

## “Stir Up Our Hearts, O God”

Preaching:  
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In Advent we pray, “**Stir up our hearts, O God.**” In so doing, we are asking for a lot! Remember being in love? Caring deeply about another? Being passionate about something? That’s what we are asking for when we pray, “Stir up our hearts.” We are praying for a new way of being which may mean being willing to reconfigure our lives. We are asking for a vision, seeking an alternate way of relating to the world~ from the heart~ with compassion: passion-with.

About eight centuries before the time of Christ. Isaiah presented his vision of a future without violence, in which he said:

*“They shall beat their swords into plowshares  
and their spears into pruning hooks;  
one nation shall not raise the sword against another,  
nor shall they train for war again.” (Is. 2:4)*

Now, almost three millenia later, we are still experiencing wars and rumors of wars; still wishing our weapons could be recast as gardening tools. That realization would be quite **disheartening** were it not for the fact that God’s time is not our time, God’s thought is mystery to us, and *Jesus has saved us*. The vision has been embodied by Jesus ~ herein lies our hope, and our reason for rejoicing in Advent.

Jesus has embodied a vision of peace: where *the last shall be first*; where leaders *wash feet*, the *hungry are fed*, sinners forgiven and where mercy, not vengeance, is **the word of the day**. That, too, seems far off from our reality. Nevertheless, we believe that war, death, injustice, loss and suffering are NOT everything and they are NOT the **final** word.

We vividly recall that major attack on our country, even now, a decade later. After 9/11 a newspaper headline stated, “We Have Seen Evil.” Yes, hell was unleashed on earth again that day, as it has been many times before. Just in the last century . . . Just for our society, some of those times were: June 28, 1914                      September 1, 1939  
December 7, 1941              August 6, 1945              June 25, 1950              March 6, 1965

September 11, 2001    March 20, 2003, etc.

These are dates that created enemies. They are some of our dates of fear. Some of our people have experienced **a century of wars**. As we celebrate Dominican preaching in the Americas we note that its peoples have experienced multi-centuries of violence and oppression.

Are we to pass on such a legacy? Will future generations have to mark their calendars with dates of destruction? The challenge of envisioning an alternative is overwhelming. That is, until we realize that all battles, or attempts at reconciliation **are learned**. They are products of the mind, expressions of the human will.

War or peace begins in the human *heart*, in the **home** and in the **community**. Do I use my words like a sword to cut others off? Have my actions broken another's heart? Do I hold onto resentment and allow it to fester in me and make me bitter?

I can make a conscious choice to let negativity go and in its absence, in the void, in the emptiness ~ find God at the **heart of life**. **I can open my heart to see a different reality**. In time, the vision can become real ~ if we but dream . . . *Imagine a world without war . . . Imagine a world where there is a just distribution of goods . . . Imagine a world where the word "enemy" is an ARCHAIC term. Imagine us living in the LIGHT*. Our minds, our wills and our hearts have greater power to create and recreate our reality than we dare see.

About two years after my father died I had a dream that he walked into the house. He was young and handsome, wearing a very nice suit and he was truly **radiant**. He sat on the couch and I sat on the floor, at his feet. We talked. I was struck by his eyes. They were beautiful and brown, but that was not the color of his eyes in this life-time (they had been green). I awoke with the words, "Pa sees with the eyes of Jesus!"

The challenge for us is not to wait until after we are dead to see with the eyes of Jesus. We can walk in peace, in God's ways, NOW. We are called to put on Jesus NOW and walk in the LIGHT.

As we turn our minds from violence to justice; as we reclaim our power *to right* fractured relationships; as we let go of our anxieties over illness, finances, or competition ~ we opt to recycle the anger of hurt into energy that burns in our hearts and helps us

renew the face of the earth. If we see with the eyes of Jesus, and love with the love of God, we will find our hearts burning within us, impassioned to see the work of God's hand in all we experience.

Advent scriptures call us to climb the Lord's mountain and to walk in the light. We pray, "**stir up our hearts**" and in so doing, we are asking for the grace and strength to *put on Christ*, to beat our swords into plowshares, to *stay awake* and be *prepared*. We are asking for a lot. We are requesting a conversion of heart and an alternate way of relating to our brothers and sisters on this earth.