

Christmas Already?

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Archdiocese of Québec:

Peace be with you! Do you hear what I hear? “Not Christmas already?” Ah Yes! Christmas is just a few weeks away. The pre-Christmas period sparks a sort of frenzy within us. All our senses are stimulated by the music, the decorations, the aroma of traditional holiday dishes, buying gifts, meeting families, colleagues and friends, etc.

We look forward to rekindling old relationships or establishing new ones. We want to please, to show our love, our friendship. We may simply intend to rest, or even go in search of sun and sea. In all of this, we are preparing ourselves, we are waiting... we are eager...

There is another pre-Christmas period which is Advent. It signifies a different kind of “coming” but it still involves waiting... Advent this year is from 27 November to 25 December. It is an invitation to prepare our hearts so that the Christmas and New Year’s celebrations may be firmly implanted into what is best within us and be bearers of joy.

Advent is a period that enables us to deepen, to interiorize our faith. It is a time of hope, of joyful waiting for Jesus, the One whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. He came, he is with us, and he will return at the end of time. Yes, he is with us always, accompanying us on the various paths of our lives. He came into our world to lead us to happiness, freedom and life in abundance. We may not always realize it because of our fast-paced and hurried lives, but Christmas comes, year after year, to remind us. Christmas is God offering us the most beautiful of gifts, his Son Jesus, the Saviour of the world.

Whether we are fully engaged in our faith or have distanced ourselves somewhat, let us offer ourselves the gift of a period of interiority. Christmas will then be for us and for our loved ones what it is meant to be, a celebration that renews us in hope and the joy of knowing that God loves us. We will enjoy greater solidarity and fraternity within our families and life communities.

The Christian communities, groups and movements of the Archdiocese of Québec are suggesting a number of means to help us prepare to experience the kind of Christmas that will meet our expectations: Eucharistic celebrations, penitential celebrations, inner renewal, activities to assist the needy, reflection groups, concerts, etc. I encourage you to visit the Archdiocese of Québec Web site www.ecdq.org to discover a large number of interesting offers.

I wish you a joyful Advent and journey on the road to Christmas! May the star that guided the Magi lead you to Jesus, the One who is *light, peace and hope!*

Your pastor and brother in faith,

† Gérald C. Lacroix
Archbishop of Québec