



## Birthing the Divine

Good Morning Blessed Ones, and welcome to yet another changing of the Seasons at All Saints. As you can tell by looking around us at the amazing and inspiring Sanctuary that our Liturgical Environment Team and our Altar Guild had prepared for us this morning... something had definitely changed. The green that had sustained us for so long is no more, and now we are surrounded by the most amazing of blues. Blue everywhere! Stunning and soothing at the same time. Signaling to us that something different is going on.

Our brand new Liturgical Year is commencing today and along with it a new Church Season... The Season of Advent. Advent, while not the shortest of the Church Seasons... (that honor belongs to Christmastide... the Church Season that lasts just 12 days... inspiring one of our favorite traditional Christmas songs... The 12 Days of Christmas) Advent often seems to emerge and depart in a pre-

Christmas wink. Advent can often, if we are not careful, be lost completely in the emotional, relational, traditional and financial turbulence of the secular christmas (small "C") experience. Advent is often like that awkward, overlooked and sometimes misunderstood "middle-child". Advent is a season searching for an identity.

Advent does not possess the liturgical majesty of Christmas or Easter... or Pentecost with the spiritual fireworks show of the Spirit. Or even Epiphany with its gifting and visiting...even Lent, somber as it is... is well understood.

So what is Advent all about for us, spiritually and liturgically...what is this "middle-child" season all about... this "blueness?" Well lets chat about just that this morning.

One of the reasons, I think that Advent doesn't get all the spark and glitz of some of the other church seasons is that it is about preparation... and I don't know about you but when I hear preparation my brain automatically says that is a fancy way of saying "work"... and work can be tedious, exhausting

and stressful. But it doesn't necessarily have to be that way. As my friend and mentor Joe Dick told me time and again... "It's all in the attitude, Joe... all in the attitude." Preparations can be joyful, exhilarating, spontaneous, fulfilling and enriching. Preparing can be loving, nurturing, full of hope and anticipation.

So okay, Father Joe... I am starting to get it. Advent is a season of preparation and preparing can be work yes... but also deeply joyful and fulfilling work. So, what exactly are we preparing for? Great Question!

Several good ways to answer it. In the 24 very short days of Advent, just 4 Sundays, we are preparing to yet again celebrate the Nativity of Jesus... his birth and the beginning of his spiritual walk that changed civilization. We prepare ourselves as individuals, as families and as a community to hear and celebrate this amazing story once again... a story that as members of the Jesus Movement we never get tired of telling or hearing. We prepare our homes, our neighborhood, our church... and also we prepare ourselves... in body, mind and spirit. This need to prepare... especially when the next

generation is coming is, I think, almost universal for species. It is often called “the nesting instinct” and it is amazing to watch and see. That drive to “make everything right” before the baby comes... whether it is painting the nursery, putting together the changing table and crib, hanging the mobile, folding the onesies... buying and arranging stuffies... bottle washers, pacifiers, diapers, formula (just in case), clothes and wipes and car seats and the list goes on forever... preparations... instinctive in our species... making sure the next generation gets as good a start as possible.

So during Advent we celebrate Mary and we remember fondly and respectfully all of the preparations that she and Joseph and the Holy Family made to receive the Blessed One. The blue with which we surround ourselves in this Season is a tribute to Mary... her color... celebrating her dignity, her strength, her resourcefulness and her faith. Mary wants to be ready for she was about to birth the Divine into the world... And in actuality Blessed Ones so are we.

Each and every Christmas Day is an opportunity for us to birth yet again the Divine that resides within us back into the

world. We have all been called by the Creator to gestate, and grow and feed, nurture, birth and spark into life the holy that resides in us all. As we have long heard and understood, we have all been made in the “image and likeness of God.” Crafted by our Creator lovingly and gloriously... as the Psalmist says... “I knew you in the womb...I knit you together and you are marvelously made.”

Advent is that time of preparation. Not only do we prepare home and hearth, family, neighborhood and church. Inside each one of us... the nesting instinct comes alive again, returning seasonally, to prepare to make everything right spiritually, ethically, morally, relationally and emotionally... for the birthing and re-birthing of the Divine Spark that resides within us all. On Christmas we celebrate Jesus bursting forward with our own celebration of our own spiritual bursting forth. Walking the Jesus journey yet again... side by side with Jesus and Mary and Joseph and all those who have walked before us and with us. Those who have shown us.

During Advent we remember that we are umbilically tied to Our Creator. We explore our understanding of that very real and personal connection to The Holy. On Christmas day

we will bring it forward yet again... “that of God within us”... and demonstrate to the world what it means to be both Blessed and a Blessing. To be a member of the Jesus Movement.

Today, gospel is an amazing reminder of what it is like, when we spiritually prepare, when we do our spiritual “nesting” , we create a safe and strong and holy and loving space for the birthing of the Divine within us. Like a physical birthing, we never quite know when that baby is coming... there is a schedule but we don't really know it. So we must be ready for that moment of birthing, both physical and spiritual.

And so today Blessed Ones both together and personally we begin our Advent journey. A gestational journey of the Spirit led by Blessed Mary and the cast of characters of our Nativity story. We begin symbolically from darkness in the darkest time of the year... lighting one small flame at a time, getting brighter and brighter... clearer and clearer until our Spirit path is fully illuminated and brought into fullness by the birth of a small child in a simple shed changing us forever.

Amen

