

Good Morning! Let us pray...

First Sunday in December... first day of December... first Sunday of Advent... and for some of us, this was a first holiday in living a new life, in a new chapter of life, with new people in life, or missing people of life.

Our first scripture reading (Isaiah 2:1-5) begins with a new thing... Isaiah saw the word. That's a new thing isn't it?

Look at the cover of your worship guide... Now, that's an example of seeing the word... HOPE...in bold letters.

What, dear friends, does hope look like?

For Isaiah, it was the vision of a mountain above the others, with people of all nations streaming to it... where the people will receive instruction, be transformed, settling disputes and turning tools of war into tools of cultivating new life, and go forth to bring peace and light. In a real way it is a pattern of expansion, receiving, transformation, and compassion for the world.

This imagery is powerful. So powerful that Isaiah's words are carved into the wall across from the United Nations building in NY.

Through these images, Isaiah offers the people of Jerusalem a new perspective, one that offers hope during times of war and despair.

While people long for joy and hope, sometimes it can be hard to see or find.

There is a friend of mine whose family is struggling these days. As with many families, there has been challenge in getting along, as well as times of getting along and having fun. Currently, the challenge is living with the progression of disease. This last week, the family gathered all together in one place to have Thanksgiving. Good conversation, laughter, memories. It was a day to be savored and treasured. It was a day of joy and hope.

Another way we connect to deep joy is through our rituals. In the second scripture (Romans 13:11-14) the writer reminds us to be alert and to be

ready and to put on / dress ourselves in Christ. This is a call to remember our baptism, our initiation into a community called to be the hands and feet of Christ in a broken world. Advent is a time of anticipation. A time of hope for good and gracious things to come.

Today, my friend's mother is receiving care outside her home. All of a sudden, the progression of disease was such that it wasn't safe to be at home. All of a sudden, the daily care provided by loving family wasn't sufficient. More intense support was needed for her well-being and her safety.

Look again at the cover of the worship guide. What image is Hope ? ...Star/Light. Isaiah sends us forth... to walk in the light. The writer of Romans reminds us to put on the armor of Light...clothe yourself in Christ... the Light of the world. We have lighted the first of several candles which reminds us of the dawning of the light coming into the world.

Advent is a time of anticipation. But it isn't a time of passive waiting. In this time between the darkness of night and the light of day each of us is called to "wake up and get dressed!" In our baptism we are anointed to the work of the Gospel.

We can wait around for the right tools for the job or we can create them. We can continue to see just what is on the surface or we can dig deep and see something we could not have even imagined.

My friend's family have been preparing for this moment in time... meeting with potential Care Providers, gathering information for future decision-making. Already, there have been moments of joy & hope, as they sing a favorite hymn together. In that moment, there is peace, love, joy, and hope.

Here's the challenge: what daily tools do you use for expansion, receiving, transformation and sharing compassion?

How do we help to usher in new light, new insight, new perspectives?

How do we best prepare to make room for the Christ child?

I give this Advent Devotional to you for your active engagement ...expanding, receiving, transformation, and compassion to share with the world. May it be so. So be it. Amen.