

First Sunday of Advent – Dec. 1&2, 2018 – Reflection – “The Prophecy Candle Lit in Hope”

For over a thousand five hundred years, Christians have kept the season of watching and waiting for the coming of God the Savior, Jesus, the Light of the World ... Advent .. Come, Lord Jesus, come and be born in our hearts.

It is said that for four thousand years, the children of Adam and Eve, the children of Abraham and Sara, the tribes led by Moses and Aaron and Miriam waited and watched and prayed: the Messiah - when would He come; the Messiah - who would He be; the messiah - maybe next year. For four thousand years, the Chosen People waited and watched and prayed.

Our Advent wreath remembers the waiting and longing of our older Jewish brothers and sisters. The wreath holds four candles which are lit over the four weeks of Advent. There are three purple candles and one rose candle, each representing a millennium of waiting. Added together, the four candles symbolize the four thousand years of salvation history that humanity waited for her Savior.

Purple is a liturgical color used to signify a time of penance, sacrifice, and prayer. During the first two and the last weeks of Advent, we light purple candles. The Third Sunday of Advent is called “Gaudete Sunday” which means “Rejoice Sunday”. On this day, we celebrate that our waiting for Christmas is almost over. Rose is a liturgical color that is

used to signify joy in the midst of penance and sacrifice and so, on the Third Sunday of Advent, we light the rose candle.

The CIRCLE of the wreath reminds of the endless, unbroken love of God for us, His people.

The EVERGREENS remind us of the promise of eternal life in Christ for those who remain faithful.

HOLLY LEAVES represent the sharpness of the crown of thorns from the passion of Jesus, and their red berries speak of the blood He shed for our sins out of love for us on Calvary.

Finally, PINECONES, FLOWERS, and FRUIT symbolize Christ's Resurrection, and the RIBBONS remind of the shroud and burial cloths He left behind in the tomb.

As a whole, the CANDLES represent the coming of the Light of Christ into the world to dispel the darkness of sin and death and call us in to the light of faith, hope, and love.

Today, we light the first purple candle, the "PROPHECY CANDLE" in remembrance of the prophets who called Israel to expect a Savior, a Messiah, a King who would restore their kingdom, defeat their enemies, and lift them up in HOPE. In the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul lifts our spirits as well: "Through Christ we have gained access by faith to the grace in which we now stand, and we boast of our hope for the glory of God ... and this hope will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Christ came for us. Christ lived for us. Christ died for us. Christ rose for us and in Him we have the sure and certain hope of life and joy forever!

All these prophets calling us to have hope ... who's to say it isn't all just wishful thinking? Who would ever place any stock in hope ... especially hope in the fairytale of God becoming one of us and saving us!??

Franklin Roosevelt called December 7, 1941 a "day that will live in infamy". It was the day of the surprise attack of the Japanese Imperial forces on the American naval fleet anchored at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, an attack that all but destroyed American naval power in the Pacific. Japan went wild then attacking the Philippines, Malaysia, French Indochina, and China. Corregidor Island was the last American stronghold in the Philippine Islands. Like a Pacific Alamo, General Douglas MacArthur vowed to defend the island to the death. But President Roosevelt ordered MacArthur off the island because he was too valuable to the Allied cause to be lost to a Japanese prisoner of war camp. Before he left in March of 1942, the General made a promise, "I shall return!" What hope he gave the Filipinos with his promise seemed empty: the American effort was in shambles in retreat at every turn; Japanese might seemed awesome and insurmountable. Yet, improbably, hope triumphed. After taking island by island across all the Pacific Ocean in his inexorable campaign toward the home islands of Japan, on October 20, 1944, General MacArthur stepped into the water and waded onto Red Beach at Leyte in the Philippines. He returned, as he prophesied he would and hope was not disappointed.

In our day, there are all sorts of prophets of doom in the world: those who say there is no God, there is no Church, there is no hope. This little candle tells us Jesus did come, Jesus is here, Jesus will come again in glory ... for you and for me. "The light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness shall never overcome it!!"

