



Advent Message – 2018

A call to repentance, change of heart and renewed way of life

The grace and peace of our Lord, Jesus Christ be with you all!

1. Brothers and sisters, we are privileged once again with the Season of Advent; a providential time in which we are invited to prepare ourselves for the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ at Christmas – the greatest miracle when God became man and dwelt amongst us (Jn. 1:14).
2. Our Advent Season this year comes at a time when our country is awake to a serious *climate condition* which threatens our common home and indeed our food security; the unending *political rivalry*, that appear to be cashing in to divide our society on tenets that seem not to favour harmony and unity but ferment anger, chaos and disorderly behaviour. The *economic war* between the East and the West, which seem to exploit our apparent volatile landscape and endangers peace. A new trend of *wilful manipulation of information* to suit interest groupings at the expense of the truth; and the degeneration of *objectivity and civility* in addressing issues.
3. Scripture calls us to mind that: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15). In this season of advent we are called to repentance, to a change of heart, and to a renewed way of life. We are called to a renewed personal journey in the encounter with the living God who comes to meet us and who awaits each and every one of us. Repentance, change of heart and a renewed way of life are personal, yet with ripple effects. Once we are renewed at personal level, we will then be renewed at community and society level. The failure to reconcile with others is purely indicative of a failure to reconcile with self at a personal level as individuals. This also means failure to forgive ourselves and our past. As a result, we become angry and

malicious with others. Resentment and hatred are moral cancers that eat away at the enthusiasm to do good and to move on with life.

4. The crowds asked John the Baptist, “***What should we do?***”(Lk. 3.10). He said “Turn away from your sins” and “Produce good fruits as evidence of your repentance” (Lk. 3:8). Our Advent preparation calls for a realignment of our entire lives especially at personal level and to show concrete and practical ways of our change in our way of life and deeds. It calls us to turn away from sin and to start living a new way of life – our initial innocence. We are invited to take a serious gaze at our lives and to take concrete actions of repentance, a change of heart, and a renewed way of life.
5. Advent season calls for an introspection of our lives and taking an inventory; and indeed asking ourselves serious questions about our way of life and how our behaviour affects others and society. Undoubtedly, others may require guides to lead them out of their predicament.
6. John the Baptist was faced with a similar situation when he showed up on the banks of the Jordan. Some people ridiculed him. Some were irritated by him. But others knew deep down in their hearts that they were indeed guilty of wrongdoing. As scripture tells us that the Tax Collectors knew they were guilty of overcharging people; Soldiers knew they were guilty of bullying others; and all the people knew they were guilty of not sharing their surplus with those who didn’t even possess the necessities of life. Yet, John the Baptist confronted them where they were most vulnerable, namely: in their hearts. John challenged them to look into their hearts and to acknowledge their sins. He further challenged them to look into their hearts and to do something about what they saw. He challenged them to turn away from their sins and to turn back to God (cf. Mt. 3: 1-17).
7. We too are guilty of wrongdoing in one way or another (cf. 1 Jn. 1:8-10). And, there lies our frailty and our sin. It is this vulnerability that we need to present to our Lord, Jesus Christ for ***healing, forgiveness and reconciliation***. Therefore, this season offers us an opportunity not only to have our shortcomings atoned but it also offers us an opportunity to experience God’s mercy and God’s love in the incarnation of His only begotten Son – the Immanuel.
8. God became man and dwelt amongst us in order to liberate us from all that enslaves us, like: *selfishness, greed, jealousy, envy, distrust, falsehood and manipulation of information*

to suit our personal agenda. In His incarnation, God offers us an opportunity to reflect deeply on our call and on our duty towards one another and towards Him. We are made in His image and likeness and we are ordained to love and to care for each other.

9. As we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ who dwelt amongst us, let us equally prepare ourselves to celebrate our faith deepened in the love for Jesus Christ who came to serve and not to be served. Let us celebrate our faith lived in sincerity with one another and especially with those entrusted to our care. Let us witness to our faith with reverence and dignity by making the truth and beauty of the gospel shine out in our lives without compromising it to the demands of popularity. May Mary, the Mother of the Child Jesus, intercede for us!

Given this at Lusaka, Cathedral of the Child Jesus, this 25th day of November, on the Feast of Christ the King, in the Year of our Lord, 2018, the Eleventh of our Episcopate.

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Archbishop of Lusaka &

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