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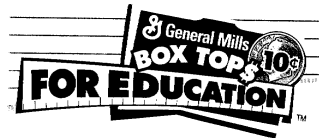
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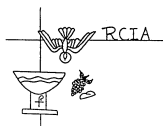
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# GOOD NEWS

## First Sunday of Advent

Is 2:1-5; Rom 13:11-14; Mt 24:37-44

*Hans Christoffersen*

The First Sunday of Advent was a significant day in my childhood home. My parents did much to make us aware that something new was happening, and there was an expectancy in the air. The lighting of the first candle in the Advent wreath indicated to me that Christmas was approaching, which certainly was exciting, but it also said something else about the faith in which my parents enveloped us kids: an unfolding, here and now, of something that gave purpose to all of our lives, not to mention the time and the place we lived in.

As a boy of eight or nine, I sensed that the particularity of my time, my history, my story - whatever it would turn out to be - was oriented toward "a day" that only God knows. There was a longing in the air that morning for the wholeness of inclusion beyond anything any one of us could expect. The insignificance of lighting a small candle on a dark Sunday morning was significant enough to stay with me now, decades later. In my present memory, I remember it as if we were setting out on a pilgrimage right there at the kitchen table, pulled by faint echoes of swords being beaten into plowshares (Is 2:2-4), of wolves lying down with lambs (Is 11:6-9), and of the poor, maimed, blind, and lame feasting at God's table (Lk 14:21). The atmosphere of that day reminded us that we, too, were "favored."

I was wide awake then! I admit that I rarely muster the same alertness today. I think it has to do with gradually losing a sense of presence. Educators tell us that children have a uniquely natural sense of the "right time." Maria Montessori focused on this in her work with children, calling these moments "sensitive periods," and Abraham Maslow called them "peak experiences," during which we see something clearly and wholly.

In spiritual parlance, we call this presence to the "right time" a *kairos moment*. *Kairos* is the Greek word Paul uses for "time" in our reading today, "you know what time it is." He isn't talking about chronology here, but of a moment charged with opportunity, fulfillment, and with the inbreaking of something new - God's time.

Advent is the right time for all of us time-weary people to return to the present, to be awake and alert to the God who desires to break into our lives in order to tell us "what time it is!" It is the hour when the knowledge of the gift of Christ engulfs us, revealing to us how favored we are to be aware that our "salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers."

## A Note of Thanks



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