



## Advent: A Season of Hope

This is a revised version of a column that first appeared in 15 December 2013.

Advent is here. Once again we find ourselves in the midst of the Season of Hope. “Are you ‘he who is to come,’” John the Baptist’s disciples ask Jesus, “or do we look for another?” Faith tells us that Someone is coming; hope keeps watch for His arrival.

If we are to live out our faith in love, our heart must beat with hope. Faith without hope is like a ship stuck at sea. The maps aboard the ship of faith (the Scriptures, the *Catechism*) serve no purpose unless the winds of hope catch its sails and move it onward across the waters to the goal of life’s journey. Against the fierce counter winds of an unbelieving world it takes strong faith to sustain the hope that is within us and live it out in love day by day. Each Advent we witness anew the world-changing faith of the Virgin who bore our Hope in her womb toward the first Christmas. Throughout her pregnancy Mary knew that the One who is to come was with her, as close as He could be. Like any mother, she longed to see His face; but He dwelt invisibly within, and she had to live in hope until Hope came to birth. Her husband Joseph shared her hope, and so do we: to look upon the face of the Father’s only Son and to feel his gaze upon us, to see and be seen by the Love of God Incarnate in the Son of Mary of Nazareth. It was altogether too much to hope that for our sake the great and all-powerful God would make Himself every bit as small and defenseless as we were when we first drew breath. Yet that is precisely the hope

which Advent proposes to us, because it is the Hope of the Church.

If Advent were taken out of our lives, what would we have to hope for, to whom would we go to hope in? “Hope springs eternal in the human heart,” it is true; but earthbound hope does not spring far enough; it cannot ferry us over the horizon of death. To make that passage we need a hope that comes to us from the other shore, the shore of eternal life.

That hope leads us home to “the end of all our desires,” St. Thomas Aquinas teaches. As we learn from repeated, painful experience, “in this life no one can fulfill his longing, nor can any creature satisfy man’s desire. Only God satisfies. . . . That is why man can rest in nothing but God.”

But resting in God—our last best hope—will not cut us off from one another. To the contrary, St. Thomas teaches, “eternal life consists of the joyous community of all the blessed, since everyone will share all that is good with all the blessed. Everyone will love everyone else as himself, and therefore will rejoice in another’s good as in his own. So it follows that the happiness and joy of each grows in proportion to the joy of all.”

This is the hope Advent invites us to make our own. To whom shall we go for a greater?