



One of the features of social media is occasional alerts on the anniversary of what it deems to be some significant event in your life. From time to time, I get reminders of where I was five, ten, even fifteen years ago. Weddings, funerals and parish events spill out before me. Friends and parishioners captured forever in image – some still with us, others not. It only goes to show us the incessant march of time – a drum that we must all fall in step with.

What have we but the 'eternal now' as one writer put it. This God-given day to do, live and be a little better as a follower of Christ. The first Sunday of Advent would have us begin a new church year. As students in Maynooth (thankfully before smart phones would record such things) as choristers, we would gather in the wee hours, move around the College and sing in four part harmony, 'Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Convertte ad Dominum Deum tuum' (Jerusalem, turn to the Lord your God). It might seem a strange thing to sing about repentance just twenty-five days before Christmas, but Advent is about inner preparation, whatever about the external preparation of our outer world. We all have something to turn our backs on and something to face toward.

Another year ends, another begins – at least in Church terms. This is

THE MARCH OF TIME

New Year's Day. An Advent adventure awaits to unfold before us. Advent makes sense of time for all of us. Anniversaries, both joyful and sad, remind us that life and Christmas is all about relationship. It celebrates God's self-humbling love for us and should be characterised by our love for others. How can you be civil to the stranger and 'a devil' to your own. That is quite hollow. Advent reminds us that love extends in a practical way. All things will end, as the Gospel reminds us, so all the more reason to live the present – the only time we truly have – as best we can. That's where Advent as a time of repentance comes in. Christ came as one of us, but he also came to save us. He is, as one carol puts it, 'saviour of the world'. There is a

need to turn our backs on ways of behaving that are not good. It is entirely possible to have everything ready for Christmas and have that nagging feeling that you are not prepared at all where it matters – in the heart. Confession would help and we shouldn't shy away from it. Time waits for no one, so they say – but the Lord waits with immense love, patience and generosity. The only fit Advent response is to mirror the same qualities in these Advent weeks.

— Tom Cox

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.
Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

Showing the Host to the people, the priest says:
Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,

but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon (Ps 84:13)

The Lord will bestow his bounty, and our earth shall yield its increase.

Prayer after Communion

May these mysteries, O Lord, in which we have participated, profit us, we pray, for even now, as we walk amid passing things, you teach us by them to love the things of heaven and hold fast to what endures.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Reflection

When have you found that your alertness meant that you were able to receive an unexpected grace (e.g., you took an opportunity that presented itself).



Lesson

'The coming of the Son of Man' refers not only to the end of time but to any moment of grace in our lives.



Prayer

For love of my family and friends I will pray: Peace upon you.