

Fr. John Sassani
Homily Given on November 30, 2008
1st Sunday of Advent
Liturgical Year B

As I get older, I find that some memories fade away while others stand out vividly. I vividly remember Friday and Saturday nights in high school. My curfew was 11 or 11:30 or 12 midnight. I'd always be hoping to get home on time because, as I'd get close to our house, I'd see my mother in the front window watching for me. My hope was not to be late. Her hope was to see me safely returning home. My hope was motivated by her vigilant hope.

I think that this is not just a fluke in my upbringing. I think hope motivates hope. The hope of another encourages me and empowers me to hope – to trust – to endeavor – to succeed.

As we begin Advent today, what is it about? Christmas? Only at the end of the season. The end of time? Yes, but not only that. The way that God's hopes and desires form us and engender hope in us? Yes, I think that's it.

That's what Advent is about—

- not just that Christ was sent 2,000 years ago,
- not just that Christ will come in glory at some time in the future,
- but that Christ is here – he is the hope of God for us.

Christ's watchful, loving, tangible presence in our lives gives us hope, motivates us to live, to serve and to act.

St. Paul tells us today, "You are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ...He will keep you firm to the end." Christ gives us the spiritual gifts to believe, to trust and to love. He keeps us firm to the end so that we can not only achieve salvation, the fullness of life and love, but so that we can share in the work of salvation.

My mother worked with Christ for my salvation, not just in her window watching but by her faith, her example, her challenge, her efforts. We are called to do that for one another – here at Our Lady's, in Newton or other cities or towns, in our work, in our world. We are called to be the presence of hope that begets hope.

Once again terror cast its darkness on many people this week. What is the solution? Is there a solution? Yes, there is. It is the light that Christ gives. It is like one little flame that illuminates a new world, a world where God is King...a world where service, not self-interest, is the primary virtue...a world where the future that the Holy Spirit is forging is better than our best efforts.

That flame spreads, not to the four candles in our church, but from the Church. It spreads from us, those who hope, to the world...to those who need hope.