

First Sunday of Advent 2016

(SUNG) IT's beginning to look a lot like Advent. All around the church. Take a look at the advent wreath. It's greenery underneath. Four candles that are pink and purple too. It's beginning to look a lot like Advent. Who could ask for more? But the loveliest sight to see is the Xavier Community waiting for the Lord.

I like to begin the advent season with an advent Carol. Yes, I know it's a Christmas melody but the words are advent. And that's appropriate since the melody of the Advent season is the anticipation, and expectation of the celebration of Christmas, or really the three comings of Christ, past, present and future. But the lyrics, the word, the lyrical love song of God and God's people is Christ has come, Christ comes now, Christ will come again.

And this is no ordinary Advent. After the events of the past month on the political scene there is a pervasive sense of anxiety, wondering about the future, wondering what in the world will be going on come January. Will we see walls being built, climate change compromised, mass deportations? What will it feel like to be living in this time? Will it be a time of tension and anxiety like in the Gospel today? Will we be carried away by a flood of programs and policies that will divide? Two will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Or in "days to come", is it possible that there will be unity and peace? "All nations shall stream toward the Lord's holy mountain. Are all things possible with God?"

No, this is no ordinary advent. And that is why our advent "wreath" is no ordinary "wreath". In fact the 4 candles ring a peace garden? Why a peace garden? If you pay attention to the scriptures this year there is a powerful promise of peace. As impossible as it seems in our war-like world, there is a promise of peace "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks". Next Sunday you will hear the prophet Isaiah's vision of a peaceable kingdom. Peace pervades this advent, even if our spirit is not at peace. I invite you come to the peace garden and pray. There are stones that you can write a prayer for peace and place it in the well. And at the entrance of the Church there is a "peace tree". You can write prayers for peace and hang them on the tree.



There is as well a powerful sense of Joy in this Advent. The first psalm we sing today is. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the lord? That is why our parish theme is “we walk and wait in joyful hope.”

Hmm, Should there be a question mark or a series of them after that statement? Do you think this is probable? Possible? Hopefully! One reason for joyful hope is that we do walk together. We are not all going in different directions. (Well during the week but here on Sunday you all come streaming –live to this place.)

And then there is the waiting. What does Advent waiting feel like?

This past week I took a train from Penn Station to Boston. If you’ve ever waited at Penn Station for a train you know the experience. The track is not announced till a few minutes before departure. Everyone eyes are focused on the announcement board, waiting for the letters and numbers to turn and suddenly you know what track you’re on. This past week, some people started to line up at a track, betting that this would be the right track for Washington, D.C. One person after another would ask “Is this the track for Washington? I think so, was the response. And the person would wait. But then there were those betting on Boston. Everyone knew there final

destination but no one knew for sure what track they would be on. Hah!
Guess what? It was neither! When the announcement finally went up, totally
different Tracks!

Well here we are for Advent. We know our final destination. But we wonder
what Track we'll be on to get there. Funny thing in Advent is that we are
already "there" but not yet. Already and Not Yet. There's a classic advent
theme!

We Walk and Wait in Joyful Hope!