

Pastoral Letter for Sanctity of Life Sunday – 2025

Advent is the time of the fetus. Every person who is born was prepared, in her mother's womb, for the great and happy moment when she would first see the light of day. Still, it must be a little bit frightening to leave the safety of the womb and be delivered into a broken world. When God chooses to become man in Jesus Christ, he wants to share in this part of our human existence.

During Advent, we may prepare ourselves for the birth of Jesus, together with the Virgin Mary who awaits giving birth to her child. We may already begin to worship the child who is still resting securely in his mother's virgin womb. It is this very child who is born to save this fallen world in which we live. It is this child who will help us to transform our world into something better, safer, and more beautiful. Not least for the 'unwanted' children who will otherwise never see the world outside of their mother's womb.

The *Fund for Life* supports projects that can give those unwanted children a chance at being born. By giving to today's collect, we, as friends and helpers of Jesus in this world, can show that we really do want to help women who want to give birth to their babies, despite difficult circumstances. Then, Advent can become a time of hope for anyone living under threat of death, whether that be in the ostensible safety of their mother's womb or in areas of the world that are afflicted with war or conflict. Jesus desires to meet us in each and every needy child. We must not let him wait in vain for us!

Advent is the time of life. It reminds us of our vocation to take care of all people who live in difficult and life threatening circumstances. If we truly want to receive Jesus in our heart, it must be open to every person who needs our help. Our holy father, pope Leo XIV, recently pointed out that if we want every single child that is conceived to be born into the world, then we must also decry the death penalty and the undignified, loveless treatment suffered by many 'unwanted' migrants.

When we prepare for the birth of Jesus, we want to offer him our heart as a kind of manger where he is received with all the love that we can give. Then it becomes natural to us to show that same amount of love to every person who God places in our lives, not least, of course, the distressed and the needy, who would not make it without us.

In a time when our society wants to build walls that risk shutting out and alienating many people, it is very important to instead build bridges between people from different parts of the world. We feel immense gratitude for those who take on that task, and we hope for a future where it will still be possible for many to participate in that important work, to the glory of God and for the benefit of all people.

Advent is the time of the sick and the elderly. God is born into our world to save and heal it. In the Gospel we can see that he has a special love for the sick and the wounded; he wants to heal them. The people who seem to not count in our society, a society that favors and glorifies the rich and successful, those are the people who are most important to Jesus and who are closest to his heart. If we want to follow and serve Christ, we must be filled with that same compassion for sick and elderly people. We must admire every person who has dedicated their lives to nurturing those who are dependent on the help of others.

It is said that in Sweden the most common profession is to be an assistant nurse. Upon first hearing this, one may think that it is a disparaging title; that the word assistant implies that the person is '*less than*'. But, when we look at it through the eyes of faith, we see that it is quite the opposite! For it is *nothing less than* a wonder – a miracle of love – to serve the needy, as Christ did. Many of these assistant nurses come here from other countries, to take care of people who we, Swedish citizens, seem to not be very interested in helping.

This is a question of paramount importance for the future: How do we, the Swedish people, want to care for our elderly population? Already, we are seeing how elderly care is not always prioritized, and that it falls short in great and worrying ways. If we want to be a civilized country then we must treat our senior citizens in a civilized manner. It is alarming that palliative care is not prioritized, giving fuel to those who advocate for euthanasia and assisted suicide for gravely ill individuals.

Advent is the time of the Virgin Mary. We are invited to share her longing to bring our Savior into the world. Together with her we may be still in reverence for the life that is growing inside of her. We may identify with her heart, which is full of burning love for Jesus. She helps us, more than anyone, to receive him with faith, hope, and love. Now, as the Year of Jubilee draws to an end, we may once again remind ourselves that we are 'pilgrims of hope' in this temporary world.

Many people risk losing hope and getting stuck in resignation and mental illness. Mary, the Mother of hope, can convey the Holy Spirit, which gives strength to the weak and courage and faith to the oppressed. We pray that Mary, the queen of peace, will pray for all those who live under the curse of war, that they may feel a renewed sense of hope for peace and reconciliation. May Mary, the mother of the church, aid the church and each one of us who wishes to share the Good News, in word and deed, with all those who have not yet gained knowledge of Jesus. We pray, also, for vocations to the priesthood and to the consecrated life.

Advent is the time of God. When Advent is here, twinkling lights and stars start to appear in windows, the streets are illuminated, and Christmas trees are erected. People flock around tables full of food. Shopping bags are filled with knick-knacks. As this is happening, the church wants to remind us that we all have a vocation to conversion, a deep conversion to

the God who came into the world in poverty and vulnerability.

Advent is a time of testing; a test to see if we truly want to love Jesus, to serve him, and to live as he did. To see if we are truly prepared to stand up for, and defend, those who need us in order to have better life, or to even survive in this harsh world.

Stockholm, the 21st of November, 2025, the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary,

With my blessings and prayers,

+ Anders Arborelius, ocd