

Dear Friends,

When big events are approaching, people start worrying about a lot of things and how to prepare for them. Many of us are already absorbed in the preparation for Christmas. A good number have sent out their Christmas cards and Christmas shopping is already in full swing. Others are occupied on deciding what gifts to give while children are busy deciding what they want to get for Christmas. Many of us have an excitement as we look forward to the Big Day. The trouble, it seems, is that our modern society has commercialized Christmas so that we have mistaken the frosting on the cake from the substance. Frosting became the cake and the cake became frosting.

If we brush off those decorations, gifts, food and drinks, the spirit surrounding Christmas would be lost. However, let us always be aware that there is a danger of losing the right perspective. We need to constantly remind ourselves to ***'Keep Christ on Christmas.'*** The truth is that Christmas is a religious event. We are celebrating the birth of our Savior who came down centuries ago. Think about it. That is why today's gospel instructs us to prepare in the spirit for the birth of Christ. John the Baptist beautifully announces, ***"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*** The Christmas carols ***Joy to the World*** puts it beautifully: ***"Let every heart prepare Him room."***

Advent is a time for preparation. It is a season of conversion and repentance - a time to live out the message John proclaims: ***"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*** The Kingdom does not appear out of the blue. It will come only when certain conditions are met, when people are converted to a new style of life where they are willing to commit themselves to banish injustice, either personal or social, and become ready to stand for one another. Whether it will indeed materialize depends on each one of us.

Repentance and conversion are not only for Advent – they should be forever. It begins with realizing that we are sinners and asking for forgiveness. Sin is like a poison in the body which slowly kills. Penance is the way to cleanse our souls. Our souls are cluttered like attics filled with junk. To prepare for God's coming, we need to do some housecleaning. We must make room for Him by getting rid of sins. Sacramental confession is a great help. Let us heed the words of John the Baptist, ***"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"***

Have a blessed Advent,  
Fr. Krzysztof Kardzis



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