



+ The First Week of Advent +

Sunday, Advent I

The Advent mystery is the beginning
of the end
of all that is in us
that is notyet.....Christ.

- Thomas Merton

Monday, Advent I

Open us to see your glory
in the coming again of the light of each day,
the light in babies' eyes and lovers' smiles,
the light in the glaze of weariness that causes us to pause,
the light of truth wherever spoken and done. Amen.

from My Heart in my mouth by Ted Loder

Tuesday, Advent I

Remember that while you are seeking you are also being sought...
you will be found.
You will be led. You will enter in.
Look for that. Expect it.

Expect to come to revelations of the Lord.
Expect shells to break in their season.
Expect boats to ride as the tide comes in.

This is hope: to desire and to expect.

—Oswald W.S. McCall

Wednesday, Advent I

Christ in Quiet, Christ in Danger

In the place of stillness,
in the room of prayer
 In the sanctuary of adoration
 In the stilling of the storm
in the stilling of our minds,
our souls, our bodies
 in the peace he gives to us
 in the peace he asks us to share
In the storm itself
in the sinking of the disciple
 In the opposition of the enemy
 In the hells and crucifixions
in the betrayals and denials
in the ebbing out of life
 The Lord is coming.
 Our Lord is coming.

Thursday, Advent I

Since Adam, being free to choose
chose to imagine he was free
to choose his own necessity,
lost in his freedom, Man pursues
the shadow of his images:
Today the Unknown seeks the known;
What I am willed to ask, your own
will has to answer; child, it lies
within your power of choosing to
conceive the Child who chooses you. ----- *W. H. Auden*

Friday, Advent I

Come and lift up the valleys
of our discouragement and doubt and denial,
and make level the mountains of our greed and pride,
so we may see your glory revealed once more
in us and in all our brothers and sisters,
from the shepherd least to the magi lofty.

Come and fulfill us through Mary's vision
of mercy stretching to all generations,
of the proud scattered, the powerful punctured,
of the rich emptied and the poor filled,
and our lives magnifying your grace.

Come lace our songs, our shopping, our celebrations
with your mystery and strange magnificence,
and let us sense it in the small, strange stirrings
of the earth and of our hearts, now and always. Amen.

from My Heart in my Mouth by Ted Loder

Saturday, Advent I

In each heart lies a Bethlehem, an inn where we must ultimately answer
whether there is room or not.
When we are Bethlehem-bound we experience our own advent in his.
When we are Bethlehem-bound we can no longer look the other way
conveniently not seeing stars not hearing angel voices.
We can longer excuse ourselves by busily tending our sheep or our kingdoms.
This Advent let's go to Bethlehem
 and see this thing that the Lord has made known to us.
In the midst of shopping sprees, let's ponder in our hearts the Gift of Gifts.
Through the tinsel let's look for the gold of the Christmas Star.
In the excitement and confusion, in the merry chaos,
 let's listen for the brush of angels' wings.
This Advent, let's go to Bethlehem and find our kneeling places.

In Search of our Kneeling Places by Ann Weems

+ + **The Second Week of Advent** + +

Sunday, Advent II

Lord of Life and Light,
help us not to fall in love
with the darkness that separates us
from you and from each other,
but to watch large-eyed, wide-hearted,
open-handed, eager-minded for you
to dream and hunger and squint and pray for the light of you
and life for each other.
Lord, amidst our white-knuckled, furrow-faced busy-ness in this season,
we realize deep within us that your gifts
of mercy and light, peace and joy, grace upon grace
can be received only if we are unclenched open.
So this is our prayer, Lord: OPEN US!

from My Heart in my mouth by Ted Loder

Monday, Advent II

As the sun illumines not only the heaven and the whole world,
shining on both land and sea,
but also sends rays through windows and small chinks
into the furthest recesses of a house,
so the Word, poured out everywhere,
beholds the smallest actions of our life.

