

Advent-Adventure

We are currently in the season we call Advent. The word comes from the Latin language and means in English *arrival*, specifically the season of Christ's arrival, Christ's birth into our world. It also refers to the next time Christ comes – his arrival at the end of the world.

It comes across as a period of waiting on our part – other than our fasting and doing penitence for our sins, cleaning up our act so as to be worthy of such an arrival. It's like the plight of the characters Vladimir and Estragon in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot* – who never comes. Even when a boy approaches with a message from Godot that while he will not come this evening he'll surely come tomorrow, they can't be sure. At last they decide to wait no longer but then the first act ends with: *They do not move*. Perpetual passivity.

But there is another way of reading the word Advent – for from the same Latin word we derive the word *adventure* – which is hardly a passive word. Adventure means movement, not waiting around. It means going forth to meet something, to find, to experience something that entails great risks – like sailing west in search of Asia and finding – surprise – America – or for that matter, like getting married.

Our Advent readings present us with much that underscores the season as a summons to adventure, movement, crossing the line into the unknown. There's Mary, for instance, made pregnant by the Holy Spirit. No matter whether you read that as an actual fact, a miracle (which the Church has for centuries) or as a way of portraying Mary as the Jewish people pregnant with the world's Messiah - or as both; her pregnancy certainly takes her out of her anonymity into the whole course of world history such as she could never have imagined – including her cult as Our Lady of Guadalupe. From relative quiet to a sword piercing her heart – releasing so much grace.

Joseph at first regrets engaging with her after finding her already pregnant. He just wants to back out of the story – back into nowhere and being nobody - passivity, normality – until the angel says – “Hey, I don't care how old you are, whether you are ready to retire; an adventure awaits you, your involvement. Get moving. Step into the role assigned to you.”

Then think of the Magi, stargazers from the East. Advent, leading up to their discovery of a child more royal than King Herod, is sheer adventure - sidestepping danger, trusting in a star. And look at the boy Jesus himself. Sure he starts out in a manger *asleep in the hay*, but it's not long before his family, thanks to his presence, is catching a bus to Egypt to escape their murder. And look at him at twelve, giving his parents fits by staying behind in Jerusalem to question the priests of the Temple – setting him up in their memories as somebody they will have to deal with someday. Go back to Nazareth?? That's not what he was born to do – he felt called to save the world, not hole up in some backwater village, safe and sound. Adventure! That's what Advent and Christmas are – a call to adventure – to opening the 365 windows of your 2017 “Adventure Calendar” to find a new insight, a new calling everyday of your life.