

## November 29, 2009 – First Sunday of Advent

*Prepared by Sr. Janet Hockman, Kathmandu, Nepal*

*Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalms 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14; First Thessalonians 3:12--4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36*

A lot of life happens on rooftops in Nepal. Grains are winnowed and herbs are dried in due seasons, clothes are sunned, games played. Daily prayers are offered there with conch shells sounded, tinkling bells from Hindu neighbors and the scent of offered incense from Buddhist friends. I looked down from our rooftop each morning to see what else the day might hold. Were the micro-vans and three wheeled “tuk-tuks” still in parking lots? Were the students in the boarding-school next door doing their 6 a.m. exercises and ending with chanting “om”? Were the plastic pouches of milk delivered to the local stalls and tea shops? Was it to be an “ordinary” day or had word trickled out through the night of another strike? Is it a valley strike or a nationwide one? Which group called it?

Strike days have an eerie quietness as they begin. Webs of mobile phone connections form for “listening into the day though:” where are tires burning, bricks being thrown, vehicles torched, and rallies blocking traffic? Danger may lurk; good judgment is called for. Tensions are internalized and hyper-vigilance squeezes, uninvited, into individuals of all ages and society as a whole. Who is safe? What can be planned and happily anticipated? Such daily inconsistencies erode trust and fortify insecurity for an entire nation. Pacts of military restrictions and arms confinement have been broken. The Peace Accord is by-passed. Admonitions and warnings come from outside, from countries with political and economic interests, from UN representatives and human rights groups, international non-governmental organizations, leaders of ethnic groups and sometimes timid voices of religious leaders. How greatly is a prophet needed, voicing truth to which a general response is “Ah, YES! This is the life we want.” This is always waiting for life.

What is sustainable peace and security? When missing, life is robbed. As Advent begins, Jeremiah sets a stance for us – SEE! BEHOLD! Look and be attentive ... It takes time, it means intent. Who of us also remembers to notice what is missing, what is absent as well as what is before us? Noticing something missing is an awareness of things known, things dreamed of, or hoped for, or promised. Jeremiah names for us things so longed for: fulfilled promises, honesty, integrity, being saved, and dwelling in confidence. These things are of God. They are not new; they have been God-promised and hoped for throughout all of history. For Nepal, as a country, they were expected from de-throned royalty, awaited in a new Prime Minister, and intended to be written into a first constitution. The absences leave the state of insecurity and continued wondering about the possibility of peace.

How does a gaze shift? Where is God, seen and unseen? When do we know ourselves be-held by God and be-holding of God wherever we are? See, in these days that are coming, how we are called upon to help make God’s love present and known. Today’s passage from Luke’s gospel is brief and clear: “Watch yourselves ... Stay awake

... for the strength to survive all that is going to happen ... and to stand with confidence before the son of Man.”

SEE! Our eyes, and the eyes of much of the world, have already been focused on dishonesty, depravity, destruction, disaster. We have been awakened to know what is and what is missing. Seeing calls us to responsibility. BE-HOLD, be-holding this Advent the promises of God, the hope of God – not in clenched protectiveness but in gestures of expansive hope for the days that are coming... Jeremiah knew God so powerfully in his own life that he spoke for a future for others to know such love and mercy.

This Advent may we live into the words of First Thessalonians: “Make more and more progress in the kind of life you are meant to live.” (4:1) What do you see? Who do you see that needs a word of promise, of hope, of peace, of courage, of strength, of faith, of knowing and wanting God among us?

*Visit the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns website where over the course of the year, we will post resources and reflections showing how missionaries and the people with whom they live and work understand and build sustainable pathways to peace and security.*

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