



Be Careful What You Pray For

Traveling up to New England in late September gave me a preview of the Fall which seemed so far away here in New Jersey. The sky was clear and the air was just brisk enough to announce a not far away change of season. In anticipation, I took along my mantle to wear for my walks around the grounds of the St. Francis Center in Andover, Massachusetts. Pumpkins already festooned the porches of the homes and my mind raced to Thanksgiving ... already! For me, this also meant the coming of a favorite liturgical season – that of Advent.

This will be one of many Advents celebrated. The older I get, I also receive the grace to really “get it” – to really understand just what is being celebrated these 4 weeks before Christmas. So much of Christian life depends on how we view this season. It dictates the way we reckon this present world and sets the tone for the way we act and treat each other. Advent forces us to anticipate something we have not yet experienced fully but which we have not been a stranger too, either ... the Kingdom of God.

“Adveniat regnum tuum ... Thy kingdom come...” we pray often – perhaps too often for our own good. Do we realize what we are praying for? When we pray the Lord’s prayer, we are praying for the coming of the Kingdom in its fullness at the end of time – at the end of this world. We also pray for the realization that the Kingdom is here. It means that we are serious about being ready to witness to that Kingdom by our actions and attitudes. Anyone taking a spiritual inventory of that personal spirituality will find themselves coming up very short on the readiness to enter that Kingdom when at last we are called. We have so far to go before we can say that our actions and attitudes have conquered war, injustice, hate, homelessness, starvation, etc.

“Fiat voluntas tua ... Thy will be done...” – another prayerful wish which makes us uncomfortable as we go through our lives fulfilling not God’s will, but our own. Do we even know what God wants? Do we desire what God desires for us and for humanity?

As Franciscans, may the coming season of Advent find us ready and willing to bring about the Kingdom in the “here and now” by living lives which give witness to the reality of that Kingdom. In being faithful to our Rule, may we come to appreciate all the more, God’s will for us as individuals, as an Order and as a society.

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