

To the Whole Church – Advent 2008

Advent 2008

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I have been preaching these last weeks leading up to, and into Advent about being awake, alert, and prepared to find Christ at any moment, around any corner, and in any person. Advent is a wonderful time for self examination, and to participate in the examination process with a faith community.

My faith community is comprised primarily of elderly men and women who live alone, forgotten or ignored by their families, as well as people who are seriously ill, surrounded by family and friends who are in emotional and spiritual pain.

I have witnessed and experienced many things this fall and early winter with my faith community- and these experiences have given me some very interesting and thought provoking things to think about.

The day after Barak Obama was elected president, I said Mass with my nursing home residents, who are primarily African American. The pain of racism is still very deep with these men and women, as they are old enough to have experienced it firsthand. The experience of sharing that conversation and prayers that day with them—the fulfillment of the words of Rev. Dr. King- words many of them had heard him speak in person was cathartic for them- and humbling for me.

They cried for they had the opportunity to witness that part of the dream come to pass. I cried because I was there to witness that through their perseverance, prayer, hope, and love they felt a new level of acceptance and freedom. They were awake, waiting, and ready- always knowing that, through their faith in Christ Jesus, they would experience the Promised Land after being guided to that mountain top that Dr. King so eloquently described the night before he was killed.

I saw the tear stained face of Christ that day each and every time I looked out on the faces of my faith community. They each felt a bit freer that day, even though they were confined to wheelchairs by their age and infirmity, and the loneliness they shared. Yet, despite their confinement and their solitude, they were awake – awake and ready to find Christ around that next corner in their lives – and that day we all found him together – as a faith community, as brothers and sister, and as children of God.

I hope we each are awake this Advent season. The holidays can be so busy, so distracting, and frustrating. Take a moment each day, slow down, think, pray, reflect – and stay awake!

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