Advent Reflection Year A

...A time of Looking Forward & Looking Back...

"Let us go rejoicing to the House of the Lord" Responsorial Psalm 121 – First Sunday Advent Year A.

As we conclude the Jubilee Year of Hope and our Mercy Pilgrimage in December, we are invited into community with the Universal Church to celebrate the Season of Advent.

How do we understand Advent?

Advent is a season of **Hope,** especially as we conclude this year of reminding ourselves and reflecting deeply on Hope. Candles are symbols of hope in so many aspects of life...there is an African proverb which tells us that *'it is better to light a single candle than to curse the darkness'*. In our Christian tradition we understand this as believing and hoping in the light of Christ and as we light the Advent candles *'we say, in the face of all that suggests the contrary, God is still alive, still the Lord of this world, and because of that, "all will be well, and all will be well, and every manner of being will be well", irrespective of the evening news*!' (Rolheiser 2004)

Rolheiser goes on to say that '*Advent is about getting in touch with our* ***longing****. It's about letting our yearnings raise our psychic temperatures (Teilhard de Chardin) so that we are pushed to eventually let down our guard, hope in new ways, and risk intimacy'*. St Augustine reminds us that *'our hearts are restless until the rest in God'*. How does this restlessness manifest itself in our lives?

So perhaps this year we are invited in Advent, to be ***vulnerable, to embrace our restlessness and our longing*** for the something more ... who we understand is God. Rolheiser goes on to say :

'Loneliness and longing let us touch, through desire, God's ultimate design for us. In our longing, the mystics tell us, we intuit the kingdom of God. What that means is that in our desires we sense the deeper blueprint for things. And what is that? Scripture tells us that the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, of simple bodily pleasure, but a coming together in justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, that is what we ache for in our loneliness and longing: consummation, oneness, intimacy, completeness, harmony, peace, and justice. Our loneliness and longing are a hunger and an energy that drive us, always, beyond the present moment. In them we do intuit the kingdom of God. (2007)[1]

- ***What words resonate with me?***
- ***What image do I have of Advent?***
- ***Where will I be vulnerable?***
- ***What and who do I recall from 2025?***

[1] Fr Ronald Rolheiser OMI 2004 & 2007 www.ronrolheiser.com

God revealed in all aspects of our lives if we are still and present and open our hearts to the messages of the Scripture Readings.

What is the Call of Advent for us as Mercy Associates?

Mercy Associates are called to live and share the mercy of God.

We are women and men inspired by the life of Jesus Christ revealed in Scripture and by the vision and charism of Catherine McAuley.
Guided by mercy values of compassion, justice, hospitality and hope, we:

- celebrate and give thanks for God's merciful love
- nurture our relationship with God
- witness to our faith in prayer and action, giving expression to God's mercy
  under the guidance of the Holy Spirit
  in response to the needs of these times
  in the ordinariness of our daily lives
  and in right relationship with all of creation.
- journey with each other and in companionship with the Sisters of Mercy.

As we journey through Advent, we apply the wisdom of Catherine

- **Advent as a time for growth:** *'A faith that does not make us grow is a faith that needs to grow. A faith that does not raise questions is a faith that has to be questioned'*. This encourages reflection on our faith as we prepare for Christ's coming.
- **Preparing the heart:** *'At this Christmas when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart?'*. This implies a need to open our hearts in preparation for the spiritual meaning of the season.
- **Awakening hope:** *'It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope'*. This highlights Advent as a time to cultivate goodness and hope in our lives.
- **Service to others:** *'Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving the others with God's own love and concern'*. This connects the preparation of Advent to active love and service during Christmas.
- **Shining lamps:** *'We should be shining lamps, giving light to all around us'*.

God is our Companion on the Advent Journey and Catherine is walking with us in Mercy.

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