

ADVENT 2016

Listen to the deepest longings within your heart



We are mid way through Advent. This third Sunday would be an excellent time to listen to the longings within your heart. The purpose of this listening is not to enhance absorption into self, but rather to listen to the movements of God within your heart.

Listen to the longings in your heart that all human beings would move into respect and concern for their fellow human being. Rather than having thousands of people fleeing for their lives out of their war torn countries, think of the longings in your heart that we work to

build schools for our little girls to go to school. We work to make sure all our young men are employed.

Listen to the longings in your heart that no group of people be marginalized and labeled as second class.

Listen to the longings within your own heart that all groups of people work towards respect of each other, whether that we working groups or your children's soccer league.

The Holy Spirit is moving ... within you

One of the best images I use to describe the Holy Spirit would be the Saskatchewan December wind. No one can control the wind. It is real, determined and moves as it will.

Now, the Holy Spirit is moving within our hearts. Our task is not to control the work of the Holy Spirit but rather to be attentive to what and where it is moving.

Perhaps you have become too comfortable and secure in your life style. Now, along comes the Holy Spirit moving you to help the new Canadian who is a single mom. She can barely speak the language and needs someone to help her make sense of our banking system.

The Holy Spirit is always moving us towards goodness. This week we want to be attentive to the wind of the Holy Spirit.

THIS DRY LAND WILL HAVE STRENGTH THERE WILL BE HOPE!

Who is the poet who said that we should be thankful for the cracks (using the image of a black prisoner's cell) because that is the only way the light gets in?

In the black moments of life we can see the light breaking through. We can only appreciate the hope of which Advent speaks if we have suffered, struggled and come close to the brink of giving up. It is in the suffering of our tears that we can begin to see the light.

This is why the first Scripture reading from Isaiah the prophet speak so loudly to us. Isaiah lived with a people in deep suffering. They were oppressed by the enemy and felt abandoned by God. Where was the great God to protect them? Bring security to their children? And provide the assurance of enough food for the hot dry season?

He uses desert images (Is. 35,1-2). The dry lands will have joy, that is, they will give crocus blossoms. New life will appear from this dry, dry soil.

It is in this parched land (where we want to give up) that God will give strength to weak hands.

Our fearfulness will be bolstered. We will be strengthened. Our fearful heart will hear the command to be strengthened. "He will come and save you." (Is. 35,4)

Stand up in the midst of all the refugee camps throughout the world and proclaim that God will save you. There is power in hope. A great moment of liberation is about to happen.

**THERE ARE STRONG MOMENTS OF HOPE AND COURAGE**

Many years ago, here in Saskatoon, we had a parishioner who was in her mid sixties. She had just received confirmation that she had cancer and it would be necessary to enter into chemotherapy.

She had no family with her when the bad news was conveyed. After the doctors left the hospital room she burst

into tears. She was frightened. She was alone.

In her tears the hospital chaplain walked into her room. The gentle priest asked: "You got some bad news?"

After a few more explanations he asked if she would like to receive the Sacrament of the Sick and pray for strength.

She mentioned that after the sacrament she did not cry again. "I trusted that God would get me through all this!"

This is our God. The creative hand of God is at work, not to spare us from being a human body subject to the breakdown of our bodies, but rather that God would walk and accompany us along the difficult path of cancer and its aftermath.

This is where we look for God in the desert sufferings of our life. This is where the crocus of hope (bursting forth from the hard dry ground of discouragement) gives us new life.

THE COMING OF THE LORD IS IN THE HERE AND NOW

On this third Sunday of Advent, pray that God come into your life. The season of Advent opens us to prayer for the coming of the Lord. For many people this may seem too vague.

When you watch the evening news and hear one bad story after the other and you find yourself asking if anything good can come of the human race, turn toward the Risen Jesus and ask that this human misery can be changed to compassion and respect for one another. Instead of continuing to live in a world where one group exploits another group, pray for the coming of Christ in hearts that hunger for justice, and in souls determined to build peace among warring peoples.

Our prayer for the coming of the Lord is very much, the coming today, in our space and time. Come as the God of peace and justice!

Come, Lord, in our own families. We fight and have such misunderstandings. One brother has not talked to the other brother in decades. Our aged Mother cries herself to sleep over these painful divisions. She asks if her old age is meant to be a time of such great suffering over her divided sons?

Ask for the coming of the Lord into our divided family. Ask for the workings of the Holy Spirit between our two brothers who have built up this huge wall of ice between themselves.

The coming of the Lord is not a distant and misty hope in the future. It is also asking for our God to come and work among us today. It is the coming of the Lord for our own lives.

**SEARCH FOR THE FACE OF JESUS**

The human face is a great mystery. It only has forty seven muscles that make up our face but amidst the seven billion faces alive at this very moment no two faces are identical. How can you have such an infinite

variety with so few muscles to work with?

Our face also names who we are. No matter how much your grandmother may be lost in her dementia her face is always one of kindness and understanding. You will never forget her face even when she will be gone for many decades.

Advent challenges us to look for the face of Jesus.

The thrust of our prayer is to develop within us the very eyes of Jesus. We are meant to see the world as He sees the

world. From seeing, we are meant to love the people of this world like Jesus loves the people of this world.

One of the most important places to look for the face of Jesus is among the poor, the dispossessed and the forgotten. These are all the people who live so very close to us.

Look for the face of Jesus in your mechanic who may have just lost his wife to cancer. When you touch and support the sufferings of others, you touch and support Jesus.

JESUS COMES IN THE TODAY MOMENTS



We all have a difficult time trying to live only in the present moment. Enjoy what is in front of you because that is all you have in this life. The friendship you are sharing at this hour might never come again. Enjoy it. Savour it.

Advent cautions us to look forward to the coming of the Lord. There will be a time when in the fullness of God's mystery, all things will be righted and we will share in the eternal glory that has begun in us, will be completed.

But we must be reminded that today is also the day of the Lord. God is coming to us in the smile of a friend, the kindness to your elderly father by a care aide, the generosity of a fellow employee towards

the refugees who have come to Canada.

The Lord also comes to the faith community when it prays and sings the songs of Advent. The Lord is coming to us when the Scriptures are proclaimed and shared in the Sunday liturgy.

The Lord is coming in so many ordinary ways of goodness. Advent is a gift to open our eyes to the daily comings of the Lord.

What a disappointment when you run across people who live as if God was in the past tense. God is anything but past. God bursts forth in our every day lives.

HAVE YOUR ENTIRE PARISH TOUCH THE THIRD CANDLE

This third candle speaks of the light and hope that Christ will bring as we look through the windows of the cancer clinic. There will be hope.

The third candle challenges us to search for the crocuses pushing through the dry, dry ground of the desert.



The third candle is hope that war will cease and divided peoples will work together to bring a new life for their children..

The third candle makes us aware that the coming of the Lord is very much, here and now.