



Christmas Tree with lights – Hyde Park Corner Johannesburg

When the Light Goes Out An Advent Message from Archbishop Anne November 30th, 2022

Advent greetings dear friends, in the name of the One we are waiting for:

Emmanuel, God with us.

It's dark in Johannesburg as I work by the light of a battery - operated lamp. Mum's residence and the surrounding area is in the middle of a period of *loadshedding* which is this country's way of managing its current energy crisis.

As electricity supply falls behind electricity demand in South Africa there are ongoing rotating periods of blackouts nationwide, lasting for about two and a half hours at a time, as often as four times a day.

When I arrived in Johannesburg, I wasn't prepared for this new thing called *loadshedding* and was very annoyed when the power suddenly and unceremoniously went out. Caught off guard by the abruptness of it there was nothing I could do but wait for the lights to come back on. At home the inconvenience is a mere irritation. Cooking is interrupted. Wet washing sits in machines and tumble dryers. The television goes out. Electronic devices run down if not fully charged. The internet is spotty.

But during loadshedding, out in the city things are a whole lot worse. Traffic on highways and busy intersections comes to a virtual standstill when the traffic lights stop working, making crossing the road a nightmare and driving hazardous. Businesses, malls, restaurants all darken when loadshedding comes, causing disruptions in sales. Computers are continually rebooting. Businesses that can afford it have inverters or generators which eventually kick in, but those that can't simply close their doors.

"What time is it?" I found myself asking. "When will the next loadshedding be?" I discovered that there is an APP (of course there is!) which tells exactly when the next blackout will happen. Armed with that information I am better able to prepare for the day, for what I will do when the lights go out, and for how I will wait in the darkness until they come back on.

Without the distraction of many things to do, the darkness and the stillness have become my teacher and have done wonders for my prayer life, especially as we watched and waited and wept in God's '**Kairos**' time as mum lay dying.

In that time, we were completely unaware of loadshedding but very conscious of the Light of Christ above us, beneath us, around us and within us. Our family is thankful for your prayers which sustained us then and continue to now.

**“You know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep....the night is far gone, the day is near.”
Romans 13.11, 12**

Yes, we do know what time it is as we approach Christmas day.

The outside world tells us in a thousand ways. It's noisy with the sights and sounds and with the hustle and bustle of the festive season. The stores are filled with shoppers and holiday jingles fill the air. Businesses are planning parties and choirs and orchestras are planning concerts. Neighbourhood homes are strung with festive lights while blow up Santa's, reindeer and elves bob in the snow. Inside there is much baking and wrapping taking place. Our parishes are busy with Holly Teas, pie baking and any number of good outreach projects.

I say to you, let's not get to Christmas without going through the season of Advent first. Four weeks given to us to slow down and wait with hope and expectation for the Light of the World to come.

Advent time is *Kairos* time, God's time, in which we focus upon, prepare for, and explore the significance of a God who not only loves us, but who came to be among us, as one of us - Jesus the Christ.

It is good news that when Jesus Christ was born we realized that we were not as alone as we thought, or had been led to believe. God in our time, is Emmanuel - *God with us*.

Advent is the time for us to wake to that new reality. We who have been baptized into the promises of God have a different outlook than the consumerist world outside. It also means that we prepare differently for Christmas.



Advent words for us to live by

Let's do some intentional *loadshedding* this Advent and live in God's **Kairos** time as we wait. There is much that is scary and frightening in the world. Even as the days become shorter and the light around becomes dimmer, as we open our hearts to Christ's light we will find we have nothing to fear.

At Paul's invitation (Romans 13.12) let us cast aside all that is dark in our lives and clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, living as the new creation we are in him.

Instead of living in a frenzy lets hit the pause button and

**pray
hope
give
rest
sing
believe
love
praise
share
confess
and trust**

as we wait upon the Lord.

Without the distractions of many things to do may the darkness and stillness of this season become your teacher too. May the Light of Christ shine upon you and the Love of Christ enfold you in his gentle embrace.

With deep affection, I remain yours in Advent Hope, Peace, Joy and Love,

+Anne