

Advent, 2024

Reflection

There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves.

People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world...

Luke: 21:25-26

Such is Jesus's message to his disciples in the Gospel from the First Sunday of Advent. He concludes the same Gospel advising: "Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Humanity."

I suspect most of us think of Advent as a time of preparation, but not this kind of preparation. Jesus offers no talk of the coming of a precious newborn, no recommendation to decorate the nursery and stock up on gifts and treats. This is a different kind of Advent, one much truer to our situation today.

Realizing this, it occurred to me that Advent is now and always. The USCCB describes Advent as a time of preparation for the *second* coming of Christ. Jesus makes it clear that life is hard, full of difficulties. There's no denying or sugar-coating that, but he also does reassure us in the same Gospel with these words: "But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand."

Our redemption is at hand! It may begin with the birth of a tiny baby boy surrounded by livestock in a cave or barn in a remote town crowded with people for a government-ordered census, but it does not end there. Through the ups and downs of daily living, in Jesus's time on Earth and ours, with vigilant and prayerful preparation, we can count on the coming of our redemption. This, too, is Advent. Let's make the most of it not just for four weeks, but year-round. And let's not think of it only as Jesus coming to us, but as our coming to Him as well. I think He'll be very pleased if we do.

Prayer of Hope by Sister Marcella Clancy, CSJ

Hope is the most courageous and creative of the virtues.

It companions us undaunted into darkness, willing us to dream differently.

It persists in kneading grace into the shadow, staunchly scorning cynics cries of gloom.

Wounded, weary, yet undaunted, it welds itself to us unyieldingly steadfast.

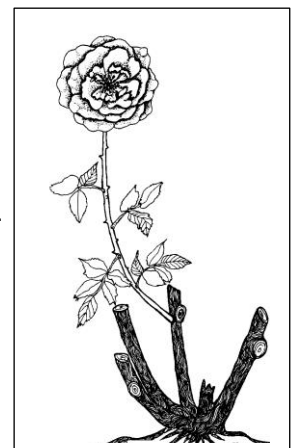
Hope, uncompromising, carries the promise of life and love, beauty and goodness.

The darkness will not extinguish nor overcome the light.

Suggested Actions

Recognize Advent as more than a time to prepare for Christmas with cards and gifts, lights, and edible treats. Remember it is a sacred season for prayer and good works. Make time to pray every day. Make time to reach out to others in need as often as possible.

Recognize Advent as more than four weeks out of the year. Jesus is coming every day throughout the year. Be watchful and ready. Be alert to His presence in people and events that touch your life at times you might expect Him and times when you might be surprised.



Hold onto hope as the prayer above describes it. Draw hope from faith, family, friends, colleagues, even strangers you may read about or see on the news resisting despair and doing good in the face of trials or tragedy. Draw hope from nature, too.

Help spread the Peace of Christ with a gift of peace. See our [flier](#) with gift-giving suggestions for children this season.

Visit the Pax Christi websites for more ways to help create hope: <https://paxchristi.net/>, www.paxchristiusa.org, www.paxchristinys.org and www.nypaxchristi.org. Also follow us on social media.