

Heart ♥ to ♥ Heart



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Second Week of Advent 2022

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1st Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 72

2nd Reading: Romans 15:4-9

Gospel: Matthew 3:1-12

For me, the phrase “**waiting in joyful hope**” is the perfect description of Advent. The concepts of “waiting” and “hope” are rich in imagery and meaning when rooted in faith. The waiting is not simply a waste of time, or a source of frustration. The hope is not limited to something that will satisfy for only a time. No, the waiting of Advent is a fruitful and exciting time, and the hope is for something far greater than our limited imaginations could ever conjure!



The waiting of Advent is an *active waiting*. One part of waiting is *watching*, being on the lookout for something important. Isaiah gives a beautiful image: “A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse” (11:1). I think of time-lapse photography where the wonders of nature are caught on a video! That new life can grow from just the stump, the remains of a tree, is truly a miracle. It reminds me that God-given life is irrepressible; it keeps coming back no matter what has been suffered. Isaiah then describes the “bud” that will blossom from the roots of the tree. This person will be endowed with many gifts for leading the people, especially “fear of the Lord,” which shows awe and reverence for God. All the other gifts are rooted in this one, so that everything this person does is founded in God’s divine plan. This will help set the world right, establishing justice everywhere. How blessed are we to be waiting for such a person!

Another part of waiting is *preparing*. John the Baptist reminds his listeners rather forcefully of what should be done to prepare for the coming of this wonderful leader. Everyone has a responsibility to take stock of his/her way of living and make changes to align with God’s way of living. In Matthew’s gospel, this conversion is symbolized by the people being baptized by John in the Jordan River, renouncing their sins and being born to a new life. Like Isaiah, John also uses the imagery of things that grow in nature when he tells the people they must “produce good fruit as evidence of [their] repentance” (3:8). This extends to us today as well. Advent is a time for personal conversion that leads naturally to social transformation. We begin by committing to “make straight” the “crooked” parts of our own individual lives, but our work doesn’t end there. We must work to eliminate injustice in our communities, one piece at a time. This is not easy or quick work, but when we rely on our faith strengthened by prayer, we can be confident that God is with us in all our experiences.

Advent is also filled with *extraordinary hope*. Isaiah describes this hope most beautifully with another image from nature, this time of the animals of the world living in harmony. What a glorious world it will be when even predator and prey can live together with no fear or conflict! Like the perfection that God created at the beginning, this world of harmony and peace is a thing of beauty. Ruling this perfect world will be the perfect king, described earlier as the one who will establish justice everywhere. This king is also described in Psalm 72 as one who will care for the poor and vulnerable, bringing peace and happiness. Such a reality may seem impossible, but it is the great hope of Advent. As we know from the story of the Annunciation, nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). Come Lord Jesus! We are waiting in joyful hope!!

—Yvonne Racine
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