

Do You Love Me? Trust Me.

Advent is the season of hope. We remember how the Israelites waited in hope for the coming of the Messiah. We prepare for the Christ Child to enter our own hearts anew, often by trying to bring hope to others through acts of kindness, service and charity at this festive time of year. We also wait in hope for the second coming of Christ when all things will be made new.

These last few weeks have not been filled with the usual joyous hopefulness that I normally experience during the season of Advent as I have had many friends, co-workers, and students share with me that one of their loved ones has been diagnosed with cancer. Some have needed very risky surgeries, others have needed to begin treatment right before Christmas. Thankfully, many of these cases have good prognoses, but there has been a lot of stress, anger, and sadness floating around this year.

At our school's Advent Mass a couple of weeks ago, Fr. Martin Vallely preached on the topic of hope. He talked about the different ways we think about and use hope. At times we think of hope as akin to wishing. Other times we use it as a motivator to work towards achieving something we really want. But Fr. Martin reminded us that the hope that is spoken of so often in the scriptures at this time of year is really about trust. I have spent a lot of time with the book of the prophet Isaiah these past few weeks, and reading those scriptures through the lens of hope as trust is what has helped me deal with all of the 'bad news' that has been shared.

The Advent and Christmas seasons often speak of banishing darkness and bringing us light and joy. But illness and loss continue even at this time of year. Our faith reminds us that even if we cannot see the light, it will come to us and we shall eventually be lifted out of grief, suffering and despair.

When we hope in the Lord, we are trusting God; we are trusting that even in times of grief, sadness and despair, we are in the presence of a God who loves us unconditionally and is walking beside us and supporting us in our times of trial. And if we have a friend or co-worker come to us with distressing news and are having trouble finding God's presence in a particular situation, we may have to consider that perhaps we are being called to be God's presence – to be the eyes, ears, hands and voice of Christ – to that person.

May Christ be born in our hearts, so that we can be his presence to the world.

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