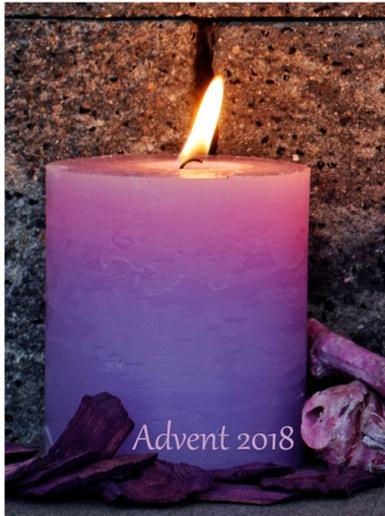


## COME AND SET US FREE

Sr. Barbara O’Dea, DW



Why I ask myself, do we hear the chaotic story of the end of the world on the first Sunday of Advent? Isn't it a time of hope, of waiting for the coming of the Lord? Strangely, written centuries later, the opening words in *A Christmas Carol* read: *"These are the best of times; these are the worst of times."* Charles Dickens opened my eyes. I caught a glimpse of how the evangelist understood the dynamic meaning of today's gospel. Luke's account begins with an apocalyptic story describing the end of the created world when people would die of fright – not really good news. Suddenly, there is a dramatic twist: *When these things happen, stand erect and raise your heads, your redemption is at hand. Be vigilant...pray for strength.* This is a call to action. Christ, the Son of Man is coming.

Advent is a call to action. It prods us to name the darkness in our 21st-century world, in our Church, and in our lives. It is a time to remember those most in need of salvation – the millions of refugees wandering the face of the earth seeking a safe haven, the caravan of immigrants approaching our borders where border patrol police, armed soldiers and huge roles of barbed wire await them. Immigrant children separated from their families, Dreamers and other young people threatened with deportation, children killed in our schools, or subjected to abuse; our soldiers engaged in wars fueled by multibillion-dollar international arms sales. We live in this darkness.

Advent hope calls us to join with others to promote greater justice in our nation, to collaborate in serving the needs of the poor around us and to pray with all the force in us: Come, Lord Jesus. Only then will peace and justice reign, opening the way for the presence of God to permeate all of creation and the Reign of God to spread in our times. This Advent may our light shine brightly for all the world to see.



December 2018