

## First Sunday in Advent, 2008 (Feast of St Andrew the Apostle)

*“And that knowing the season: that it is now the hour for us to rise from sleep ...”*  
(Rom. 13:11)

There you have the actual words from the living word of God, “knowing the season” — for us it is the season of Advent. That beginning of a new year in our lives as “children of God”, a time given to us to think of those long years of waiting for the coming of the Messiah — who is our salvation. We must use these next four weeks, then, as a time to prepare ourselves for the feast of the Birth of our Saviour in the way that St Paul guides us. Let us recall the words that immediately precede the text we have chosen: “The love of our neighbour worketh no evil. Love therefore is the culmination of the Law.”<sup>1</sup> We were made to love — to Love God above all things and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. That is the sure foundation of true happiness — because it is without evil. The night is passed – the night is the period of at least partial domination by the devil, attracting us away from God; for us that must be passed: and we must now prepare ourselves to walk in the fullness of Christ’s Light — the Sun of Justice. This can happen at any time — our salvation is nearer to us than we may think; life in here on earth, at its longest, passes very quickly; so we must prepare ourselves for that meeting with Christ; and use this time wisely to bring about in ourselves the reality of being citizens of the Kingdom of Christ.



There are two phases of necessary preparation. The first is the duty of overcoming sin — of setting aside everything that is not for Christ in our daily lives. We must set ourselves unflinchingly against every work of darkness — all sinfulness. If we have fallen into habit of sin – an attitude of indifference, spiritual lethargy, the “*I’ll-get-by-somehow*” mentality – we must rouse ourselves and put away the very sources of such a way of thinking. Today’s world of violence should make us see the dangers. Each one must know where his own weakness lies — to which work of darkness he is inclined or enslaved! And the Scriptures tell us of the spiritual armour that we must use if we are to put on Christ. Putting on Christ means uniting ourselves with Him so as to share His outlook, His way of looking at things; and to imitate Him in all the actions of life.

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 13:10

There is the second phase. Through the Sacred Priesthood, Christ offers us all the means necessary for the fight against the spirit of darkness; we must put on the spiritual armour that God has given us. Consider what God has given us in the gift of True Faith. Normally we set small store by what has cost us neither money nor pain. We may perhaps understand the goodness of God towards us and yet fail to appreciate the obligations that have their origin in this gift. This is a most powerful piece of our armour. We must then pray for intensity of Faith; for an increase of charity; for never-failing watchfulness; for perseverance in good works. Without all the helps of God's grace, constant prayer, frequent reception of the Sacraments and the humble hearing of God's Word, we shall be weak in the struggle with the forces of darkness, and we shall fail in the chief of all Christian tasks — that of "putting on Christ," of reproducing in our lives the Spirit of Him for Whose coming our short lives are the sole opportunity of preparing.

Let us make these last eight days of the Year of the immaculate Conception eight days of fervent prayer — through the Most Pure Heart of Mary, seeking an ever increasing knowledge of the mysteries of her Divine Son. Monday-week<sup>2</sup>, a holy day of obligation, is something to make special preparations for this year — try to make your families who pray together the devotion of the Rosary and, by reciting the Litany of Loreto, try to learn from the many titles of the Blessed Virgin the many ways our blessed Mother can be of assistance to us and our loved ones who have already been called from this life.

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<sup>2</sup> (December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008)