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Larkspur, California  
November 30, 2014

### Advent Homily: Hope

Most of you know that I had a recurrent inguinal bilateral hernia surgery 10 days ago. It was performed at noon and I awoke six hours later in a hospital room attached to an IV. It was dark outside. This began a long overnight hospital stay. At midnight, still attached to IVs, I thought about my Advent sermons.

The words that mark each Advent bulletin came to mind, Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. I shall preach on the first three Sundays of Advent and Stephanie on the fourth. I decided in that dark and vulnerable place to preach on the three words given me on their respective Sundays. They spoke to me there and then.

As I thought of Advent, I saw Jesus' birth and life as a sign of hope. Signs of hope were everywhere: in the prayers of you all and my own prayers, in Suellen's presence with me at the hospital and in the excellent medical staff.

It dawned upon me that Jesus's birth was a sign of hope for every individual in his day and for everyone who believed in him in succeeding generations.

The Gospel of Luke 2:10-12 speaks of this sign. Luke recounts the story of the angels appearing to the shepherds, telling them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: <sup>11</sup>to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

The shepherds sped off to see Jesus and on that dark night they saw hope for their lives and a better future. Everything about Jesus and his mission was about hope.

The shepherds watched the baby tucked in and vulnerable. I identified. Reflecting on Jesus that night in the hospital, I internalized that hope. The biblical Jesus grew in strength and health and proclaimed his message of hope to all. I would grow in strength, and in my kinship with Jesus, I was hopeful of a positive outcome and would proclaim his message of hope.

Advent means, "Coming" the coming of Jesus into the world to bring hope, peace, joy, love and faith. It came in his first birth (the first coming) and it comes in his second coming, which is the message and ministry of Jesus in his life and death and in his people throughout time, inspired by resurrection faith.

No matter where we are in life, no matter our predicament and pain, no matter where we are on our journey of faith, Jesus is with us, born in us, to take us into a new and hopeful future. Our faith in Jesus lifts us from pain, gives us hope, proclaims his peace, affirms our joy and supports our love.

I visited the doctor six days after my surgery and he said I was in the best place at that time. I told him it's about the spirit and science of healing. He looked at me inquiringly and I said, "The spirit is a positive, hopeful attitude. It's the prayers of others and my own prayers. The science is the medical team, the meds and the regimen." He said, "Please share that with all my patients." If I did, and if I could, I would tell them about Jesus. Amen.