



December 6, 2020

Dear friends of God,

Wendell Berry is an American novelist, poet, essayist and farmer from Kentucky. He once wrote: "It gets darker and darker, and then Jesus is born." We are in the darkest time of the year, and so many of our brothers and sisters struggle with darkness in their lives. Advent is about moving from darkness to light. Christ is the light of the world. God has come to offer his people comfort. Christ is the light of God's love in the darkness of our lives.

The other day I was listening to the radio as I was driving. I heard these words, and they struck a chord with me. I did my best to write them down. The singer was a blues musician, Don Bryant. He was singing about romantic love, but I think that it says something about how God continues to work in our lives and in our world since the incarnation of his beloved son, Jesus. Thankfully, I won't sing the words to you but they do make my heart sing. "Nothing in my life is the same. Your love is to blame."

We believe that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. God has become one with us, and our world has never been the same. We continue to struggle with understanding that the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated. The Gospel of Mark which we will hear proclaimed for much of this new liturgical year begins with this call to prepare the way for Christ and the Kingdom of God:

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."

The season of Advent provides an opportunity to pay attention: to God's action and presence in our world; and to how we live God's Kingdom of justice, compassion and mercy in the present moment.

Advent means "arrival" or "coming." Advent is a time of preparation for the coming of the Christ Child 2000 years ago, Christ's coming into our hearts every day, and the coming of Christ at the end of time. Advent is a time when we pay attention as God breaks into our lives and world. God calls us to be receptive to the inbreaking of God's Kingdom in our lives right now. We are called to participate in the building of the Kingdom of God that began with the birth of the child Jesus so many generations ago. Advent is about welcoming this Kingdom as we anticipate the coming of Christ.

This weekend we get our first glimpse of our Advent friend, St. John the Baptist. He seems like a mad man wearing camel's hair and feasting on locusts and wild honey and living in the desert. Like the prophets before him, John was screeching for repentance. John believed that the end was near and wanted to call his listeners to change their lives and their world as God's judgment was near. He wanted them to turn away from the idolatry of greed, hate and violence and turn towards God who calls us to care for our neighbor. St. John the Baptist echoed through his life and preaching what it says in the Hebrew Scriptures: "Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor" (Proverbs 14:21). St. John the Baptist's words continue to be shouted throughout time to us. We do not believe that the end was near with the coming of John the Baptist, but we do believe that the beginning of the Kingdom of God began with the arrival of Jesus Christ. John's prophetic life prepares us for the coming of Jesus as we make straight the paths of our world for the Kingdom of God.

For some time, in response to our living with Covid- 19, I have not been having regularly scheduled times for Reconciliation. Nor will we have Communal Reconciliation for Advent this year. Our confessional is not set up to distance properly. I have been hearing confessions by appointment and will continue to take appointments. During Advent, I will also be in Church during the week to be available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation at the following times:

December 9, 10 a.m. - noon

December 16, 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.

December 23, 10 a.m. - noon Advent Peace!

Much love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Ken". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.