



THE RT. REV. STEVEN ANDREW MILLER, D.D.

BISHOP OF MILWAUKEE

Almighty God gives us grace to cast away the works of darkness and put on the armor of light now in the time of this mortal life in which your son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Dear Friends in Christ,

The words of this much loved collect speak deeply to me each year as we begin the season of Advent. I am drawn particularly to the word NOW which for me speaks to the sense of urgency which is at the heart of this season. Advent is about the imminent breaking through of the kingdom. Our opening acclamation, "Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and our response "And Blessed be his kingdom, now and forever. Amen," takes on a deeper and more poignant meaning in this time. For me, Advent rings true to the 'already but not yet' experience of God's reign that characterizes life informed by Christian faith.

The readings from scripture to have a deeper sense of urgency. As I read the lessons at Morning Prayer from the prophets Isaiah and Zechariah, the parallels to the political and religious realms of our own day are clear to me. I am chastened by the words of prophet Isaiah, "Bring no more vain offerings" and "learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression." I find new hope in the promise, "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

And then there are the words which inspired the prayer for I Advent written by Thomas Cranmer from the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans "For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed; the night is far gone, the day is at hand. Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves becomingly as in the day." Paul reminds us that there is more to it than having on the right uniform. It is how you play the game.

I believe that such a time as this calls us to respond to the invitation to walk becomingly in a particular way namely by living lives that show we are citizens of God's kingdom so that people may see God's reign at work in us by our actions showing that we belong to Christ by the way we love and serve, by the way we speak to friend and stranger, and by the joy we bring because Christ has brought us joy.

Yours in the Advent hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Andrew Miller".

The Rt. Rev. Steven Andrew Miller
Bishop of Milwaukee