

The only real blind person at Christmas-time is he who has not Christmas in his heart.

- Helen Keller

We have now entered the season of Advent, which according to the church calendar, refers to the four Sundays and weeks before Christmas. The word "Advent" in Latin actually means "coming" and that refers to the coming of Jesus to this world. This is the time for Christians all over the world to remember and to prepare themselves for the coming of Christ. In a way, you can consider Advent somewhat like a countdown for Christmas.

There are of course different ways of celebrating this Christmas countdown. One common way that you can see in Hong Kong is the Advent calendar. Advent calendars come in different sizes and shapes. Usually it is made of card with 25 little windows and a piece of chocolate each inside. Each day a window is opened and the chocolate eaten until the very last window which will be opened on Christmas day.

Another way of celebrating the countdown is the use of the advent wreath. You can often find this in church or in people's homes. Usually there are four candles arranged in a circle. The candles are purple in colour because traditionally this is the colour of royalty and Christmas is about the coming of the King. The fifth one, which is white in colour, is placed in the middle. One candle is lit on the first Sunday of Advent, two are lit on the second Sunday and so on until the last one which is lit on Christmas day. However, here in St. Paul's College, we have to compress the whole month into one week. The first candle was last week on Friday and the rest will be lit leading up to the Carol service this Friday.

So why do we do the countdown? For many, Christmas has become so predictable and familiar that it no longer astonishes



people. Yes, people are very busy shopping for Christmas presents, booking Christmas meals, buying food and decorations for Christmas parties or getting ready for a Christmas vacation. Yet, like any other holidays, Christmas to many people is no more than a few days of hard earned holidays, a break from the chores and the daily grind.

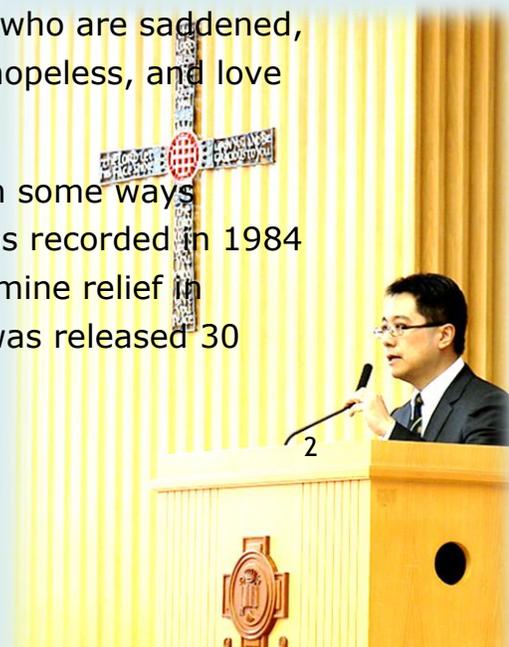
Why then should we wait expectantly for the birth of a baby that happened over two thousand years ago? What is in Christmas that makes it worth eagerly waiting for?

Christmas carries the message of hope. It is the coming of the Messiah, the hope of deliverance. Christmas carries the message of love because God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to die on the cross for our sins. Finally, Christmas carries the message of peace because we can be reconciled to God.

In some ways, we are all like old Mr. Scrooge, the main character in Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol". We care so much about ourselves that we seem to have forgotten that Christmas is about giving and about caring for others. Advent is the time for us to sit back and consider how we are to prepare ourselves for the coming of Christmas.

As we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christmas, which is a time of giving and forgiving, let's show our care for the people around us, be it a classmate, a schoolmate, a friend, a colleague or a family member. Let us bring joy to those who are saddened, hope to those who are feeling disillusioned or hopeless, and love to those who feel lonely.

Finally, I would like to play you a song which in some ways embodies the spirit of Christmas. The song was recorded in 1984 by a group of British and Irish musicians for famine relief in Ethiopia. The same song with different lyrics was released 30



years later in November 2014 to help raise funds for the Ebola crisis in Africa.

Do they know it is Christmas time?

It's Christmas time; there's no need to be afraid

At Christmas time, we let in light and we banish shade

And in our world of plenty we can spread a smile of joy

Throw your arms around the world at Christmas time

But say a prayer to pray for the other ones

At Christmas time

It's hard, but when you're having fun

There's a world outside your window

And it's a world of dread and fear

Where the only water flowing is the bitter sting of tears

And the Christmas bells that ring there

Are the clanging chimes of doom

Well tonight thank God it's them instead of you

And there won't be snow in Africa this Christmas time

The greatest gift they'll get this year is life

Oh, where nothing ever grows, no rain or rivers flow

Do they know it's Christmastime at all?

Here's to you, raise a glass for ev'ryone

Here's to them, underneath that burning sun

Do they know it's Christmas time at all?

Feed the world

Feed the world



Feed the world

Let them know it's Christmas time

Feed the world

Let them know it's Christmas time

We live in a world of plenty but "T[t]here's a window outside your window and it is a world of dread and fear". During this season of Advent, let us look beyond ourselves. There are people around us, in Hong Kong and in the world, who need our message of hope, love and peace.

I hope you will all have a warm and blessed Christmas with your family and friends. Of course, you will be spending most of your time revising for your mid-year examinations. You should of course start your revision as soon as possible so that you can have time to enjoy your holiday. To help you to do this, all the school grounds will be closed after 5:00 pm and all students must go home to do their revision.

Merry Christmas to you all

and

a Happy New Year!

Mr. Dennis Yuen

Acting Principal

15.12.2014

