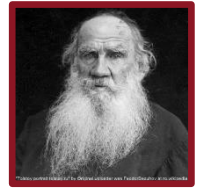




Advent is a privileged season of grace. For the attentive soul, it is an opportunity to express, and in some measure to obtain, the deepest longing of the human heart – the longing for God. Leo Tolstoy, the Russian writer (1828-1910), observed that man is made up of three things: body, soul, and longing for God. In this sacred season, we actively express our longing for God – “COME LORD JESUS!” We wait



Leo Tolstoy

and anticipate with joy the presence of Emmanuel – God with us. To prepare to meet the Lord at the hour of our death, and to prepare to meet the Lord when we celebrate His birth at Christmas, we must, among other things, by a determined faith and love, prepare to meet the Lord when He comes now under the humble guise of bread and wine. Let us learn from a great man of faith, St. Francis of Assisi, who about a year before his death wrote to all Franciscans:

Kissing your feet, therefore, and with all that love of which I am capable, I implore all of you brothers to show all possible reverence and honor to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in Whom that which is in heaven and on earth has been brought to peace and reconciled to almighty God.

I also beg in the Lord all my brothers who are priests... that whenever they wish to celebrate Mass, being pure, they offer the true Sacrifice of the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ with purity and reverence, with a holy and unblemished intention, not for any worldly reason or out of fear or love of anyone, as if they were pleasing people. But let all their will, as much as grace helps, be directed to God, desiring, thereby, to please only the Most High Lord Himself ... If anyone acts differently, he becomes Judas the traitor and guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. ... For a person looks down upon, defiles and tramples upon the Lamb of God when, as the Apostle says, not distinguishing and discerning the holy bread of Christ from other foods or actions, he ... eats It in vain and unworthily. ... for your part love, revere and honor Him above all others. It is a great misery and a miserable weakness that when you have Him present in this way, you are concerned with anything else in the whole world!

Let everyone be struck with fear, let the whole world tremble, and let the heavens exult when Christ, the Son of the living God, is present on the altar in the hands of a priest! O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity! O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! The Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under an ordinary piece of bread! Brothers, look at the humility of God, and pour out your hearts before Him! Humble yourselves that you may be exalted by Him! Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally!

Oh, that we had such faith and love! Through the mercy of God, may we faithfully and lovingly express our longing for God and thus be prepared to meet Him when He comes! Have a grace-filled Advent!

Your Servant in Christ,
Fr. Terry Staples

P.S. Above is a picture of Leo Tolstoy. Does he look like anyone you know? 😊

