

Although this is the Legatus Christmas celebration, we all know that we're in the Season of Advent. The fact that we are already playing Christmas music and putting up our decorations, even though it is not Christmas yet, is a sign of our reality as Christians! The Kingdom of God is here among us, because God has already come to us in Jesus, but it is still yet to come — when Christ will come at the end of all time as the merciful judge restoring all things under his Kingship!

It seems like we have one foot in heaven and the other foot is still stuck here, below! But Advent is really about preparing — as we prepare for the coming of Christ — and its about new beginnings, as we renew our spiritual lives in a new year of worship. Knowing that Christ has come to us as the child born in Bethlehem is the source of our joy, and knowing that he is yet to come in the fullness of his Kingdom is the reason we must prepare. But the question is, how can we prepare? Pope Francis has some suggestions for us.

“During Advent,” Pope Francis said, “we are called to enlarge the horizons of our hearts, to be surprised by the life that is presented each day with its newness. In order to do this we need to learn to not depend on our own securities, our own established plans, because the Lord comes in the hour which we don't imagine.” - (Angelus remarks on 1st Sunday of Advent)

“With the start of Advent,” the pope said, “people can reflect on how Christ's birth was about small things: a tiny stable, a small manger, a child born to a simple mother and father — people with big hearts, but childlike in their attitude.”

That attitude “helps people understand what humility and fear of the Lord are,” he said. “This is how the faithful live, knowing the Lord is watching over them and giving them the strength to go-on in their daily lives.”

“True humility,” he said, “means walking simply with the Lord, serving others and never speaking ill of them.”

So, if we are listening to our Holy Father, then we know that we prepare for the coming of the Lord by the small things, the normal things, the human things. We prepare by trusting in the goodness of God. We prepare by remembering that it is truly God who is our strength. We prepare by being humble, serving others, and by not giving into a spirit of negativity that tears us down, but rather, by a spirit that builds-up each person, strengthens, and renews us.

As Catholic leaders we have a special responsibility to demonstrate the virtues and teachings of our faith by our example and our words. In a world where there so often seems to be a spirit of bitterness, distrust, and disunity, let us take this Advent time to be living signs of mercy, healing, and trust. Let us show the world that we can be both successful *and* generous, that we can achieve much *and* have a heart for the poor and the outcast, and that we can discover the grace of God in the small things of life like a “tiny stable, a small manger, [and] a child born to a simple mother and father.”