



**An Advent Pastoral Letter From +Owen Williams
Bishop Ordinary Of The Diocese Of The West**

November 27, 2021

To My Beloved Brothers & Sisters-in-Christ of this Diocese:

As we are approaching this Advent Season and the preparation for the Celebration of the Birth of The Messiah, we can easily get distracted by worldly issues. Yes, we need to have more people in the pews. But we sometimes look at numbers and not at the people. There are people who need God in their lives, to make sense of the world and to know that they are not alone in this world. As usual, we get easily caught up in the mess of pre-Christmas.

It is also a time of earnest competition. Who has the best pre-Christmas parties, how many lights decorate your house or your neighborhood? Joy! Joy! Joy! - or else you are a “humbug” or a “Grinch.” Every year we are faced with this challenge to stay focused on our Christian Mission - To bring Christ to people and To bring people to Christ.

It is also a time of other distractions. These past few years of disease and war, both of which never seem to go away, have drained our spirit, bank accounts and humor. But in darkness, God always brings light.

In the Season of Advent, the focus is often on “Last Things” as we prepare for the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. These four Last Things are:

Death – Our time of earthly pilgrimage is limited. This is not our final home.

Judgment – Our decisions and actions have significance, to be recognized as needing forgiveness – and the debt or the cost of that forgiveness.

Heaven – The Eternal bliss of those souls who put their faith in Jesus.

Hell – The soul’s existence without God.

It is all very well and good to think on these things. But, what might be more beneficial? A quote of St. Francis comes to mind, “Preach always, Use words if you must.” How do we do this? Our Book of Common Prayer gives us direction in the Collects for the Sundays of Advent, of how we can prepare ourselves for the Coming of Our Lord.

The First Sunday – To Cast away the works of darkness. This is our daily Collect in Morning and Evening Prayer throughout the Advent season.

The Second Sunday – To Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest God’s Holy Word.

The Third Sunday – To Pray that the Clergy may be faithful to God’s Word; to aid us in our Holy Pilgrimage.

The Fourth Sunday – Our need for God’s strength and mercy is so great. By our own wills we are not able, of ourselves, to help ourselves. From the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, “O God, make speed to save us, O Lord make haste to help us.”

To sum up, God loves us, His wayward and oft-times willful children. That is the intention of what He is doing. And the price which that love brings is astounding - The sacrifice of his Son on Calvary's cross. It is all for Love. We understand nothing of scripture or theology if we do not understand this.

I pray that you will use this time of Advent to pray, meditate and give God the glory, for the promises He has given.

Your faithful servant in Christ,