



Message for Advent 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Order of St Lazarus of Jerusalem

In this season of Advent we are called to wait, prepare, live the presence of God with us, who is "the One who comes".

Our life is a desire for good and, more profoundly, an expectation of good. Our consumer society has lost the sense of waiting, convinced as we are that no one will come to save us and that everyone must take care of themselves. But it is sad to have a society without Advent, without the desire for greater justice, greater solidarity, a broader and more stable peace. The gravest sin is not waiting for anyone, living in passive resignation and fear without a living hope in the newness that comes from God.

Our history and the life of each one of us does not await an uncertain future that fills us with anxiety, but awaits the Advent of Christ which fills us with hope, a virtue that sustains the entire journey of history to its completion. Christian hope prevents us from looking at history in a fatalistic way and helps us to live our commitment in the world with courage and confidence. We Christians look to the future without fear, because the roots of our hope lie in the very heart of God.

Ours is not only expectation, but also the memory of one who has already come in the mystery of Christmas that we are preparing to celebrate and the certainty of the presence of Christ who walks with us, at our side.

In this season of Advent we are invited to raise our eyes and open our hearts to welcome Jesus Christ who saves the world from loneliness and sadness, from indifference and despair, from sin and death.

If the Lord comes - we are called to go out to meet him.

It is time to rise from the laziness of self-centeredness and to wait not for novelties that are the result of fantasies or utopias, but for someone who is new: Jesus Christ, the hope of the world. Faced with the certainty of having to appear before the Lord, who will judge us in love, we cannot live a breathless and banal life made up of dissipations that distract us and evasions that alienate us, sterile actions and useless discussions.

A time of waiting, Advent is a time of joy because every coming of Christ is a gift of grace and salvation, but it is also a time of commitment because it impels us to live the present as a time of responsibility and vigilance.

Let us live Advent together in intense prayer, in practical charity, in joyful vigilance, and let us offer everyone the warmth of Christian joy.

Happy Advent!

Michele Pennisi EGCLJ, Archbishop Emeritus of Monreale & Ecclesiastical Grand Prior