

+Advent 2017

My Dear Brothers,

On this first Sunday of Advent, Jesus urges us to appreciate the truth that life is precious, that our world changes, that our time is limited. Fr. Richard Rohr writes that faith and spirituality begin with “seeing.” It’s not about earning or achieving, but about “paying attention.” Paying attention to the presence of God in every joy and sorrow and in every victory and setback before us. Advent calls us to “watch,” to be “alert” to the presence of God in the love of community, family and friends, to find the true meaning and purpose of our lives in moments of compassion, forgiveness and generosity.

As we kindle the Advent candles let us never forget that this is essentially a bold statement of hope. Hope is not wishful thinking, or natural optimism springing from an upbeat temperament that always looks on the bright side of things. Rather, hope is based on deeper realities: God’s existence, God’s power, God’s goodness and faithfulness to His promises.

To live in hope is to live in the power and promise of God’s promises. We do this in the present moment of our lives looking back in a memory of hope – not counting our losses, underlining life’s hurts, playing the victim, but recognizing the healing promise of the great Incarnation. With great trust we look to a future filled with hope. When we can see that all of our plans are mysteriously part of God’s plan, we have something truly to hope for.

Mary our Mother shows us how to hope. Not only did she believe the promise, but became pregnant with it, gave it her own flesh, went through the pains of childbirth to give it reality, and then nursed a fragile new life into a powerful adulthood that saved the world. In that, she needs imitation, not admiration.

May Advent be the season in which we imitate Mary’s hope, and, believing God’s promise, bring it to flesh.

With fraternal affection,



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