

ADVENT JOURNEY  
R.C.I.A.  
Deacon George Collins

Spe Salvi • Christian Hope • Pope Benedict XVI's recent encyclical

Today we light the Pink candle; a symbol of hope. By the way, the color is rose, not pink. The Church names today as Gaudate Sunday. Take heart, the journey through Advent is almost over, renew yourselves. Renew your hope, for hope is the distinguishing mark of our faith in Jesus Christ. We have a future! We still may have a distance to go on our journey, and the end may seem to be a long way off, but time has a way of flying by. What if, for some, this is their first Christmas; what have they learned from us? For others this may be their last Christmas; what have they learned from us? And for many this may be their only Christmas; what have they learned from us? How should we act in Christian love toward them? And what have we learned about ourselves?

Did you ever take a long journey by car; how endless it seems trying to get to the destination. The children in the backseat are always asking, "are we there yet?" The anticipation is overpowering. We need to take a coffee break to relieve the tension. That's what Gaudate Sunday is all about; an opportunity to renew our hope in our future. Are we there yet? It seems that we will never get there. It seems like the trip is endless. Are we there yet? The time we spend at our destination seems to go so quickly. And, all though we go the same distance coming home, how much faster the return trip passes. The children are usually fast asleep in the back seat. There's nothing like getting home; to sleep in your own bed again with familiar surroundings.

The theme for Advent should be, "Come home, all you weary travelers. Some of you have been away too long. The door is always open; we have left the light on for you." Put your trust in the one true God of the mind, heart and soul; not in science and technology; but in the service to one another. We must not isolate and confine our efforts to our own salvation. We should also ask: what can I do in order that others may be saved, so that they too may have hope? For no one lives alone. No one sins alone. No one is saved alone. Our lives are constantly involved with others.

Recently I was sitting at our kitchen table drinking some tea. It was very quiet and I became aware of a ticking sound. Tic, tic, tic, tic, tic. tic..... Then I realized it was the second hand on the clock making the sound. At first, all I could think of was “my God, my life is ticking away.” Each tic meant that I no longer had that moment; and my life was getting shorter. For a moment there was panic. I wondered how many TIC's I had left. Pessimism is a negative thought. I realized that I had a deeper Faith in Jesus and that I was an optimist, not a pessimist. Each tic, tic, tic, brought me closer to my soul's desire: the start of a new life, and that this life is my advent to heaven.

Heaven is not an endless parade of days in a state of Joy, but an immersion into a state of endless joy. Did you ever experience something in your life that, in the ecstasy of the moment, you said: “I wish this would never end. I wish it would go on forever.” But of course it didn't. Well, in heaven this becomes a reality. Some Christians consider an endless parade of days in eternity could become very boring. PESSIMISM! This is a highly secular and humanistic disillusion. But as an immersion into Joy itself, into God Himself is the heart's desire. Since there is no passage of time in eternity, the joy of the moment is eternal. God has no past tense, God has no future tense, for God is perfect as He is. He said to Moses, “I am, who am.” Everything with God is in the present tense. At our death we enter into an eternal presence. The immersion into God Himself is eternal. God who is eternal shares Himself with us. No wonder that we can be OPTIMISTIC. Our optimism is based upon truth, it is trustworthy truth known only through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus sent word to John the Baptist that the blind see; the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed; the deaf hear; the dead are raised; the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. Blessed are those who take no offense at me. Who can argue with that truth? Science may have some solutions to our human condition, but science and technology in and of themselves are not the answer to our humanities longing. The longings that are in our hearts are cured only by God. Only God can enter our hearts, if we invite Him. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Tic, tic, tic, tic, for whom does the clock of time tic? It tics for us! When that last tic comes; do we still have hope in God's promise? For a man who does not know God, even though he may entertain all kinds of hopes, is ultimately without hope for he depends upon himself. He drifts

into a life of emptiness. Hope and Faith in God are brothers, one can not have meaning without the other.

Today, renew your hope, renew your faith, renew your prayer life. Renew the hope of salvation in your heart. It is never too late, until that last TIC is gone. Tempus fugit, memento morte; time flies, remember the last TIC is coming. God will strengthen your faith and hope if you invite Him into your heart. May the peace of a true Christmas be in your home. AMEN!