

Rejoice in the Lord

**By Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.
Archbishop of Newark**



Waiting

We pray about “waiting for the blessed hope” every day in the Mass and in a special way during Advent. Our faith teaches us that the Lord will come again. And we’re told that his coming will be a time of great rejoicing, a time when every tear will be wiped away and all our hopes will be fulfilled.

We believe this. It is an integral part of Christian hope. One day the Lord will come again and the redemption of the world (and our personal redemption) will be complete.

As a member of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer (Redemptorists), I have a keen awareness of this fundamental truth of our faith. The process that was initiated by God’s promise to his chosen people, the Jews, and that was realized in the fullness of time by Christ’s incarnation and by his passion, death and resurrection, will be brought to fulfillment on the last day. We wait for this day, the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Waiting is not something we do willingly. We are used to the instant gratification of our desires, the quick fix. We don’t like waiting in long lines, and we get irritated when the meal we ordered in a restaurant takes longer to be served than we think it should.

So what does hopeful waiting mean for us? Is it just a nice thing that we reflect on during the Advent season, or does it tell us something important about who we are as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ?

As missionary disciples, I believe that we encounter God first and foremost in prayer and in the loving service of others that is nourished and sustained by our prayer. Authentic prayer requires patience. We open our hearts to God; we share with him our deepest hopes and fears and desires; we ask for God’s help; we promise to be more faithful and to sin no more—with the help of his grace. And then we wait for God’s response.

Prayer is “hope in action.” It is action because we take the initiative and reach out to God who is always there—our constant companion on every step of life’s journey. Prayer is also a profound expression of hope because it requires that we let go of our need for an immediate or predetermined answer. Prayer teaches us to wait—and to trust—in hope.

We begin the new Church year with a season of waiting, a time of expectation and longing. Advent prepares us to celebrate Christmas without falling into the trap of superficial or unrealistic expectations. It teaches us that the greatest gift of Christmas is the Lord himself. Advent shows us that a personal encounter with Jesus Christ is what we truly hope for at this time of year (and always). It reminds us that all the joys of Christmas, and of the Lord’s second coming, can truly be ours—if we learn to wait for them prayerfully.

Waiting in hope requires patience, trust and a firm belief that God will hear and answer our prayers. We hope that the Lord will give us everything we truly desire, and need, and that his coming again—this Christmas and at the end of time—will be our greatest source of joy.

Sincerely yours in Christ the Redeemer,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph W. Tobin" with a stylized flourish at the end.

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Archbishop of Newark

Being Accountable

Every five years, we bishops travel to Rome to meet with the pope, who is the Bishop of Rome but also the Pastor of the Universal Church, to render an account of our stewardship of the dioceses we serve. We call this an “*ad limina*” visit from the Latin phrase which means “to the limit or boundaries,” which in our case means the spiritual homeland of Saints Peter and Paul. Here we renew our promises as bishops and strengthen our commitment to unity with one another and with the pope.

The bishops of New Jersey made this trip during Thanksgiving week and it was a truly rewarding experience. As is customary on these visits, we had meetings with the principal offices of the Curia (education, doctrine, charity, clergy and religious, ecumenism, protection of our youth, and the Vatican’s Secretary of State). But the most important activities were the opportunities we had to meet and pray with Pope Francis. His genuine concern for us and for the people we serve was truly inspiring, and we came away from our encounters with our Holy Father feeling supported and encouraged in our efforts to be faithful missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

Every conversation and official meeting we had during this *ad limina* visit sought to strengthen the Local Churches (dioceses) we serve. We were honest and straightforward in reporting the challenges our dioceses face, but we also were confident and hope-filled in our descriptions of the many ways the Holy Spirit is renewing the Church in New Jersey. We expressed our sincere gratitude for the outstanding clergy, religious and lay faithful who give themselves so generously to carry out Christ’s work here and in so many other places across the globe.

As much as we bishops enjoyed the opportunity to be together with each other and with Pope Francis and his leadership team, it was a blessing to return home to the sights, sounds and smells of Advent and to the anticipation of a joy-filled Christmas in New Jersey!

— Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R., on behalf of the bishops of New Jersey

A Message from Pope Francis: Words of Challenge and Hope



The Lord is born, the Redeemer who has come to save us. Yes, it is a celebration... [but] we always face the danger, we will always have within us the temptation to make Christmas mundane, worldly... When the celebration stops being about contemplation—a beautiful family celebration with Jesus at the centre—it begins to be a worldly celebration: all about shopping, presents, this and that... and the Lord remains there, forgotten. Even in our own life: yes, He is born, at Bethlehem, but [then what?]. Advent is [a time] for purifying the memory of this time past, of that dimension.

Because the Lord who came then will return! He will return! He will return to ask us: “How did your life go?” It will be a personal encounter. We have a personal encounter with the Lord, today, in the Eucharist; we cannot have such a personal encounter with the Christmas of 2000 years ago: we have the memorial of that. But when He returns, we will have that personal encounter. It is purifying hope.

Vigilance and prayer are two words for Advent: Because historically the Lord came in Bethlehem; and He will come, at the end of the world and also at the end of our individual lives. But every day, every moment, He comes into our hearts, with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. (Advent homily 2018)

My Prayer for You

During this Advent season of waiting, we pray: Maranâ thâ' (Our Lord, come)! Help us wait patiently. Prepare us for Christmas and for your coming again in glory. Remove all the obstacles—our frustrations, pain and anger—that prevent us from receiving you with joy, so that we may share your love with others as missionary disciples. May we be one with you always, our blessed hope. †

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin, C.Ss.R.

