

The Canticle

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Voice of
The Community
of St. Francis,
Province of
The Americas

ADVENT



The Advent Wreath before the altar in the chapel at St. Francis House on the eve of First Advent, waiting for the coming of the light.

Advent invites us to prepare our minds and hearts for celebration of the Christmas mystery.

The major theme of Advent (“The Coming”) is waiting in hope and expectation. We often put in the adjective “Joyful” and speak of the joyful hope of this season. But joy is not inevitable.

As Benedictine Religious Genevieve Glen and Jerome Kodell remind us, “Waiting has many moods: impatience, expectation, dread, eagerness, reluctance, confidence, and anxiety. Waiting is one of life’s inevita-

bilities, but joyful hope is not. Joy is not false gaiety waiting with gritted teeth. It is a fruit of our communion with Christ in the Spirit of God, but it must sometimes be snatched back from the grip of self-pity. Hope is not wishful thinking leapfrogging over the present into a rosy future. It is a gift given to us in baptism, but it must sometimes be retrieved from the jaws of despair.” (*Daily Reflections for Advent & Christmas: Waiting in Joyful Hope 2015-16*)

Sr. Maggie and Sr. Pamela Clare are facilitating the Advent Quiet Days at the Bishop’s Ranch again this year, Dec. 11-18. This is a “drop-in” retreat. People can come for a day or a week, participate in all of the offerings or none of them. There is a team of 7 meditation leaders who each present a meditation one day. A liturgy team provides leadership for Offices in the chapel. There is daily Eucharist, a Taize service, Sacred Circle Dancing, massage, spiritual direction, Anglican Rosary, Art as Meditation and a chance to experience the quiet and beauty of the Sonoma Valley—complete with cows as well as vineyards.

Advent is a busy and exciting time. It’s good to take a break from all the preparations!



Where we’re headed with Advent: The Christmas crèche in the chapel at St. Francis House.

ADVENT 1



Srs. Maggie and Pamela Clare packing the car with all our stuff in preparation for the Advent Retreat.

can be something that we look forward to, but also something to fear and dread.

Two major aspects of waiting are being watchful and being alert. Jesus commands us to “Keep awake!” Advent is not a passive matter but an intense urgency. As Jesus says, “the Kingdom is already among you.” As demonstrated by the babe in the manger in Bethlehem, Christ comes to us when he is least expected. So, be ready!

“Give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light” (Collect for Advent I)



The music team at the Advent Retreat: Sr. Pamela Clare and Cindy Howard.

ADVENT 2

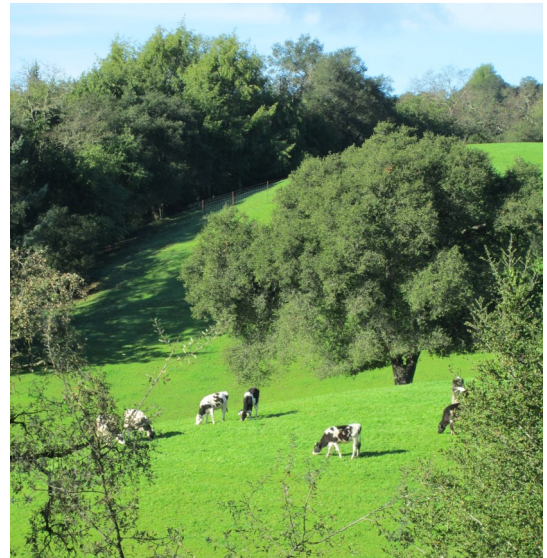
Prepare the Way

John the forerunner is featured in the lessons of Advent 2. He is the prophet, the messenger to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation.



“The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.” (Mark 1:8)

“Let every heart prepare him room,” we sing in the Christmas carol “Joy to the World.” This is the deep preparation of Advent – not the buying and wrapping of presents, the writing of cards, the decorating of the house, the cooking of a feast. How do you prepare your heart for Christ to be born anew in you as in that stable 2000 years ago in Bethlehem?



The neighbor's cows at the Bishop's Ranch contribute to the atmosphere of pastoral ease for the retreat, as well as providing curious observers of our human activities!

*“I,” said the cow, all white and red,
“I gave him my manger for his bed,
I gave him my hay to pillow his head:
I,” said the cow, all white and red.
(traditional French carol)*

ADVENT 3

The One who with Great Might is come among us

The lessons for Advent 3 tell us that the earth will be healed by the coming of the Christ: “The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom.” (Certainly Good News during this time of climate crisis).

But that is not all. The coming of Christ will bring Shalom, true peace and justice. “The Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners.”

An important part of Advent is a renewed commitment to our task of building up God’s Kingdom in our struggles for equal access to health care, in the welcome and comforting of refugees, in feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless. (Episcopal Relief and Development puts out a special Advent Calendar of Response to help our work of justice-making.
www.episcopalrelief.org/landing/2015/advent/)

“Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us! “ (Collect for Advent 3)



The final day Advent Retreat Team in 2013: Pamela Clare, Penelope Duckworth, Cindy Howard, Marcus Crim, Maggie, and Timm Dobbins with the special retreat altar.

ADVENT 4

The Coming of the Son of David

The lessons for Advent 4 tell the stories of the annunciations to Joseph and to Mary and the visitation of Mary with Elizabeth resulting in the Magnificat—My soul proclaims the greatness of God!

Advent is preparing us for the Incarnation, the coming of God in the flesh to share our life and to teach us the full measure of God’s love.

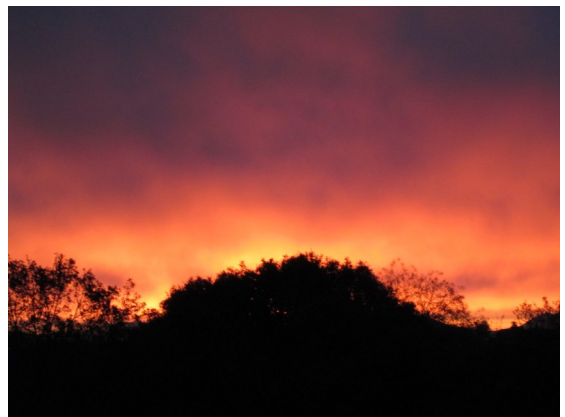
“The Lord himself will give you a sign: a young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Emmanuel—God With Us.” (Matthew 1:24)



This marvelous old tree at the Ranch recalls the shoot that “shall come out from the stump of Jesse”

“The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him and the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11)

Dawn at the Ranch recalls the Advent hymn: “The King shall come when morning dawns!” (The Hymnal # 73)



The Canticle

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The Canticle
is the newsletter of the
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Francis, a religious
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Advent

OUT and ABOUT with CSF

Sr. Pamela Clare attended the C/SSF Ministers Meetings in England in early November. The meetings took place at Hilfield Friary in rural Dorset. See photos of one of the two calves born at the start of our meetings on our Facebook page.

Advent Quiet Days at the Bishop's Ranch Dec. 11-18.
Srs. Maggie and Pamela Clare, CSF, facilitators.
www.bishopranch.org.



Sr. Jean celebrated her 85th birthday Nov. 9 and then again on Sunday at Holy Innocents Church Nov. 15. When you are 85 you get to celebrate more than one day!

Sr. Pamela Clare is singing in the San Francisco Bach Choir's Candle Light Christmas Concert the second weekend of Advent. Tickets still available for Dec. 4 and 6. www.sfbach.org.

The Canticle—digital version

The newsletter of the Community of St. Francis, *The Canticle*, is now available in a digital edition. If you would like to receive this publication online, please send us your e-mail address.

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