

Welcome again to this new season of Advent, which we begin this day. Advent is an abrupt disruption in our “ordinary time.” It is not only a new season in the church year; it is an utterly new year, new time, new life. Everything begins again.

What one marks as new in the liturgical sequence we dare to confess is a genuine newness wrought by God in the world. That is, liturgy anticipates historical newness, and matches the newness that God is doing in the world. In this season we are at the brink of something utterly new, long yearned for but which is beyond our capacity to enact. Advent invites us to awaken from our numbed endurance and our simple expectations, to consider our life afresh in light of new gifts that God is about to give.

The community of believers has been hoping for a very long time. The substance of that hope, deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, is persistent and resilient. As both the prophetic oracles of Isaiah (that we read throughout the season) and the psalms attest, Israel hopes for justice, peace, and well-being. The biblical community knows God’s intention for these matters and trusts God’s faithful promise. Thus, Advent begins in a vision of a healed alternative for the world.

The New Testament church stands in close continuity with the Old Testament. Christians hope with Jews, and hope for the same thing; well-being in a world that has been healed, blessed, and cared for. The New Testament readings, however, intensify the longstanding hopes and make the promises of God immediate prospects. The intensity and present tense of New Testament faith revolves around the presence of Jesus, whose very person initiates a new beginning in the world. Believers are to perceive the world differently and position themselves for the new gifts of God.

Our Advent texts of promise and expectation make a claim on us that violates our rationality and jeopardizes our current patterns of security. The church at Advent watches in order to notice where God is doing justice and peace and well-being. Wherever and when-ever that happens, God’s promises are on the move toward newness. It is for us to notice and receive with eagerness and joy.

May your Advent season be one of newness, also, and may you receive this with hope, joy, love, and peace...

May Andrew, Frances Perry, Francis Xavier, and all the Saints walk with you this week...

*Sam*