



ADVENT
Reflections
2014

Dear Sisters and Associates,

Every year we enter into the four weeks of Advent to reflect, pray and prepare ourselves for the Feast of Christmas and to live a better life in the coming year. This year marks a special time in Holy Cross as we begin to live the Direction Statement of the congregation's Twenty-fifth General Chapter, held in June in Entebbe, Uganda. The chapter Direction Statement reflects the blessings and challenges of our global reality and calls us to "deepen our commitment to the people we serve and continue to be a prophetic sign of God's love to the Church and the world."

Themes from the Direction Statement are woven throughout the Advent reflections on the Sunday readings. Each reflection is followed by thoughtful questions or comments that invite us to pause in the midst of our Advent journey.

We are grateful to four Sisters of the Holy Cross who generously gave of their time to create these reflections: Sister Amy Lynn Cavender, associate professor, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana; Sister Miriam Nohemí Arizpe Paredes, student at Saint Mary's College; Sister Lillian Nyakaisiki, student at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana; and Sister Arpita Rozario, student at Holy Cross College, Notre Dame, Indiana.

May this season bring an abundance of God's blessings in our lives through our prayers, reflection and the time we share with one another as we serve the people of God.

Devotedly in Holy Cross,
*Leadership Team of the
Sisters of the Holy Cross*

First Sunday of Advent

November 30, 2014

Mark 13:33-37

This Sunday's Gospel calls us to watch for the Lord's coming. What is interesting about this passage, though, is that only one of the servants is stationed at the gate to watch the road. The rest are left "each with his or her work."

The master in this parable is not likely to be pleased if he finds all of the servants he left in charge of the household keeping watch at the gate. If they are all at the gate, the master will return home to find fields unplowed, crops unharvested, buildings not repaired — all will be in disarray. What the master quite reasonably expects is that each of the servants will "keep watch" by diligently attending to the tasks she or he was assigned.

As we begin this season, we might want to reflect on ways we are called to "keep watch," as individuals and as a community. What tasks have we been assigned?

Our chapter Direction Statement reminds us that we are invited to work to bring about a culture of peace and nonviolence, and calls us to do that by, among other things, developing "skills, capacities and imagination, bringing us to a deeper conversation about our identity, our commonality and our differences that leads to a transformation of minds and hearts."

What concrete steps might each of us take toward fulfilling these tasks as we "keep watch" this season?

Sister Amy Lynn Cavender

Second Sunday of Advent

December 7, 2014

Mark 1:1-8

Today, Mark's Gospel shows us God's efforts to communicate with us in various ways. Thus, God speaks through the prophets Isaiah and John the Baptist. It is with the assistance of the prophets that God desires to remind us to use our talents, imagination and senses so that we are ready for God's coming.

We have an adventurous and creative God who challenges our expectations of God's presence in our lives. Was it not a surprise that God spoke through John the Baptist in the wilderness? I can imagine peoples' thoughts: "Seriously God, through John! But, he eats locusts and wild honey, and is clothed with camel's hair, and lives in the wilderness!"

In other words, John was not who people expected for a prophet. God speaks to us through people in ways we do not expect, and God does everything in order to capture our attention. That is because God's infinite love for us is incomprehensible, and God's desire for us is continuous and urgent.

During Advent the prophets give us clear instructions to "stop and see" so that we will not miss God's call. Advent is a time during which we should ask: Who are God's prophets in our lives today? Are they who we expected? What is God telling us through them?

In order to answer these questions, we need to "stop and see."

Sister Miriam Nohemí Arizpe Parades

Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2014

John 1:6-8; 19-28

John the Baptist was filled with joy, love and zeal for mission that drew the attention of so many people as he preached the good news of Jesus Christ. On this Joyful Sunday of Advent we are called to enter into dialogue with Jesus, to share our life's journey with all around us, to bring to the table the fruits of joy that all will feast upon.

John brings for us the gifts of joy, love and humility. In his mother's womb he leapt for joy upon hearing that Mary was pregnant with Jesus. He did not take pride in himself, boldly telling his followers that he was not Christ, that he was not worthy, that he was only on mission.

John calls us to repentance. Does not repentance lead to inner peace and freedom? Does it not make us take an extra step inwardly and outwardly? Do we not feel an unquenchable fire of happiness at the core of our being when we know that we are one with our Savior?

What a great gift John gives to all of us in different ministries. The work we are doing is not our own. We are called to continue the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist to make Christ known, loved and served. In choosing to deepen our commitment to the people we serve, we are following the footsteps of John the Baptist. Let us continue to find ways to be light to one another and those we serve.

Sister Lillian Nyakaisiki

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2014

Luke 1:26-38

In this time of Advent, we are called to follow the Lord and share our story, which gives life to others. Sometimes we are fearful of the unknown and the unexpected incidents that can change our lives.

Mother Mary teaches us to accept God's will in our lives and assures us that God can fulfill what is impossible and astonishing for us. God is in-charge of everything, even that which is difficult to accept. Mary faced confusion and wondered what would happen to her next. Did Mary understand God's profound plan for her? The Annunciation is a mystery of God's way that encourages us to surrender ourselves to God. God will protect us and lead us to work for the Kingdom.

Sometimes we try to control situations. We need to accept that things are out of our control. As we are called to be servants of the Lord, we should rely on God and say, "Let it be done to me as you say," feeling peace and joy in our hearts.

Let us ponder Mary's response to God and our work for the Kingdom. When we experience wonder in life, how do we respond?

What encouraging words or help can we provide to others when they face trials?

What is our duty as servants of the Lord? How do we live our call?

Sister Arpita Rozario