

So, my friends, in this Advent:

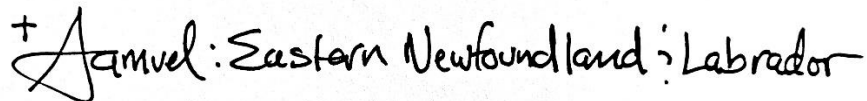
Will you keep awake?

Will you keep watch?

Will you wait?

For Christ is coming!

Advent Blessings,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel: Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small cross symbol above the first letter 'S'.

The Rt. Revd. Samuel V. Rose (He/Him/His)
Bishop
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