

Bishop's Message for December 2009

I read an article this morning entitled “What Hope for Advent?” As you might guess, the author decries the annual phenomenon of the four Advent weeks being steam-rolled by a seemingly ever-expanding Christmas. A kiosk manager in our local mall last year made a telling comment. I asked her on what day she opened her seasonal kiosk. Without missing a beat, she made this swift response: “Oh, Christmas started on November 12th.” Indeed. What hope is there for the four weeks of Advent and their call to us to prepare the way of the Lord – to make straight the Lord’s path? Some suggest lengthening the Advent season so that it gets the attention and the spiritual focus of God’s people that it deserves. Even our congregations rush to the manger with Sunday School Christmas programs and pageants, the singing of the beloved Christmas carols, and the many Christmas adornments – all making their appearance in the early days of Advent. Did you know that Advent used to be called “a little Lent”? It was a penitential season: reflective, inward-looking, repentant – anticipating the coming of Jesus the Christ in glory at the close of the age. The Advent wreath is too easily displaced among us. The challenge is in keeping a short and serious season in the midst of the commercial hype around us. There is the challenge of bringing the Word (in Advent, a word of warning, of consequence, of end-times) to a culture in which the Christmas euphoria is coming at us from all sides. Here’s a suggestion: let us make and keep Advent, and THEN, let us make and keep Christmas. It’s worth a try. I wish you a meaningful Advent and a joy-filled Christmas!

+Ronald B. Mayan, Bishop
Synod of Alberta and the Territories