

The past couple of years during Advent, the Archbishop has assigned us a theme to preach on. That is fine on a limited basis, but we cannot forget that every season of the liturgical year has a theme of its own. During the season of Advent, Just the word “advent” is a theme unto itself.

The word “advent” comes from two latin words “ad venire” which mean “to come towards.” Different forms of the word can mean “arrival” or “about to happen”. That is what Advent is about. During Advent, we prepare ourselves for the coming of Jesus in glory at the end of time, we prepare for his arrival at Christmas, and we prepare for that event which is about to happen very soon, which is Jesus coming to us body, blood, soul, and divinity in the eucharist. The word advent means all of those things and this is probably familiar to most of us and might make this seem like a routine advent homily.

Here’s something that might be a little bit unexpected. Do you know what the French did with this word? They took the form of the Latin word which means “something about to happen” (adventurus) and gave us the word “aventure”. Adventure!

Is Advent an adventure? Adventures call to mind hobbits, dwarves, elves, and wizards running around in the forest on their way to steal a treasure from a dragon or to destroy a magic ring. Or Luke Skywalker and friends blasting off in the Millenium Falcon to deliver the Death Star plans to the Rebel Alliance and rescue a princess along the way. Or the remnant of the Avengers and Guardians of the Galaxy embarking on a time heist to steal the infinity stones and rescue half of the universe by undoing Thanos’ snap.

Those are what we typically call adventures. How is preparing for Jesus’ arrival an adventure? If we don’t think there is anything adventurous in Advent, it’s probably because we have the wrong idea about both Advent and adventures. First of all, we think of Advent as Jesus coming towards us, it is his journey, meaning it is his adventure. While that is true, we are supposed to be moving towards Jesus at the same time. It isn’t just Jesus who is on a journey, we are supposed to be on one too.

The second thing is that maybe we misunderstand what an adventure is. Aren’t adventures supposed to be fun? Not necessarily. The stories that really mattered, the ones we remember and like to tell or listen to again and again are full of darkness and danger. And sometimes we don’t want to know the end, because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad had happened? Adventures can—and should—include fun

but in the ones that really matter, the stakes are high and failure comes with serious consequences.

No adventure came with higher stakes than Jesus' own journey into human nature and human history. Certainly there was joy and laughter—how could there not be when his companions included Peter, James, and John and the other disciples? But Jesus never forgot that his mission was to offer himself as a sacrifice in payment of our sins. The Son of God accepted his mission from his father knowing full well that his adventure had to end with his death—but he also did it trusting that his sacrifice would be rewarded with his resurrection and the possibility that we will be able to join him in heaven.

Jesus is always inviting us to join him on his adventure. This includes journeying towards him during this season as he makes his way towards us. The journey will be dangerous because we will be coming face to face with the darkness within ourselves and we may have to face dangers from the outside as well. We have the option of staying in our hobbit-holes and saying “No. We don’t want adventures around here.” If we do that we will avoid the danger, but adventures help us to grow and change and find courage we never knew we had.

We won’t be heading into the darkness on our own. God has given us many guides to show us the way, and during Advent there are three in particular who are very eager to help us find Jesus. We will meet our first guide next week.

In the meantime, get ready and be prepared. For, as the hobbit Bilbo Baggins once said to his nephew Frodo, “It's a dangerous business, going out your door, Frodo. You step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you'll be swept off to.”

Jesus is on his way. Let’s get ready to go out and find him.