

Advent Devotional December 11, 2019

Scripture

Revelation 1:17-2:7

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, 18 and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. 19 Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this. 20 As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches. 2:1 To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands: 2 'I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. 3 I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. 6 Yet this is to your credit: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat from the tree of life that is in the paradise of God.'"

Devotional

The Rev. Thomas F. Conboy '56

The schedule remains pretty much the same in my assisted-living "home." The Christmas decorations are pretty much the same each year. Like much of the outside world, we fast forward from Thanksgiving to Christmas and miss completely the wonderful anticipation of Advent.

The ninth verse today's New Testament text, "I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary" (Rev. 2:3), paints a cross section of facilities such as the one I live in. The folks here who inspire me are those who live each day with joy and a quiet sense of anticipation. Their faith gives them the assurance of the promise "Unto you a child is born, unto you a Son is given." Each day, with increasing infirmities, they look after each other, give a word of encouragement to those who meet their daily needs, and greet with open arms family and friends who come to visit.

The assured certainty of the Nativity does not relieve us of the need to live each day of Advent 2019 with faithful anticipation. Whether in a facility such as ours or in the crazy, conflicted, strife-filled world beyond these walls, we need to strive to be an example of "faith in action" to others, "enduring patiently, bearing up for the sake of [Jesus'] name."

As we continue today on our journey to the manger of Bethlehem, recall the words of the 17th-century hymn: "O Lord, how shall I meet You, How welcome You aright? Your people long to greet You, My hope, my heart's delight! O kindle, Lord most holy, A lamp within my breast, To do in spirit lowly All that may please You best."

Prayer

Gracious God, we rejoice that Emmanuel has come. We rejoice that we still have the opportunity to remember and repeat the journey of anticipation leading up to that arrival. Guide and sustain us as we

face the pitfalls we encounter, and help us to encourage and inspire others to cherish the anticipated joy in celebrating the Nativity at the end of our journey. Amen.