



## MESSAGE OF BISHOP NOËL SIMARD FOR THE SEASON OF ADVENT 2020

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Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Hoping for the presence of the Lord! This is the theme that I am proposing for this time of Advent.

This year our season of Advent will be different because of the pandemic. WE would like to be present – physically, and not only virtually- to our family members, our friends, the members of our community but we cannot. WE cannot express our affection and our joy to others in a physical way. We suffer not being able to meet with family members for a good dinner, or with friends for a happy hour. We cannot visit those who are sick and lonely. We miss our celebrations of prayer and the mass on Sunday.

We hope that this crisis will end soon and that a vaccine will help re-establish a real and living communication among us, and also help to improve the economy. The season of Advent is offered to us in order to reinvigorate and strengthen our hope. In fact, we are hoping for the presence of the Lord who visited us in the past with the Incarnation and Birth of Jesus at Christmas, who visits us in the present as Jesus visits us continually, every day, and who finally will visit us in the future when Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead.

With the whole Church, let's make this waiting, a time to nourish our hope and joy, a time to remain serene and trustful in the midst of the trials of the pandemic. At the same time, let us take advantage of this season to remain alert, listening to the Word of God, deepening our relationship with Him through prayer and the sacraments (when possible), reaching out to the poor, to the weak, the homeless, the lonely, the sick, and persons in need.

More than ever, as Pope Francis pointed out in his homily for the First Sunday of Advent 2019, we are called “to choose prayer and charity over consumerism”. We are called “to enlarge the horizons of our hearts, to be surprised by the life that is presented each day with its newness”.

The Lord comes! “Here is the root of our hope: the assurance that the consolation of God reaches us among the tribulations of the world (and the trials of the pandemic), a consolation that is not made of words, but of presence, of His presence that comes among us”. And referring to our motto for the pastoral year, in this time of advent, I make more of an effort to spread happiness, speaking words of consolation and expressing Jesus' presence in my life and through actions of solidarity, self-giving and charity.

Have a good and holy season of Advent!

✠ Noël Simard  
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