



THEOLOGY CORNER

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*Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of
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“Why Advent Matters”

The season of Advent is just a few weeks away and now is the perfect time to decide just what you want to do about that. Do you want to use those four weeks before Christmas to simply make plans for Christmas decorations, gifts, Christmas cards, parties, and so on? Aren't we called to something more? Don't get me wrong, all these things can be good, but what is the purpose for it all?

There is a legitimate spiritual battle going on. There is a reason the Church on earth is called the *church militant*. We are engaged in constant warfare against the powers of evil, and at times it seems like we are losing. But the fact of the matter is that God is always in control. If the world is filled with evil, it is because God has permitted this to happen as a result of our disobedience and lack of virtue. The good news, though, is that he never leaves us. When we fall, he is right there to pick us back up. The Church provides us with seasons to encourage us to become docile to this divine assistance. The readings for the First Sunday of Advent do well to communicate just what it is that we should be doing during this season of preparation. Most specifically, Psalm 25:4-5 sums things up quite well: “Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior, and for you I wait all the day.” This truly is the heart of Advent. To open up our minds and hearts to the ways of God so that he may guide us down the path to salvation. We await in expectation for his coming (i.e., Advent) into our lives. We await that light of Christ which illumines our path in a world of darkness, dispelling the darkness of ignorance and sin and showing us the way to reach the happiness for which we were created — the heights of a life of grace.

Christ promised to bring us salvation, but the Gospel on the First Sunday of Advent calls us to, “Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are immanent...” (Luke 21:36). What causes these tribulations? Sin! The fact of the matter is that many people aren't bothered by their sin. Sin just becomes a part of their lives. People have lost the motivation to strive for perfection. But I ask, “Why!?” Why be a lukewarm Christian? What benefit comes of this? We are made for so much more, yet we decide to live our lives just settling and doing the bare minimum? Have we lost sight of our ultimate destiny? Have we lost sight of what truly brings peace and right order in our lives? If so, again, there is good news! We can make the decision right here and now to open up to God. I don't mean opening up to God partially by following him on our own terms, but accepting in faith all of *his* terms because we also accept in faith that his ways sometimes surpass our understanding. This is precisely why the Psalmist in the Responsorial Psalm asks the Lord to make his ways known and to teach and guide us in the truth. In a marriage, you have to be fully invested in and committed to your spouse if you are to have a strong marital relationship. The same is true for the Christian. We must be *all in*. If we live a lukewarm Christian life, everything will be lukewarm. Why? Because if our relationship with Christ is lukewarm then our relationship with others will reflect this same attitude. It cannot be stressed enough: following Christ in the way that he asks us to, properly orders the rest of our human relationships with our spouse, children, friends and other family members.

During Advent, we are challenged to prepare the way for the Lord to be at work in our lives. We have to clean our rooms, so to speak. Because if our room is always dirty, we get comfortable with the mess. Likewise, when we remain in sin, we get so comfortable with our way of life that we don't even notice when our soul is a mess. This Advent, I encourage anyone reading this article to tidy up and get your spiritual life in order. Do not get comfortable. Heed the words of Christ when he asks us to be vigilant at all times and pray. Strive for the greatness to which we have been called. Make sacrifices for the sake of God because he is worth *everything*. Prepare the way for Christ to come into every aspect of your life. Go to Confession, pray often, receive the Eucharist frequently, and make God the very center of your home life so that everything you do reflects his divine love and mercy. Come, Lord Jesus. Show us the way to eternal life. Amen.