

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Advent. For most of us, this word brings to mind notions of candles, of wreaths, and the beginning of the Winter holiday season. Our memory allows us to smell the logs in the fireplace, the aroma of the Christmas tree, and the family reunions which offer us great joys in our reconnections, not to mention the satisfaction of eating our fill of the delectable holiday delights. While all of these things are surely good, and aid in our desire to celebrate together our holiday traditions, let us, at the same time, not forget what Advent is *really* all about.

The word Advent comes from the Latin word, *advenio*, which means **to come to** or **to arrive at**. It is a verb in the present, active, indicative. What, then, are we to abstract from this notion of the present tense? The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* sheds some brief light on this: “When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes **present** [the] ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming” (CCC 524). What a beautiful summation, isn’t it? You might be wondering, however, how this pertains to *me*, right?

This liturgical gift of the Advent season, is for us, a statement by the Church, for the benefit of EACH and EVERY member of the Mystical Body of Christ. For Advent is not merely a time of reflection of what the People of God longed for in the Old Testament, but is an opportunity for us to actively—TODAY, RIGHT NOW—experience this same mystery of expectation as did our Jewish brothers and sisters. The difference, however, is that Christ has already redeemed us in His blood. In our humanity, we have now been granted access to the Father, through the merits of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Individually, however, we must remain vigilant and ready, and so prepare ourselves before He returns at the end of the world; for He is near.

In Christ through Mary,
Mr. Andrew M. Steele