- Clement of Alexandria, 2nd century

Tuesday, Advent III

...Some ways indeed are very odd
By which we hail the birth of God.
We raise the price of things in shops,
We give plain boxes fancy tops
And lines which traders cannot sell
Thus parcell'd go extremely well
We dole out bribes we call a present
To those to whom we must be pleasant
For business reasons. Our defense is
These bribes are charged against expenses
And bring relief in Income Tax
Enough of these unworthy cracks!
'The time draws near the birth of Christ'.
A present that cannot be priced
Given two thousand years ago
Yet if God had not given so
He still would be a distant stranger
And not the Baby in the manger.

excerpt from Advent 1955 by John Betjeman

Wednesday, Advent II

We watch and wait for you, O Lord.
Come and make your own transforming way
in the desert of our confusion
and the wilderness of "me and mine",
so that we may walk with you
the hard way of justice, mercy and peace
among the people of the earth.

- Source unknown

Thursday, Advent II

Advent is patience.
It's how God has made us
A people of promise
In a world of impatience.

- *Stanley Hauerwas*

Friday, Advent II

Prayer for Advent: Hope in a Dark Time

In this time of darkness,
We choose to look toward the Light.
In this time when so many are suffering,
We choose faith, not despair,
We choose the work of compassionate justice.

As we move together,
Hungry for transformation, for hope,
Our steps themselves
Transform us, nourish us.
We are on constant pilgrimage,
Moving to the heart of things,
Reaching beyond what any one of us
Can accomplish ourselves.

The brightness of the Incarnation
Guides us as we continue,
With the promise of the Prince of Peace
As the bright star in these dark nights.

- *author unknown*

Saturday, Advent II

Advent

if you came in the spring,
we could expect newness,
bright yellow flowers
to soften your path,
the songs of birds
to herald your coming.
but you came in
winter's despair;
the chill of complacency
settled upon us.

if you came in summer
we could expect you
to be bronzed,
blonde,
stepping from the sea;

but you came
in a stable,
a wrinkled baby
with animals your midwives,
and angels your playmates.
help us to set down
our parcels of expectations
to reach down and scoop
you up in our arms,
your laughing breath
giving us life.
Amen.

by Thom M. Shuman

+ + + The Third Week of Advent + + +

Sunday, Advent III

"People who have really met the Holy are always humble. It's the people who don't know who usually pretend that they do. People who've had any genuine spiritual experience always know they don't know. They are utterly humbled before mystery. They are in awe before the abyss of it all, in wonder at eternity and depth, and a Love, which is incomprehensible to the mind. It is a litmus test for authentic God experience, and is -- quite sadly -- absent from much of our religious conversation today. My belief and comfort is in the depths of Mystery, which should be the very task of religion."

from NPR's "This I believe" series contributed by Richard Rohr

Monday, Advent III

Lord of Hope,
Dare I? Can I really hope?
From out of the darkness
I sense a dim light ahead,
the light of your coming into the world.
I long for the time
when you are no longer hidden from me
and my deepest desire is
to trust in your warm voice I hear behind me,
guiding me along a hidden path I do not know.

Dry my tears,
heal my wounds
and help me
to wait for the dawning of the dim light ahead,
with a brighter vision
of healing and freedom.

- Author unknown

Tuesday, Advent III

Our first glimpse of reality this day -- every day -- is your fidelity.

We are dazzled by the ways you remain constant among us.

in season, out of season

for better, for worse

in sickness and in health

you are there in watchfulness as we fall asleep

you are there in alertness when we awaken ... and we are glad.

Before the day ends, we will have occasion to flag your absence

in indifference

but not now, not at the dawn.

Before the days ends, we will think more than once that

we need a better deal from you

but not now, not at the dawn.

Before the day ends, we will look away from you and

relish our own fidelity and our virtue in mercy

but not now, not at the dawn.

Now, at the dawn, our eyes are fixed on you in gladness.

We ask only that your faithfulness

permeate every troubled place we are able to name

In your mercy

move against the hurts to make us new

that your steadfastness

hold firmly what is too fragile on its own.

And we begin the day in joy, in hope, and in deep gladness.

Wednesday, Advent III

love
in a young girl's song;
fearful, determined,
hopeful, bursting.

love
in a young mother's song;
tender, embracing, challenging, stern.

love
is god's song;
curious yet timid,
playful and wondering,
coming among us again.
we light a candle for love.

