

Dear Sisters and Friends,

Charles Dickens, in speaking of his most famous character, Ebenezer Scrooge, states at the end of A Christmas Carol, "...it was always said of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well...May that be truly said of us..."

What does it mean for us today "to keep Christmas well" – or put another way – *how do we live daily the great mystery of the Incarnation?*

We have had weeks of readings about a world to come:

*Here faithful love and truth will embrace;
here peace and justice will come face to face.
God's truth shall water the earth like a spring,
while justice will bend down and sing.*

(Rory Cooney's "Your Mercy Like Rain")

And how are these hopeful words fulfilled? The scriptures we read and the songs we sing tell us that we are the ones we have been waiting for. When God's Word became flesh, incarnated in Christ, he became the Way, the Path - to peace, to justice, to reconciliation. Then Emmanuel, God With Us, invited us to become that Light, that Good News, that consoling word, that justice bringer and peacemaker.

And so we pray, during Advent, during Christmas, in fact during every season: *Come and be light for our eyes, be the air we breathe, be the voice we speak! Come be the song we song, be the path we seek!* (David Haas)

We ask to be Christ present and compassionate, to embody the healing, reconciling presence in our world in ways that are particular to each of us. We are the ones we have been waiting for....

Denise Levertov, in her powerful poem calls us "Beginners". Regardless of how old we are, how experienced we are, how many or varied our ministries have been, we are still beginners. We start again to be Good News, to be the concrete presence of the God of Life for everyone we meet. She tells us :

*But we have only begun
to love the earth.
We have only begun
to imagine the fullness of life.
How could we tire of hope?
- so much is in bud.*

It may seem strange to think of buds at this time of year in the northern hemisphere. At the same time, we are celebrating the return of light, the Radiant Dawn, the Sun of Justice. Our songs are about birth and hope and peace. We look to Mary's great canticle, a song rooted in the history of her people, of our ancestors in faith and we are challenged to find our place in a world and in a mission where the Advent promises will be fulfilled. And we can join Mary as she sings:

*My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
And the world is about to turn
(from Rory Cooney's "Canticle of the Turning")*

What a gift it is to be part of that great turning, of the righting of wrongs and imbalances named in Mary's song. We are the collaborators in bringing justice and light to our world. We are the ones we have been waiting for. Mary Chapin Carpenter in her beautiful Christmas song, "*Come Darkness, Come Light*" issues an invitation to all and we ourselves can join both as inviters and invitees:

*Come broken, come whole
Come wounded in your soul
Come anyway that you know
Alleluia
Come doubting, come sure
Come fearful to this door
Come see what love is for
Alleluia.*

May you be Light. May you be Hope. May you be Joy. May you be Peace.

Sheila

