

## ADVENT 1 (A)

*There was these two twin boys, one an optimist and the other pessimist. Their Dad decided to set the scene so his pessimist son couldn't but change his outlook. They were put in separate rooms, the pessimist with a sacksful of expensive toys all boys love and the other was given, yes, a bucket of horse manure. As usual the boy with the toys was complaining - he didn't like the colour, he would have preferred something else, it didn't include the latest model and on and on. The other boy in the other room was very happy and when his Dad put his ear to the door he could hear him saying with glee: 'gooddie, I must be getting a pony'.*

The genuine Christian is an eternal optimist. He knows his faith and hope in God will not disappoint. He knows evil will not succeed in the end even though at times it might appear to be getting the upper hand. As the scriptures says: 'When Christ comes again all his enemies will be put under his feet'

But we must be ready to meet him when he comes again and 'stand before Him with confidence'. St Paul sees life as a kind of battle: Let us arm ourselves and appeal in the light. Advent is the time to engage in battle and confront those demons which tend to shake our hope and confidence in God and man.

So this Season before Christmas is for people who need to recover hope – hope in a Saviour. The battle between hope and hopelessness goes on within us.

Psychologists tell us that feeling somewhat demoralised is at the root of every illness whether physical, psychological or moral. When people's faith in the goodness of God is on the wane then their faith in themselves and other people takes a battering as well. The emptiness which ensues can often be filled with short term kicks that make our situation worse.

Advent is the time to wake up from the darkness of sin and unbelief and turn with confidence to the Lord. There is no need to hold on to the guilt of our sins which keeps us from coming out into the light. Remember the good thief last Sunday when all seemed lost turned to Jesus in the midst of his hopelessness and had his trust rewarded beyond his wildest dreams. If anything should give us hope, this should.

During Advent we should all avail ourselves of the Sacrament of Penance. There is no need to carry the burden of guilt round with us. When we hear the words of absolution said by the priest, who represents Christ, the weight of our sins is taken away. That's what St Paul means when he says: 'give up all the things you prefer to do under cover of darkness and come out into the light'. Don't put it off because the Master can come at an hour we do not expect. 'In our Advent prayer we 'wake up' to the reality of God's love for us so that when Christmas dawns Christ may be reborn again in our hearts, in our lives and in our families.