

light in the darkness



Advent 2011

The season of Advent is here! It calls us to watchfulness, to be attentive to the coming of Christ in our daily lives. We are waiting for the potter, Jesus Christ, to mold us and fashion us to give witness to the world of the wonderful work of God. We are called to give witness to the true light that overcomes all darkness, to be points of light and hope in a world where many struggle to believe in God's promise to be with us.

Let us prepare ourselves to hear the good news that Christ is born for us and dwells within us. Joyfully we say: Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus.

We are grateful to Sister Catherine O'Brien for preparing these meaningful reflections.

During this season of Advent we pray for the gift of peace for the world. May our journey together in Holy Cross be a sign of hope.

Leadership Team of the
Sisters of the Holy Cross.

First Sunday

November 27, 2011

Isaiah 64:1-9

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:24-37

Mark's advice to us today as we begin our Advent time is, "Be watchful!" This admonition closes Mark's long discourse on the end times. Mark was concerned with the community's readiness for the second coming of the Son of Man in clouds with great glory. His advice to the community who were waiting for an imminent coming was to be alert and watchful. Mark likens this attitude of alert waiting and watchfulness to that of a porter watching for the return of his master. Mark prays that the community he is addressing will not be found sleeping if the master should suddenly appear.

The porter image calls to mind the person and mission of St. André Bessette. He remained awake and alert on his watch! His life exemplified what Mark meant in his caution to be watchful. Brother André lived a life in prayerful union with God. He responded to this gift of the good news with an untiring commitment to the physically and spiritually poor. He was awake and alert, ready for Christ's sudden coming in the persons for whom he opened the door.

What kind of watchfulness does the porter image in today's Gospel evoke in you as you begin this Advent season?

Second Sunday

December 4, 2011

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

The readings for the first two Sundays of Advent this year remind us that we are to keep our minds focused on the certainty that there will come an end time when God's hidden plan will be revealed. In the Isaiah reading, we can see our own longing for this end time realization likened to the faith experience of the exiled Jews longing for their return from Babylon. Isaiah's counsel to the exiles to keep their eyes fixed in the certainty of the realization of God's promise is the same counsel we hear in today's Gospel reading.

The Gospel's narration of the role and mission of John the Baptist brings with it an alert that this kind of waiting is not simple. John's message tells us we need to prepare for this coming. We need to break with the obstacles that hold us back and keep us from hope and belief in the realization of God's promise. John's voice tells us to pay attention to the task of our ongoing conversion.

During this week let us ask for the grace to see to this conversion. Using the church's ancient plea, let us pray with longing: Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus.

Third Sunday

December 11, 2011

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalm 126 or Luke 1:47-55

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

In the northern hemisphere the weeks preceding Christmas are usually dark winter days. The daylight hours before December 21 are some of the shortest of the year. The twinkling lights and glittering ornaments that brighten Christmas shopping days help to keep this winter darkness at bay. We, as a Christian community, resemble these little points of light.

Today's Gospel reminds us of our Advent purpose that we are called to be points of light in the darkness of our times. The Gospel, through the voice of John the Baptist, tells us that we are not the light but that we are called to give witness to the true light that vanquishes all darkness. The authorities in the Gospel had seen a glimpse of this light in John the Baptist. The evangelist makes it quite clear that he is not the light but only a witness to the true light that is to come.

During the winter solstice, as we go about our preparations for the celebration of the true light coming into the world, pay attention to the colored lights around you. Let them remind you of the light that no darkness can overcome. Become aware that you, too, are a tiny point reflecting this great light. Let the point of light in you shine through these dark days before Christmas. Let the points of light of the community around you remind you that we all are preparing for the coming of the feast of Radiant Dawn.

Fourth Sunday

December 18, 2011

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26 or Luke 1:47-55

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

Today we hear again one of the Gospel's favorite stories, the story of the angel's annunciation to Mary. Biblical scholar Raymond Brown tells us that the primary message of the text is centered on the conception of Jesus and the confirmation of his identity as Messiah and God's Son. The messenger also tells us what this son will accomplish by way of salvation. Jesus comes to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, to restore sight to the blind and to set the downtrodden free.

Brown calls our attention to the secondary message in this text. The first message has assured us as a community of believers of the divine and messianic identity of the one Mary is to conceive. Brown says the secondary message makes us call to mind that the Gospel is not good news unless there is someone to hear it, someone to accept it and act upon it. Luke presents Mary as the first someone to hear, accept and proclaim the good news. Brown recognizes in this passage the strongest New Testament evidence of the important fact that Mary was a disciple of Jesus.

The gospel reading invites us to meditate on the good news announced to us and to respond to it as a true disciple. What greater model and surer guidance for our response could the liturgy place before us as we enter into this final week of preparation for the celebration of Christ's coming!