

During the time of the pandemic, we have had several options. We could collapse in on ourselves, becoming icons of misery, failure and despair. We could choose to become "couch potatoes" in front of the television. Then again, we might look at the unexpected limitations and see an opportunity to do things differently.

But life isn't lived according to global reflections. It comes down to me, as an individual. I can't say what "everyone" could or could not do. It's a question of how I live and behave which makes the difference, not only in my own life but also in the lives of the people whom I know and love. There is a saying that there are two ways of looking at a rose: to

regret that roses have thorns or to marvel that thorns have roses. Where have I stood during the Covid-19 pandemic? Have I wilted or have I blossomed?

RIPPLE EFFECT

Now, as Advent starts, I'm looking back at what has been, but I am also looking ahead. Christmas is coming. Jesus can be born into my heart if I open its door and welcome him. There's a ripple effect: Jesus within me can be the centre of an unlimited pool of love and hope. If I stay awake, I can watch it happen, perhaps not with my physical eyes, but certainly with the eyes of my soul. Advent is hope for sunshine tomorrow, after the darkness has gone.

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

To you, I lift up my soul, O my God.
In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame.
Nor let my enemies exult over me;
and let none who hope in you be put to shame.

FIRST READING Jeremiah 33:14-16

PSALM Psalm 24

RESPONSE To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

1. Lord, make me know your ways.
Lord, teach me your paths.
Make me walk in your truth, and teach me:
for you are God my saviour. **R.**
2. The Lord is good and upright.
He shows the path to those who stray,
he guides the humble in the right path;
he teaches his way to the poor. **R.**
3. His ways are faithfulness and love
for those who keep his covenant and will.
The Lord's friendship is for those who
revere him;
to them he reveals his covenant. **R.**

SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 3:12 – 4:2

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Let us see, O Lord, your mercy
and give us your saving help.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL Luke 21:25-28. 34-36

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

The Lord will bestow his bounty,
and our earth shall yield its increase.

Next Sunday's Readings:

Baruch 5:1-9
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11
Luke 3:1-6

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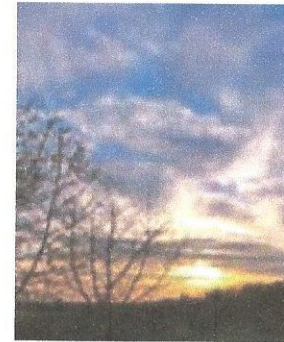
SUNDAY BULLETIN

THINKING FAITH

WHISPERING HOPE

Soft as the voice of an angel,
breathing a lesson unheard,
hope, with a gentle persuasion
whispers her comforting word:
wait till the darkness is over,
wait till the tempest is done,
hope for the sunshine tomorrow,
after the shower is gone.

(Alice Hawthorne
[Septimus Winner], 1868)



Today is the first Sunday of Advent. It's both the beginning of winter in the northern hemisphere and the promise of the birth of hope into our world.

Yet today, as we look forward, we also look backwards. We can't help it. This time last year we had become used to listening to the latest news concerning positive Covid-19 tests and the numbers of deaths of those infected with the virus. We looked towards the easing of the lockdown and wondered what restrictions we would be living under. We worried about our celebration of Christmas and its customary family get-together. Workplace Christmas parties were scrapped. Millions of people faced job insecurity and its effects on their nearest and dearest. Families wondered if they might be able to visit relatives in care homes. Would it be possible to give granny a hug? We weren't even sure that we could go to Mass for Christmas. In accordance with government regulations, many churches had to insist that parishioners booked their attendance in advance in order to ensure safe distancing.

There was a glimmer of hope. Vaccines might be available. Vaccination might allow us to return to some sort of normality in a world which many feared had possibly changed for ever. We need hope. We find it hard to survive for very long in hopeless situations. Throughout the time of the pandemic, we've looked for signs of hope to help us to deal with seemingly endless limitations and anxieties.

Yet in today's Gospel Jesus, the source of all hope, seems to offer little but doom and gloom. Even his promise of liberation is almost hidden between impending disasters. He instructs us to stand erect and hold our heads high while the world as we know it collapses around us. He tells us to stay awake so that we can see the new dawn. Are these impossible "asks"?

Hope in the darkness



Today we begin a new series for the Advent season with Sister Janet Fearn FMDM.

28 NOVEMBER 2021

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

YEAR C

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK 1