

Reflection for 1st Sunday of Advent Year B

Advent is a time of new beginning. This year, however, Advent is familiar but different. It is a new time but an unprecedented time. This year is no ordinary Advent. It is an extraordinary Advent for an extraordinary time in history. Traditional plans and social gatherings are probably likely to be celebrated in a reduced fashion. This Advent we will need to create a new sense of belonging., Hopefully we can still display our advent wreaths, open the doors of our Advent calendar or even light our candles in the days of Advent. For many people in the past, Advent was seen to be time of joyful expectation, getting ready to make the Advent journey with God's people throughout the world with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment. This year, those dreams will be challenged as the shape and form of Advent will, this year, take on a different colouring or landscape.

The catchphrases or slogans in Advent remain the same. Stay awake; Get ready; Be vigilant to name but a few. The interpretations of these words or phrases, this Advent, may find a new meaning or take on a different significance. The language of Covid-19 places all these things in a new and different place for people of faith as they start the Advent journey. In the past, many would have felt invigorated to be starting Advent as they would try and balance this time of preparation with all the other events that would be taking place spiritually and socially.

The language of Advent can stir a lot of emotion and a sentimentality in us. Hopefully, it can also stir in us a new energy in our faith, particularly as, Advent and Christmastide will have their own unique challenges. However, our challenges of faith can also be seen as an adventure and an adventure of faith can be both exciting and rewarding. It would be easy to become disheartened this Advent. We are facing an Advent never heard of before in recent history. Faith, and history can still come together this Advent and make this Advent season worthwhile. The adventure into an Advent faith can be unknown and not without its challenges but it can also have its surprises. The call to faith in Advent, this year, will be an invitation for us to experience different signposts and pathways to God that we may never have encountered in the past. This will make it an Advent with a difference. The Advent journey is about our encounter with the God of Advent who patiently accompanies us towards Bethlehem. We go as pilgrims, fellow travellers in faith, to celebrate in time, the Christ child event of Bethlehem. C.S. Lewis's, The Chronicles of Narnia present us with a backdrop at the start of Advent as we unravel the story of the Christian faith. The following reflection may offer us some consolation as we reflect on our faith in this Advent season.

“Walking into Advent can be like walking through the wardrobe. Depending on where you live, Advent might be like Narnia – cold with snow under your feet. But Advent is like Narnia in more ways than weather. It's a magical time, set apart from ordinary time: we listen to special music; we decorate our homes, streets and clothes: we eat particularly delightful and delicious foods. We experience a heightened sense of excitement and expectation. Those expectations are not only about the giving and receiving of gifts but also about Advent and Christmastime offering us a glimpse of a world that's a kinder, more just, and more joyful than the one we usually experience. To truly enter that world, as Christians, the door we must walk through first is Christ. Snow, greenery, music, cookies, and gifts can all help us imagine the Kingdom of God, but no matter how big and beautiful the wreath, walking through our front door is not going to transform our lives the way walking through the door of Jesus himself will. It is he who will lead us to that world we long for, where pain is turned to love and death to life.”

Heidi Haverkamp, “Advent in Narnia: Reflections for the season,” pages 2/3