-- Katherine Hawker

Thursday, Advent III

In Mary-Darkness

I live my Advent in the womb of Mary
And on one night when a great star swings free
From its high mooring and walks down the sky
To be the dot above the Christus i,
I shall be born of her by blessed grace.
I wait in Mary-darkness, faith's walled place,
With hope's expectance of nativity.
I knew for long she carried me and fed me,
Guarded and loved me, though I could not see,
But only now, with inward jubilee,
I come upon earth's most amazing knowledge:
Someone is hidden in this dark with me.

Jessica Powers

Friday, Advent III

Advent Summons

Come forth from the holy place,
Sweet Child, Come from the quiet dark
Where virginal heartbeats
Tick your moments.

Come away from the red music
Of Mary's veins.
Come out from the Tower of David
Sweet Child,
From the House of Gold.

Leave your lily-cloister,
Leave your holy mansion,
Quit your covenant ark.
O Child, be born!

Be born, sweet Child,
In our unholy hearts.

Come to our trembling, Helpless Child.
Come to our littleness,
Little Child, Be born unto us
Who have kept the faltering vigil.
Be given, be born, Be ours again.

Came forth from your holy haven,
Come away from your perfect shrine,
Come to our wind-racked souls
From the flawless tent,
Sweet Child.

Be born, little Child,
In our unholy hearts.

- *Mary Francis*

Saturday, Advent III

Prayer for Advent: Hope in a Dark Time

In this time of darkness,
We choose to look toward the Light.
In this time when so many are suffering,
We choose faith, not despair,
We choose the work of compassionate justice.

As we move together,
Hungry for transformation, for hope,
Our steps themselves
Transform us, nourish us.
We are on constant pilgrimage,
Moving to the heart of things,
Reaching beyond what any one of us
Can accomplish ourselves.

The brightness of the Incarnation
Guides us as we continue,
With the promise of the Prince of Peace
As the bright star in these dark nights.

- *Author unknown*

+ + + + **The Fourth Week of Advent** + + + +

Sunday, Advent IV

Mosaic of the Nativity

(Serbia, Winter 1993)

On the domed ceiling God
is thinking:
I made them my joy,
and everything else I created
I made to bless them.
But see what they do!
I know their hearts
and arguments:

“We’re descended from
Cain. Evil is nothing new,
so what does it matter now
if we shell the infirmary,
and the well where the fearful
and rash alike must
come for water?”

God thinks Mary into being.
Suspended at the apogee
of the golden dome,
she curls in a brown pod,
and inside her the mind
of Christ, cloaked in blood,
lodges and begins to grow.

- Jane Kenyon

Monday, Advent IV

Out of the Ash

Solstice of the dark, the absolute
Zero of the year. Praise God
Who comes for us again, our lives
Pulled to their fisted knot,
Cinched tight with cold, drawn
To the heart's constriction; our faces
Seamed like clinkers in the grate,
Hands like tongs—Praise God
That Christ, phoenix immortal,
Springs up again from solstice ash,
Drives his equatorial ray
Into our cloud, emblazons
Our stiff brow, fries
Our chill tears. Come Christ,
Most gentle and throat-pulsing Bird!
O come, sweet Child! Be gladness
In our church. Waken with anthems
Our bare rafters! O phoenix
Forever! Virgin-wombed
and burning in the dark,
Be born! Be Born!

Tuesday, Advent IV

The Risk of Birth (Christmas, 1973)

This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war & hate
And a comet slashing the sky to warn
That time runs out & the sun burns late.

That was no time for a child to be born,
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honour & truth were trampled by scorn-
Yet here did the Saviour make his home.

When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn-
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.

- *Madeleine L'Engle*

Wednesday, Advent IV

Listen with your heart.
Your ears may deceive you,
But your heart is the kinder guide.
There is a softness in the air;
The Word travels lightly in the wind.
Still then your feet for only a moment,
And feel the message all around.

Christmas Eve

O my child, child of sweetness,
how is it that I hold thee, Almighty?
And how that I feed thee who givest bread to all?
How is it that I swaddle thee,
who with the clouds encompasseth the whole earth?

---- from the Orthodox liturgy



Christmas Day

Time is not the treasure
but the wrapping for the gift
God at Bethlehem

we too come
from later years
crowned by laureate achievements
drawn from distant cathedrals
mitered by incensed rite and ritual
from other epochs
turbaned by tempting technologies

to make homage
join the journey
of ageless adoration
to the timeless God
born today a child

Harvey S. Mozolak, "Gift among gif