

PASTOR'S PERSPECTIVE:

ADVENT –

'An Experience of Longing for God!'

19 / 20 December 2009

Dear Friends

'Come, Lord Jesus!' is our Advent mantra but it can be our Christmas mantra too because, in the words of Fr Richard Rohr, the mantra means that, *'all of Christian history has to live out of a kind of deliberate emptiness, a kind of chosen non-fulfilment'* (Preparing for Christmas p 4).

Beautiful as they are, Advent and Christmas are Seasons full of meaning. All the familiar celebrations and the gifts are fine but spiritually both are about remaining open to grace and the action of God in our lives, a time for restating the meaning of, and our hope for, our spiritual journey.

The title of this reflection is taken from Belgian PM Herman Van Rompuy, who was recently elected President of the European Council. Described as a poet, blogger and devout Catholic, as well as a 'shrewd political operator', Van Rompuy was answering the question about how he would describe his own faith – *'An experience of longing for God'*.

His statement reflects St Augustine's classic words in the Confessions, *'You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You!'* Isn't there a strong message here for Christmas about our longing for God, about desire as the heart of the spiritual life? Yes, but that's only half the picture. Christmas is about God's longing for us, desire as the heart of God's reaching out and affirming our humanness in sending his Son as one of us.

Thus *'Come, Lord Jesus!'* is always our prayer – our prayer of cosmic hope, our affirmation of Jesus as Lord, our hunger for God as the only one to whom we can surrender. Our faith is in the goodness of the human, made so by God and affirmed by Christ; it is in the goodness of our human body, because God in Jesus chose and said 'yes' to our humanity (Rohr p 73). The following great Christians capture some of the meaning:

'Christ is our beginning, Christ is our life and our guide, Christ is our hope and our end.' Pope Paul VI

'Whoever loves their neighbour has fulfilled the law because God himself has become neighbour.' Karl Rahner SJ

'Our spirit is set in one direction ... toward Christ our redeemer, the redeemer of humanity.' Pope John Paul II

'Christ is beautiful as God, the Word with God ... Let not the weakness of the flesh distract your eyes from the splendour of Jesus' beauty.' Saint Augustine

Fr Dave