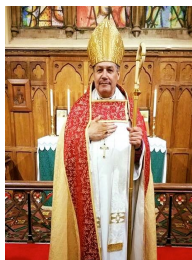




ARCHBISHOP SHANE B. JANZEN PRIMATE OF THE TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN CHURCH



WE enter into the holy Season of Advent and the new Church Year very differently than we did in 2019. The year of our Lord 2020 has brought new challenges, new concerns, new demands on our lives and on our way of life. Faith in God, faith in our public institutions, faith in our national leaders, has been tested and will continue to be tested. To say that we are in the final days is not an exaggeration. Yet we have always been in the final days for our Lord told His disciples that we are living in the 'final age'. Advent is the season of preparation for that Day and for the return of our Lord in glory.

The Scriptures for this Season remind us of the two Comings of Christ: The first at the end of time; the second, in time. One we await with eager anticipation; the second we celebrate with joyous faith.

Where we live now is between these two eschatological realities. 2020 has put to rest any idea we may have had that we are able to control the destiny of our lives in the absence of godly faith, hope and love. The year has brought concern and fear. We have gone from an isolated Covid-19 outbreak to a global pandemic; we have experienced increasing natural disasters including life-threatening hurricanes, tropical storms, earthquakes, fires and floods. Nations have been rocked by political divisions, increasing polarization, and social unrest. The cries of secularization, coupled with attacks on churches and people of faith, have increased as humanity tries to grapple with its past sins while attempting in vain to forge a world without God. All of which was prophesied:

Luke 21:11: "There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven."

Jude 1:18-19: "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions. It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit."

2 Timothy 3:1-5: "But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power."

Yet even in the face of this reality, Advent brings a message of hope. Repentance, renewal, re-engagement, are all themes of this Season. And lest we become discouraged by our present reality, we hear again the resounding words of Scripture: *"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light. (Romans 13:11,12)*

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world; He calls each of us to be lights in the world, shining brightly with the light of faith and the flame of hope. Where the world scoffs, we bring belief; where governments order churches to close, we open our hearts and souls in prayer for others; where voices are raised in division and hatred, we raise the Word of God in unity and love. The ministry of Word and Sacrament, the outreach of the Church, the self-giving of Christians, the worship and prayers of the faithful, these cannot be cancelled, cannot be silenced, cannot be shut down.

As we enter into the Season of Advent and the new Church year, I bid you 'fill your soul with God's richness and strength'. Let us welcome Christ's coming into our hearts anew. I assure you that if we keep God's holy word close to our hearts and live it out daily in our lives, the promises of God will be fulfilled before our very eyes; and God will dwell with us in all grace and truth and blessing.

May each of us be drawn into the faith and mystery of Advent; and may our Lord Jesus Christ richly bless us with his grace and mercy as we prepare for His coming in time and eternity. A blessed Advent to you all.

+Shane