

Homily for the 1st Sunday of Advent

December 1-2, 2018

Readings: Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2; Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36

Preacher: Sr. Karen Dietz

Vinde de novo, Senhor, nascer nesta terra pobre,
Aqui neste chão de miséria, onde a Verdade não cresce.
*(Come again, Lord, to be born in this poor world,
Here on this earth of misery, where the Truth doesn't grow.)*

Recently I have learned about this Advent Carol sung by the people in Brazil. Though it is indeed somber in tone, the message seems fitting as we begin Advent 2018. There is so much darkness in our world at this time. We read about it in the news, we hear about it in our churches and we experience it in our own lives. Issues of the migration of peoples everywhere, climate change, unchecked violence, abuse of minors and racism are reported daily. The darkness comes both from outside us and from the depths of our hearts.

As Christians, we are named “people of the Light.” By our baptism, we are called to be the antidote of the pain, suffering and sorrow that is dark. We believe that Jesus is that way, the *truth* and the life. Our life in Christ is an environment where Truth does grow and thrive.

I find that so often these days I feel paralyzed and powerless. The Gospel today warns us to be vigilant against this lethargy:

“Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life ...”

Certainly this is a caution to be aware and watchful for the coming of Christ at the end of time. At the same time I believe this is an encouragement for us to be watchful for the coming of Christ in the here and now. More than ever, it is essential that we open all our senses to the presence of Christ in our world. Our souls need to function like solar panels—searching for light so that we might become energized and strengthened to *be* sources of light for others. This is not a time to give in or to hibernate from the darkness of our world.

And yet, if you are at all like me, you would like to hide away from all that is painful and sorrowful in our world. We feel powerless against such enormous forces of darkness. The dark days we have been experiencing in the Northeastern part of the United States contributes to the feeling of being overwhelmed by the gaping needs in our world. It is hard to lean into the light.

This is the backdrop of Advent 2018. These are our “signs” of the coming of the Son of Man. This is the world in which Christ is longing to arrive anew. We are called to be the midwives and to birth this Christ. The Incarnation for which we prepare these next four weeks is not a passive undertaking. Rather, as the baptized, we are to be actively engaged in the birthing process.

I believe being bearers of the light in such opaque times calls for patience and perseverance. Much like the Christmas lights that are beginning to appear in our neighborhoods, little by little, the light of our faith illumines the darkness a bit at a time. It happens when we greet fellow drivers, shoppers and store clerks, friends and neighbors with an easy smile or positive greeting.

It happens when we send an email or letter to a government official voicing our concerns. It happens when we donate our time and/or resources to aid victims in any corner of our world. And it happens when we raise our concerns and the concerns of our world to our God in prayer over and over again. This may not seem like much. We might feel as though our contribution is insignificant, but the cumulative effect of such positive energy is bound to overtake the negative. I believe that this is the power of the Incarnation. In these Advent days, we join our thoughts, prayers and actions for good, bringing to birth anew the Light of the World! This is who we are.

I close with this paraphrase from this Sunday’s second reading from the letter to the Thessalonians:

*May God make you increase and abound in love
for one another and for all,
just as we have for you,
so as to be blameless in holiness before our God and Creator
at the coming of the Christ, Jesus, with all the holy ones. Amen.*

This is my prayer for all of us. It is only our love for one another and for all Creation that will truly birth the Christ today and always.