

An important Visitor is coming!

December! Already!

For many around us, if one begins preparing for the Holidays with the start of December, he or she is already too late! Think of all you have to think about to get to Christmas “on time”. The gifts, the food, the turkey, the drinks... What a race, my friends!

Truly, it's fantastic to see this excitement many of us demonstrate, while the year ends and the fatigue of autumn hits us. At the same time, I wonder: where is the essential?

I think we can all agree that the most important thing isn't the size or price of the gift, or the caviar you want to put on the table and wash down with a fine wine on New Year's Eve. Nor is it about the obsession some people have with everything being perfect, with the house looking as good as new... and themselves too: a new haircut, a new dress, a new jacket.

No. The most important thing is you, it's me, it's us: the ties that bind us together. That's what we need to nurture as a priority, without neglecting the party, of course!

For us Christians, something is offered to us to help us live out this time leading up to Christmas. Something that goes against the grain of this race, inviting us to slow down instead of speeding up, to take our time rather than chasing after it.

In order to become more attentive to this important visitor who is coming. This “something” we are talking about is the time of Advent. The time of the Coming, if you prefer... the time of the Visitation. Yes, with a capital “V”. Because the One who is coming is not just anyone: it's God himself!

Some will say: “But He's already come. Nothing new!” Others, more learned, will add: “It's true he said he'd come back... but since we've been waiting for him for two thousand years, is it worth doing something special this year?”

We are invited to commemorate these two Visitations of the Lord Jesus, these two “Advents”. Without forgetting a third Advent. That of His coming into our everyday lives, He who presents Himself in the guise of a “Survenant”, on our paths, in our homes, just as He did to us the first time, on the road to Emmaus, on Easter evening.

So, yes, let's slow down, open our eyes, our ears and above all our hearts. The Lord comes, today, tomorrow, in the midst of our family celebrations, in this secret place where our desires for peace, security and happiness lie! He is the Unexpected, the Stranger, the Troublemaker. What a wonderful Visitor!

“My God, I'm not ready! I haven't prepared anything! What will he think of me, of us?” For my part, I tell myself it's not so bad. The first time he came, the world didn't pay too much attention. Too busy doing its own thing, too busy surveying the universe. In Bethlehem, there was no room for Mary and Joseph in the common room. Inspired by the Lord, they improvised: a manger, swaddling clothes, the “heater” provided by the local animals. And Jesus sleeping comfortably on straw.

It speaks to us of a God who does not easily scandalize, who does not take offense at our imperfections. A God who has the genius to use everything we offer him: a small or large space in our lives, even our stables. A God who takes advantage of even our refusal to welcome him to make himself close to the poorest, the most distant, the shepherds and the wise men. A God for whom the most important thing is you, it's me, it's us.

Dear faithful of Valleyfield, I wish us, for this Advent and this holiday season 2024, to taste the joyful presence of this surprising God who comes to visit us in Jesus. He is both a little child and the Lord of glory himself. May his visit warm our hearts and make us witnesses of his Love for all his people, for everyone.

Happy Advent!

+Alain
Bishop of Valleyfield

