

CRIBB<S>NOTE – NOVEMBER 29, 2009

Walking along Huntington Drive, I notice the changing colors among trees that line the median. Rust, red, gold, and yellow blend with fading greens as leaves turn in seasonal fashion. Our community reflects the time of year when old passes and gives way to something new. Of course, in Southern California we enjoy this visual treat a few weeks and even months after our fellow citizens in the Northeast spied the transition from summer to fall and fall into winter. Here, we are a tad late with lingering warm weather and longer hours of sunlight that delay the climatic announcement of winter's arrival.

By now, our sisters and brothers back East have already raked leaves off their lawns and shoveled snow from sidewalks and driveways. The changing colors of trees have long since given way to bare branches and frozen tundra that signal the end of the year is near. The end is near also means the beginning of long, cold, dark nights that bring blasts of arctic air over regions and will settle into deep drafts of ice and snow.

We who live in Southern California have almost no knowledge of such transitions. We are exposed to the constant presence of sunshine, warmth, and dry lands.

Changes still come here although they are subtle. The bright spray of wintry hues provides a delightful and appealing sense of something new is happening. We can see the misty cloud of our breath in the chilled air as we take early morning walks or jog. It is crisp, fresh, and clean. We feel ourselves touching the elements and becoming more aware of Nature's fragile and awesome gentleness surrounding us. We have a sense of something different is taking place. It excites us.

While our eyes experience the transformation of scenery, we are quite mindful the holidays are coming. Our moods turn toward pleasant thoughts and familial ties. Sounds of the season fill our ears with melodious backdrops in shopping malls and civic centers. Christmas music flows throughout the land. Change is coming.

What are we to make of these things that shift our understanding and call to our attention the dynamic intrusions into our lives? Even amid the predictable activities that always take place during this time of year, there are unexpected events that disturb us or bring surprising joy. We are changed.

In this immediate moment, we exist in the brief and fleeting in-between time after Thanksgiving and before Christmas. On the Christian calendar, this is Advent, a period of great anticipation. It is the in-between when we leave the past behind us and look toward a new beginning.

Advent allows us to imagine possibilities for peace and justice. We still believe in miracles that surpass magic or immature wishes. We gaze skyward in search of a lone star to guide us in the right direction. It is the same star the Magi used more than two thousand years ago to lead them to a stark barn in Bethlehem where an infant awaited their arrival.

Right now we are living in a precise time of Thanksgiving and imprecise expectation. We are a people of faith and hope. The colors of change remind us of life's continual motion toward renewing energy and clarifying vision. This is when we slow down and pay closer attention to the environment as we concentrate more fully on human relationships.

We reflect and examine events that have broken bonds and violated our Covenant with God. We stop long enough to imagine another world is possible. "Peace on Earth" can come in real time...even in our time. Just as the leaves turn brilliant colors before they fall from the trees, we, too, can change to brighten our futures and improve the way of the world for our children and those yet unborn.