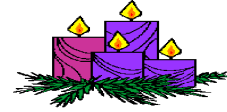


# Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church

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Advent 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters of Saint Thomas,

Advent has arrived. For Catholics, the real new year begins not on January 1, but on the First Sunday of Advent. This is when the Church begins her new cycle of scripture readings and liturgical worship. The sacred season of Advent, from the Latin verb *advenire*, meaning “to come” or “to arrive,” has a two-fold purpose. The first is to remind us of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem, and how he came to us for the salvation of the world. The second, is to get us ready for Christ’s second coming at the end of time as King and Judge of all creation. Like Lent, Advent is a time of preparation. Also, like Lent, Advent is a penitential season, but not in the same strict way. Rather, Advent echoes the words of the liturgy, which reminds us that “that we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our savior, Jesus Christ.”

Advent is about hope. The virtue of hope, which we chose to live and express, needs to be refreshed from time to time. Hope allows us to overcome despair. Jesus Christ was born in a filthy stable and died brutally on a cross not to make a good world even better; but to save a fallen world from itself at the cost of his own blood.

During these weeks of Advent, I encourage you to open your hearts and minds to the scripture readings at mass. Arrive to mass early and read and reflect on the readings for the day. Ask yourself, “How can I prepare to meet Jesus on Christmas morning?”

As we ready ourselves for the joy of Christmas this year, let’s live Advent well and remember why we are supposed to be joyful. In the end, Christmas is not about gifts or carols or parties, though all these things are wonderful. Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ, who brings meaning and hope to a world that needs redemption. In Him, and only in Him, is our hope.

Advent Blessings,

Most Revered Brian P. Spencer

Bishop, The Independent Roman Catholic Church, Diocese of Nevada  
Pastor, Saint Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church