

An Intentional Exchange

Happy New Year! That's right, this coming Sunday is the start of the new year on the church calendar. I know that is it is kind of counter-cultural because the "real" New Year doesn't begin until January 1st, but it is good to remember that the church is **supposed to be** counter-cultural!

Advent, of course, gets us ready for Christmas. It is a time to prepare and anticipate the arrival of Christ's birth; the arrival of something new.

One way that clergy often try to help people get a handle on Advent is to think of it as a time to do some house cleaning. You would do that for the arrival of guests for Christmas, wouldn't you? So it's the appropriate thing to do to prepare for the arrival of the Christ Child. Of course, the "house" you are cleaning isn't your actual, physical home (because that is always spotless, right?!), but rather your spiritual life, your heart-life.

When it comes to this kind of work at Advent, however, I tend to think of it as more of a process of intentional exchange rather than pitching the parts of ourselves that we don't like into a dumpster in the driveway. By that I mean this:

This Advent, if you long for a friend to support you, instead be the friend who calls another person to find out if they are well. Exchanging a heartfelt desire or hurt for an outward action to meet your own need. See?

If you long to know peace, be the non-anxious presence during times of tension.

If you long for community and connection, be the heartbeat of whatever group you are with.

If you long to feel less afraid, be the hand that reaches out with generosity.

If you long to know your presence matters, don't wait to be welcomed, be the one who welcomes.

This kind of Advent practice allows you to not only name those things that are weighing you down (something we typically don't take time to do), but it also prompts you to be creative in how you bring greater wholeness into your life.

Advent is the start of a New Year. It is a time to prepare for something new. That something new is the arrival of Christ who invites you to intentionally exchange your hopes, hurts, and desires for fulfillment, wholeness, and peace.

See you in church,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Dominic". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned in the lower-left area of the page.