



Advent Reflections 2012

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A new liturgical year begins with the first Sunday of Advent. It is the season of expectation, of alertness, of hope, of watching and waiting. It is the season when the Scriptures call us to “stay awake,” to be alert, have our eyes open and our ears tuned in to discover all the ways that Emmanuel, God-with-us, is present.

Scripture calls out to us to stay awake to the various environments and events that shape us. Be alert to those moments when we choose to live together, loving and caring for one another. Be attentive to the voices around us calling out for justice, acceptance, compassion, for peace, for hope. Be watchful and waiting, with a responsive heart, for the Beloved One’s invitations throughout each day.

For us, Advent is a call to discover the Providence moments in our ordinary daily living, whether it is in the changing scenery around us, the Advent wreath and candles, reminding us of the Light of the world, the sending and receiving of Christmas cards, or the music that begins to fill the shopping malls. The always -to-be-expectedness of God is there, acting in the ordinary moments of living. Sometimes in the rush of the season we miss it. Sometimes it is not easy to recognize God. This Advent, as we once again prepare for the coming of God’s reign, perhaps we need to clean the lens through which we look and see, not with limited vision, but with new eyes of compassion, justice and peace. How are we really living our lives? For in the end, we will all “stand before the Son of Man,” who will lovingly remember those lives and our acts of “making Providence visible in our world.”

The reflections this Advent come from quotes from Ronald Rolheiser at our Providence Event last June. I have asked Associate Directors and some lay associates to be our Advent reflectors this year. Hopefully, for those who attended the Providence Event, this will bring back wonderful memories.

Happy Advent!

Barbara McMullen, CDP
WPC Executive Director



Advent 2012 - Week 3

**"We have remembered that kiss of God on our individual and collective being. We have learned again the abundance of God, the beautiful diversity, the multiple ways of seeing the richness of Providence among us."
~Providence Event stargazers: Marie McCarthy, SP and Irene Wilson, SP**

"God is in your midst, a mighty savior who will rejoice over you with gladness and renew you in love." ~3rd Sunday of Advent, 1 Zep. 3:14-18

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In this Advent, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. This quote from Zephaniah reminds us that when Pope John XXIII called the Council Fathers together, he believed God was in our midst and God would rejoice over us and transformation would take place. As we look again at the documents that came out of this Ecumenical Council, we are reminded that, as people of our Provident God, we are called to be in dialogue with our world. As individuals, we need to experience the healing kiss of God to be renewed in the Spirit of Jesus and to go into the world. The world needs to hear that God loves people of all nations and creeds. As in the early church, we are called to discipleship. It is in the ordinary events of our day that God works through us to bless those we encounter. *Gaudium et Spes* (p46) tells us "...it is from the principles which Christ has given us that the faithful will receive guidance and all people will be enlightened in their search for answers to so many complex problems."

God desires that all people be renewed in love. All of creation has been graced with the abundance of God's rich blessings. The vocation of humanity will be realized only when all people learn to live in self-transcending love. All humanity is called to share in the outpouring of the divine love of our Provident God.

**Barbara Baker, Associate
Sisters of Providence
Kingston, Ontario, Canada**



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“Divine Providence is the conspiracy of accidents through which God speaks.” ~James Mackey

**“Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight God’s paths.”
~2nd Sunday of Advent, Lk.3:1-6**

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This summer at the Providence event, Father Ron Rolheiser, OMI, quoted James Mackey: “Divine Providence is the conspiracy of accidents through which God speaks.”

As he spoke, dozens of images came to mind. I remembered times of confusion and loss. My prayers brought unexpected outcomes – opportunities for service and ministry and new directions for my life. Now it seems easier to ponder and reflect on these “conspiracy of accidents.” God and I are still at work changing my life.

During this time of Advent preparations, our Blessed Mother will come to mind as one who pondered the greatest conspiracy of accidents: the birth of Jesus. “Blessed is she who believed that what our God said to her would be accomplished.”

During this time of waiting, we can pray silently and reflect on the happenings in our lives that were not just accidents but the secret plan of God. Listen! God is speaking to you, calling you and Providence people to be more. Quietly in the secret of your soul, the mystery of God continues to be born.

**Suzanna Harland, Associate
Sisters of Providence
Seattle, Wa.**



Advent 2012 - Week 4

**"Mystical experience is being touched by God at a level that is deeper than language, thought, conceptualization, imagination, and feeling."
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**"Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved."
~4th Sunday of Advent, Ps. 80**

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Not often do we hear, Lord, make us turn to you, let us see your face and we shall be saved. More often we hear a tempting invitation, "come to me and I will refresh you," "seek me," or "come and see."

Rolheiser sees mystical experience as being touched by God at a deeper level than language, thought, etc. My thought is that any time we are touched by God on any level, we experience mystical moments. We are called to listen, slow down, feel the touch and, like the mystics, become quiet and respond.

Preparation for Advent is replete with mystical invitations from God, from Joseph, Mary, the angels, shepherds and the child who is our Saviour.

**Mary Horgan, SP
Sisters of Providence
Holyoke, Mass.**



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“I will treat of the mighty works of the Lord and tell of your singular justice. God you have taught me from my youth and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds.” ~Wednesday, Advent Week 3, Ps. 17:16-17

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As Providence people, we know that God shows His/Her will through the circumstances of our lives. It is the everyday ordinary things in our lives that we may overlook.

