

New Brighton, Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December 2023

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

“Creator of the stars of night, Thy people's everlasting light, Jesu, Redeemer, save us all, and hear Thy servants when they call.”<sup>1</sup>

We sing that verse of the breviary on Sundays and ferias of Advent, at Vespers. It seems particularly adapted to this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent, as the Church allows a moderate joy to illuminate today's liturgy.

Christmas decorations are taking place, violet colour fades to a mixture with white towards rose, organ resounds alone again at the High Mass, but, we are still expecting. However, our expectation is not marked with sadness, because our Saviour is coming. We would mislead ourselves if we were thinking that Advent is a moment of penance as hard and thorough than Lent. The exact opposite is marked throughout the liturgy and the chant. We are expecting Him with hope, confidence and joy.<sup>2</sup>

Christmas so naturally follow Advent, that there are nearly no oppositions between the two liturgical times, at the very difference of Lent and Easter. Advent is a time of preparation, Lent is a moment of penance, contrition and sorrow. Today, the veil is slightly removed, to see the light coming down upon us from the crib. The words of the Introit give us three advice to guide our final preparation, with these dispositions of our minds. Rejoice, be moderate, and have no anxiety. So is the melody also expressing, with a quiet joy. There is no outstanding demonstration in the chant. The Church is glad that salvation is coming, but still expects. The joy will be full when it happens.

Joy is marking this Sunday, but do not remove worries. We need to bear them, without losing this joy, because we are promised to contemplate the Salvation of the world, our own Salvation.

“Happy, thrice happy, is the soul in whom so magnificent a promise is fulfilled! Christ Jesus will reveal “the gift of God”<sup>3</sup> to her; by His Spirit “Who searcheth... the deep things of God,”<sup>4</sup> He will make this soul penetrate into the sanctuary of this hidden sacrament<sup>5</sup> which His mysteries are; He will open to her those “storerooms” of the King<sup>6</sup> of which the Canticle of Canticles speaks, where she will be inebriated with truth and joy. Doubtless, this intimate manifestation of Jesus to the soul, while she is here below, will not reach to the Beatific Vision, which remains the privilege of the blessed in heaven; but it will fill her with divine enlightenment, fortifying her in her ascension towards God.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roman Breviary, Hymn, *Creator alme siderum*.

<sup>2</sup> Dom Ludovic Baron, L'expression du Chant grégorien, le temps de l'Avent.

<sup>3</sup> John, IV, 10.

<sup>4</sup> I Cor., II, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Eph., III, 9.

<sup>6</sup> Cant., I, 3.

<sup>7</sup> Dom Marmion, Christ in his mysteries, introduction.

We are living with this promise. In a way, Advent is a short summary of our life: We are still on earth, constantly assailed with worldly worries and evil attacks, but the Light at the end of the road is guiding us like the lighthouse for the ship on the sea. It shows us where to go, this is Faith; it gives us confidence in the direction, this is Hope; it warms us up, this is Charity. Do not lose yourself in vain battle, but look over the battlefield towards the end, because Christ already won, and He is coming to share with you the laurels of His victory.

The mystery of the Incarnation, which we are about to celebrate in a week time, is a joyful mystery, and this is how it was announced to the Shepherds: “behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy.”<sup>8</sup> At Christmas, this peaceful and expecting joy will become

“the joy of deliverance, of the inheritance regained, of peace found once again, and, above all, of the vision of God Himself given to men. [...]

But this joy will only be assured if we remain firm in the grace that comes to us from the Saviour and makes us His brethren. “O Christian, recognise thy dignity. And made a partaker of the divinity, take care not to fall back from so sublime a state.”<sup>9</sup>

“If thou didst know the gift of God,”<sup>10</sup> said our Lord Himself. If thou didst know all that this Son is Who is given to thee! If, above all, we were to receive Him as we ought to receive Him I Let it not be said of us: “In propria venit, et sui eum non receperunt,” “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”<sup>11</sup> By our creation, all of us are “His own;” we belong to God; but there are some who have not received Him upon this earth. How many pagans have rejected Christ, because He has appeared in the humility of passible flesh!”<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, as we are given one final week of preparation, let’s not waste our time anymore, Jesus’ time. Let’s not drop off this joy which is reminded us of this morning, and live from it, as it is the evidence of the Truth of our Salvation, the note of a good Christian.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.

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<sup>8</sup> Luke, II, 10.

<sup>9</sup> St Leo the Great, *Sermo I de Nativitate*.

<sup>10</sup> John, IV, 10.

<sup>11</sup> John, I, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Dom Marmion, *Christ in his mysteries*, VII, *O admirabile commercium*, V.