



Ordinary moments can also transform us!

Photo by Archbishop Anne, taken at “The Illustrated Hospital” Moyses’s Hall Bury St. Edmund’s August 2024. Artwork by Quentin Blake.

A Message from Archbishop Anne in the First Week of Advent 2024

My dear friends in Christ,

“Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” (Romans 13:11-12)

In his book 'Craddock Stories', the preacher Fred Craddock describes an event that took place in a Wednesday evening service at Temple Baptist Church.

"I went to a service down at Temple Baptist Church on Wednesday night. I could hardly worship. There was a couple in front of me that talked through the whole service. I mean the whole service. They weren't young people, you know, they were nearly as old as I am. They were punching each other and talking about everybody sitting in the choir. "See that woman up there? We went to school together, that's before we moved away. I never knew she could sing. I don't know what she's doing up there." They went on like that, and just like two mean ducks, picked apart everybody up there.

Why did they come? If you're not going to be awake; if you don't enter every room, every relationship, every moment saying, "This could be it," you will miss the coming. Stay alert, stay alert.

You know, I had a thought, not much of a thought, but a thought. Suppose, just suppose, that God, who is full of surprises, were to come among us as a baby – a crying red faced, Jewish baby, seven pounds three ounces, kicking arms and legs, with a band around the middle holding the tied cord, a mother attending, and a poor carpenter man standing there looking on.

What if God were to do it that way?

Do you think you'd miss it?

I'm going to stay awake.

I wouldn't miss it for the world."

Don't be distracted! Don't miss out! Wake up because God is coming soon.

During Advent we focus upon, prepare for, and explore the significance of a God who is Emmanuel. It is a season of hope that God's promised future will come again, just as it did that first Christmas Eve.

Advent is the time for us to live into that new reality. As the Advent candles are lit each week the darkness around dissipates until eventually the Christ candle, representing the Light of the World shines in its fullness. This is the light we have inside us, given in baptism. We who have been baptized into the promises of God have already taken off the night clothes of selfishness and ignorance and put on the new clothes of Christ.

These metaphors of old and new, darkness and light are found everywhere in Paul's writings – in Ephesians 5:14 Paul says: "*Sleeper awake, rise from the dead.*" And my personal favourite in Galatians: "*It is no longer I who lives but Christ who lives in me.*"

In Christ we are new creations and so we look to a new day when God and humanity will be reconciled - when peace and justice will be the hallmarks of human society, when swords will be turned into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks. Now is the time for us to start living as if this new day has already begun.

If we live in a way that it is no longer me who lives but Christ who lives in me, we may catch a glimpse of what is possible right now. If we can learn to trust our lives and our time to God, we will start to see all the ways in which Jesus breaks into our lives and transforms them in some amazing ways.

Several years ago, I visited a parishioner who'd come to Sudbury for open heart surgery. The doctor had told him that he had no more of a 50/50 chance of surviving, but he beat the odds and came through it well. When I visited him later I remarked, "See you made it through, you survived. Isn't that wonderful."

Some ten years later I ran into him at one of Algoma's Synod gatherings. As we spoke about his new life after surgery he confessed: "Anne, I didn't just get through it and survive. I did more than that, I was transformed. I'm not the same person I was when I went into that surgery. It is like God reached into my life and through this illness made me somebody better than before. I'm living differently. I have a whole new outlook on life"

"O Come Emmanuel" we pray during Advent. May Christ come to you during this holy season and intrude your ordinary life, transforming it from the inside out.

The winter of 2024-2025 is off to a very snowy start in some parts of our diocese with record snowfalls through snowsqualls recorded and a number of Advent events needing to be postponed or cancelled. It is disappointing when this happens, especially after months of planning for special events. However, the safety and well being of our communities must be uppermost in our minds. Please take heed of the weather conditions early and make adjustments to your calendars as needed.

For those of you who have not signed up for Bishop Michael's Advent Book Study that has two dates remaining (Wednesday December 11th and December 18th from 7-9pm) on "**Jesus and the Powers: Christian Political Witness in an Age of Political Totalitarian Terror and Dysfunctional Democracy**" by N.T. Wright and Michael F. Bird and would like to, please register with Carla MacEwan at carla.macewan@dioceseofalgoma.com for the zoom link by **noon Tuesday December 10th**. It is an excellent study.

With affection and gratitude for all the ways in which you live as people of the light, dispelling fears of the darkness. May your Advent bring you to the fullness of joy on Christmas Eve as you celebrate the gift of our Saviour.

Blessings upon you all,

+Anne