



## **A Place at the Table**

Second Week of Advent (Nov. 28 or after)

Like the childhood game of “musical chairs,” we are convinced there are not enough places at the table. And so we shrink the guest list just in case there is not enough and we scramble to occupy the chairs first. And yet our sacred texts invite us to imagine and make real the gathering of all people to the table - this is what is right and good.

Read this out loud, and together if you are with others...

*Peace waits for us at Advent  
Peace waits for us to rest.  
Peace waits for our acceptance  
of the truth that we are blessed.*

*In this time of preparation  
for the work of co-creation,  
for the birthing of a world  
of gentleness and play.  
Peace is born in us each day!*

Light two candles.

*Today I offer the Light of Hope and Peace to illumine the Door of Welcome.*

*May this light shine in my heart, in my life, and in this community.*

*May Peace awaken us to possibilities and lead us to greater hospitality.*

*There IS room in this Inn, a House for the Holy.*

What could I/we do to help someone feel more peace?

### **An Ancient Invitation**

*Baruch 5: 1-5*

Take off your mourning clothes and oppression, Jerusalem!

Dress yourself in the dignity of God's glory forever.

Wrap the justice that comes from God around yourself like a robe.

Place the eternal one's glory on your head like a crown.

God will show your brilliance everywhere under heaven.

God will give you this name by which to be called forever:

The Peace That Comes from Justice,

The Honor That Come from Reverence for God!

Get up, Jerusalem!

Stand on the high place and look around to the east!

See your children gathered from the west to the east

by the holy one's word as they rejoice that God has remembered them.

**A Poem**  
*“Counting Chairs”*  
by John van de Laar

We love counting chairs, Jesus  
    and measuring the size of your table;  
We check out each seat,  
    trying to work out who gets to sit where,  
    and which seats are the best;  
We check out the people around us—our competition!  
    and develop our strategy to make sure  
    we get the best seat possible;  
We put ourselves in your place,  
    deciding who, in our opinion, deserves a seat  
    and who doesn't.

But then you arrive,  
    and suddenly the table seems bigger  
    than we could ever imagine,  
    there are more chairs than we can count,  
    and you are throwing your arms around people  
    that we would never allow to sit with us.  
And the feast! What a spread!  
    There is food in abundance,  
    and wine flowing so freely!

The scarcity we believed was everywhere  
    is nowhere to be seen  
    at your table, Jesus!  
    the welcome is extravagant  
    and overwhelming!  
And strangely, now that we see this,  
    we no longer need to count the chairs,  
    and it doesn't seem to matter  
    where we sit.

Space to write your thoughts about this poem:

### **Breath Prayer**

Make of my heart a stable,  
a house for the holy,  
a warm and sturdy place  
for hope to live and grow.

In this moment we open the doors of our hearts,  
letting go of all we do not need.

Take a deep breath in...  
and then breathe out regret...  
and breathe in forgiveness...  
and out again, inviting peace.

In this moment we open the doors of our hearts to the Spirit,  
inviting us to become more than we can ask or imagine.

Take a deep breath in...  
and then breathe out fear...  
and breathe in courage...  
and out again, inviting hope.

In this moment we open the doors of our hearts,  
filling it with compassion for all those who are struggling.

We remember and pray for...  
... those who are suffering economic hardship, and insecurity in basic needs;  
may abundance be shared.

... those who are suffering mentally, finding it difficult to cope;  
may paths open and hope return.

... those who are suffering illness or injury;  
may healing abound.

.... those who are suffering loneliness and isolation;  
may companionship and solace arrive.

... those who are suffering discrimination, fear and violence;  
may they know respect, respite, and safety.

May the Advent of Compassion be born in us,  
reside within us, move outward from us,  
to meet the needs of the world,  
making a house for the Holy that is each and every child of God.

### **A Blessing**

May God's Door of Welcome  
swing open just a little bit more.  
May Jesus' humble first dwelling  
remind you of the plenty you already know.  
And may the Spirit lead you into  
more possibility and hospitality that you can imagine,  
making room in The Inn for all.  
May it be so.