

- Advent is the time of the year in which we meditate on the two comings of Christ: one coming which has already been fulfilled in history; and another which we still await.
- In Advent we prepare our hearts to receive the Christ Child anew at Christmas so that He may be incarnate in the world once again through us, while we also await His second coming at the end of time, when Christ will come again in glory with salvation for His people.
- And while it is important for us to prepare for these two comings of Christ, St. Bernard of Clairvaux tells us that there is also a third, intermediate coming, that exists between these two comings of Christ.
- While the first coming and last coming of Christ are visible and manifested in history, this intermediate coming of Christ is invisible, hidden, and only seen by the elect within their own selves.
- St. Bernard tells us that “in His first coming our Lord came in our flesh and in our weakness.” “In the final coming He will be seen in glory and majesty.” But “in this middle coming He comes in spirit and in power.”
- This intermediate coming of which St. Bernard speaks is Christ coming to us through the Word, which we keep in our hearts.
- You see, when our Lord ascended into Heaven 40 days after His resurrection with the promise that He would one day return again, He did not leave us bereft of His divine presence. Christ has not deprived us of Himself.
- To the contrary, our Lord abides with us even now, and not simply in the Word of Sacred Scripture, but through the sacraments, which provide us with a visible manifestation of and encounter with the Word Made Flesh!
- As Christians we know that we always have our Lord with us. He comes to us in this intermediate way first through the sacrament of Baptism, by which He enters our soul, imbuing it with sanctifying grace and forging a covenant of love with us.
- And throughout the course of our lives Jesus comes to us again and again through all the sacraments, most especially the Blessed Sacrament: the Eucharist, by which He feeds us with His very own flesh.
- Jesus also comes to us through the prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture, especially when it is proclaimed at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, speaking to us His word of truth.
- And so that we may never be without Him, our Lord remains with us in the tabernacle, His divine presence signaled by the glow of the sanctuary lamp, waiting for us to come to Him.
- Yet while it is true that our Lord blesses us with His presence in the tabernacle, we must remember that Jesus did not come to earth to dwell in a tabernacle of gold.
- He has come to earth because He wishes to dwell within something much more valuable: the tabernacle of our souls!
- While it is important that we prepare for our Lord’s two comings in human history during Advent, we must not neglect to prepare for the daily coming of the Word-made-flesh in our souls. For engaging in this intermediate coming of Christ is how we best prepare for our Lord’s two comings in human history.
- Just as we’ve spared no effort in making this church a suitable dwelling place for God through the use of noble materials, beautiful and theologically rich architecture and artwork, all the more must we work to make our souls suitable dwelling places for the Lord!

- Instead of the intricate stained glass, marble, and gold that adorns this church, we must adorn our souls with virtue and good works.
- Just as the morning sun pours through our stained-glass windows, illuminating them and giving us a glimpse of the heavenly realities, so too must the light of faith, hope and charity pour through our words and actions so that people can get a glimpse of Christ within us.
- Truly, this intermediate coming of Christ is not something we passively await, but rather is something that we go after! We must pursue Christ so that He may reign in us.
- We do this by making every effort to avail ourselves of His grace through our prayers, through our worthy participation in the sacraments, through our obedience to His Church, and through our service to others.
- If we are truly going to be prepared for our Lord's coming as man in the Incarnation and His second coming at the end of time, then Christ must reign in our hearts now.
- And when we do this, when we allow Christ to reign in our hearts, He grants us the priceless gift of joy – that same joy that our first and second readings speak about today.
- Of course, our model for inviting Christ to reign in our hearts is His very own mother.
- Today, December 8th, is the traditional date of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.
- In honoring Our Lady under the title of the Immaculate Conception, we recall that by a special grace, our Lord preserved Our Lady free from every trace of sin from the first moment of her conception in the womb of St. Ann.
- We know by faith and tradition that Our Lady was not only conceived without sin, but that she kept her soul free from all stain of sin throughout the entirety of her earthly life.
- In Mary's sinlessness we are given a glimpse of the great dignity of the human soul. In Mary we see just how beautiful and magnificent humanity can be when we are freed from the terrible bondage of sin and Christ is given free rein in our souls.
- Our Lady shows us the mystical heights to which a humble soul can ascend; she shows us how majestic a soul can be when perfectly united to our Lord and His most holy will.
- While we will never enjoy the same degree of holiness or achieve the perfection of union with Christ as she did, the example of her perfection spurs us on to greater holiness.
- The more we imitate her purity and her perfect obedience to God's will, and call upon her maternal assistance, the more we will grow in virtue and give Christ greater dominion over our souls. This is the very best way for us to prepare for His two comings in history.
- Christ came to earth as man to save us from our sins, and He will come again at the end of time to take us to Himself for all eternity. As we await His coming in glory, we must do all we can to avail ourselves of His saving grace so that we might be prepared.
- You see, not only did God create us for Himself. He created us so that He might dwell within us. Our soul is meant to be a paradise that our Lord inhabits through the grace of the Sacraments.
- As we now prepare ourselves for our Lord to come to us in the Eucharist, let us pray that we may have the courage to rid from our lives and from our souls all that prevents us from receiving our Lord as we should.
- As we welcome Christ into our souls, may we be better prepared to receive Him anew when He comes as a tiny child at Christmas, and be confident in His mercy when He comes again at the end of time.
- O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.