



'A Time to *be a Hope* and *give Hope*'

When I was completing my studies in class X, I happened to listen to a seven-minute talk by a young missionary priest working in one of the remote mission stations in the Northern part of India. He said all that he could do in this mission station with no power, no roads, no telephone, etc., was to give them some hope for their lives through his presence. Then for the first time in my life I thought of wanting to be a missionary like him. Today, as I write this reflection, it is a dream come true for me, as I recently got appointed in a mission station in Assam, North East India. Truly it was a long wait, more than quarter of a century! Yet, it was worth waiting for.

As we enter into the season of Advent two words that will frequent our thoughts and reflections are *hope* and *waiting*. I think the entire salvation history is built around these two terms/themes. The promise of a Saviour gave hope to the people of Israel, but they had to wait patiently for His coming (Is 7:14; Is 9:2). The coming of the Messiah/Saviour gave hope for all those who believed in him, yet there is the patient awaiting for his second coming in Glory (Jn 1:12, 14; Mt 24:36; Rom 8:18-25).

The hope we have is not just hope for a better day or hope for the lessening of pain and suffering, although that is certainly a significant part of it. It is more about hope that human existence has meaning and possibility beyond our present experiences, a hope that the limits of our lives are not nearly as narrow as we experience them to be. It is not that we have possibility in ourselves, but that *God* is a God of new things and so all things are possible (Is 42:9; Mt 19:26; Mk 14:36).

During Advent we also focus on waiting, waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus, and during the week before Christmas our waiting changes to waiting for our celebration of the birth of Jesus. Anytime we wait, we do so because we expect something to happen. When we wait for a bus or train we cannot see it coming; we only hope it will come. During Advent we are waiting for the Second Coming of Jesus because the Second Coming of Jesus will bring all God's plans for the world to completion. As we wait in hope for the Second Coming of Jesus we know he is with us in so many ways especially in the sacraments. During Advent we are conscious of the fact that God is present with us while we wait for the fulfillment of His plans.

So also during this season our attention is to make this presence of God more and more visible. In the particular context and call of Jesus Youth, our focus during this holy season is *to be a hope* and *to give hope*. It could be to anyone, to our family, spouse or children, parish community, school or college community, cell group or Household and the like. In other words we become that living presence of God in a world that longs and badly needs men and women who can be a sign of hope. It is then we can meaningfully celebrate the Christmas-promise of *Immanuel* – 'God with us'.

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JESUS YOUTH
Households

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Illustration: Jacob Jose