



This week we light the second candle of our Advent Wreath which is blue, a colour that represents hope. Hope also adds to the brightness of light that shines in our times of darkness. Don't you feel some days that you're not sure if you can face the challenges that lay before you, but upon rising and entering into "living" that hope helps us bring our lives into perspective? A life without hope is like a day without sunshine – the warmth of God's love is revealed in the hope Jesus gave us while walking among humanity. Paul's tells us in his letter to the Corinthians – "When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory...Put to death then the parts in you that are earthly: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and the greed that is idolatry..." In other words, serve one another and stop "worshipping" things. When anything but humanity takes over your life, you are turning from God to worship something that is empty, dark and destructive. Being made in the image and likeness of God, and called to live with each other as children of

the same Father, with Christ as our brother, there should be no room in our hearts for envy, hatred, jealousy or prejudice – for we are all related. More families are torn apart by debt caused by living for our wants rather than our needs, and more families are torn apart squabbling over their own sense of entitlement when loved one's pass and the contents of the will is not to their liking. Paul reminds us again "now you must put them all away, anger, fury, malice, slander, and obscene and profane language. Be truthful with one another, since you have taken off your old practices and have put on a new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator. Here there is no Greek, nor Jew, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free: but Christ is all and in all!" This should have us jumping up and down with joy and anticipation... We have a Father who loves us so much! He cares for our needs – but our wants are up to us. While there is nothing wrong with living comfortable and having nice things; **FOR THE CHRISTIAN THEY SHOULD NEVER TAKE THE PLACE OF FAMILY OR FRIENDS** – we are God's number one priority for He dwells within each and every one of us – the more we make the effort to see the divine in each other – the healthier our perspective on life and love. Genuine love is not mushy – it is unconditional while at the same time challenging. My entire life has been this experience of God loving and living in me – and I am blessed to be aware of this every day. This love of God which affirms my trust in Him allows me the gift of hope. Anyone who knows my story knows the many challenges, tragedies and heartbreaks I had to endure, yet I was always able to hope – and it is this hope that allowed me to carry on to "LIVE" my life rather than to "LAMENT" it. I know with all my being that this can be true for you too, all it takes is a surrender to God – to let go of those things that are not in your control and never will be – to assist with every prayer – to live each day in gratefulness and to see in every one... friends, family, co-workers, the sick and suffering, the addict and street worker, the poor, the oppressed, and those who struggle each day just to get up in the morning the presence of Christ who has promised to be with us always. If you can do this; the way in which you respond to challenges, trials and tribulations, tragedy and hurt and anger will change – for you will respond in a "Christ-like" way... thinking before you speak, and recognizing the Christ in you called to bring compassion and healing in our world. May the hope we celebrated this Sunday fill your lives and renew your spirits.