

ADVENT, THE BICENTENNIAL AND STEWARDSHIP

Although at first glance these might seem like three distinct and disparate topics, I think a case can be made to show their interconnection.

Advent is sometimes described as the season when we call to mind the terrible situation the world was in before the Incarnation and the birth of Jesus Christ. It was a time of death and dying in "the desert and the parched land"; a time of despair and hopelessness.

But, in today's first reading we hear: "Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense he comes to save you." (Isaiah 35: 3-4)

Pope Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical Letter on Christian Hope, tells us that: "The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life."

Certainly hope motivated the Catholics of the early 1800's to bring the Church as the Body of Christ and the visible sign of Christ's presence to our area. The formation of the Diocese of Boston, with Lefebvre de Cheverus as its first bishop, in April of 1808 was a landmark fulfillment of Christian Hope.

The Bicentennial recognizes the hope, work and sacrifices of our forebears in the faith who have developed the Archdiocese of Boston to its current level of serving the needs of approximately 2 million Catholics in 295 parishes across 144 communities.

Our faith community's ongoing growth in the spirituality of stewardship motivates us to recognize that everything we have – our time, talent and treasure – are gifts from God. As good stewards, we have come to identify our gifts, and in gratitude to determine how we can concretely share these gifts with others in further building the Kingdom of God.

May we see the results of our hope and stewardship way of life as we pass the faith on to future generations.

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