Recently, I had the privilege and blessing of travelling to Ghana, West Africa to visit our Associates. Little did I know what an impact it would make in my life. Visiting a third world country opened my eyes to the realization that God's loving Providence is truly at work with and within me. Meeting and speaking with the Associates made me realize how much God is present in every little and big event. Personal stories shared with me tugged at my heart.

One Associate, the mother of four children, spoke of her husband who has been out of work for over a year. She works at the retreat center in Sunyani and her husband travels weekly to a village about two and a half hours away (in the U.S., the ride would be 45 minutes) looking for odd jobs. He returns home on the weekends to be with his family. She proceeded to tell me that when her purse is empty, God always provides for her either through a generous person who sends her money or because her husband has a small job to do in the village. The family is in constant financial struggle yet Providence has and continues to provide. This is just one of the many stories I could tell.

In this season of Advent, let us reflect on our own stories of Providence. God is truly with us!

**Donna Esposito, Associate
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Melbourne, Ky.**



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“Providence is being in touch with our deepest center and acting out of its nudges and imperatives.” ~Ron Rolheiser

“Your deed of hope will never be forgotten by those who tell of the might of God.” ~Advent Week 2, Judith 13:19

*While we wait,
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We live in a world that is bombarded by “hurry up and wait syndrome.” We want that instant gratification and we do not want to have to wait for something special. This human tendency toward having to have everything “right now” actually reminds me of Advent. We scurry around buying gifts for loved ones and friends. We hurry up to parties and celebrations. And then we sit in church listening to the message that Jesus is coming. How is Jesus coming and what does this Advent mean to us who are so engrossed in many real and necessary activities? While we wait, is it possible to spend any time going deeper into our being to investigate the mystery of Advent?

The Hebrew people waited in hope for the coming of the Messiah. Mary, the mother of our Savior, waited in hope that one day the Messiah would come to heal God’s people. They waited. And our Provident God, remembering the promise to Abraham and Sarah as well as to the prophets of old, brought forth the light of the world, Jesus Christ.

While we wait, how does Christ become real to us and through us?

As we wait in the lines to purchase our gifts, can we remind ourselves to pray for those who are going without this Advent season? Can we reflect on creative ways to be sure that we can provide for at least some of them? As we wait for the stoplight to change, can we pray for all those traveling that they may arrive safely? We can be confident that God is present – here, now, in the waiting. Being attentive to this truth and breathing into the love of it can make the difference between sharing irritation and rage or radiating peace and the energy of God’s providential, creative love.

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“This was the oath God swore to our ancestor, Abraham: to set us free from the hand of our enemies, free to worship God without fear, holy and righteous in God’s sight all the days of our life.”

~Monday, Advent Week 4, Lk 1:67-69

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The days of Advent invite us to experience *metanoia*, to change our minds and hearts, to embrace the opportunity to change and to transform our vision of our world. They invite us to embrace new ways of loving the other and of being in the universe. They invite us to be open to concepts beyond our present understanding and envision how we can engage in the Great Work.

God’s words to Abraham offer a vision of a new world order. Just as God spoke to our ancestors in faith, God speaks to us of a new world order. Like God’s word to Abraham, God’s word to us is an invitation to trust – to trust in God’s Providence and to trust that we can each make a difference so that our generosity, compassion and justice for all creation will herald this new world order. As we make our annual journey through the Incarnational Cycle, let us ponder God’s invitation and promise. Let us be Providence in our world, in the universe.

**Gayle Desarmia, SP
Sisters of Providence
Kingston, Ontario, Canada**



Advent 2012 - Week 1

“The mystic is the “inner weather meteorologist of the spirit,” in touch with the inner weather movements of God, Spirit, Providence. Providence is reading mystical experience.” ~Ron Rolheiser

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars..and when these signs begin to happen, stand erect, raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.” ~1st Sunday of Advent, Lk 21:25-28

*We need to be
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Advent: a time to wait and to watch. Advent is about preparing for new life. Watching and waiting allows the “inner meteorologist” of the spirit of Christ to touch our hearts and souls. It frees the mystic within to search for the light inside the darkness of our ordinary life. We need to be open as we sit with this mystery and ponder. We watch and listen to the movement of God inside our inner selves and inside the outer events of history.

We prepare the way for the birth of Christ, the one who gives us hope and new life. This is our story, our personal story, the ordinary person, the one who is watching the sun that gives hope in a world desperate for love; this is about the moon guiding each of us through darkness within this era of constant change, only to realize that we are not alone

During this Advent, seek the Christ within; know that this story is about transformation. Discover the joy as one who has taken the time to sit with this story and watch the stars that lead to active faith and trust in Providence that will never fail us. All we have to do is be still and listen.

**Diane Mason, SP
Sisters of Providence
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“God speaks through the dimensions and effects of tragedy. Persons understand that there is meaning. Mysticism is an attempt to be in touch more deeply with the depth of that experience.”

~Ron Rolheiser

“Great crowds came to Jesus, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute and many others and he cured them.”

~Wednesday, Advent Week 1, Mt. 15:29-37

*Advent is a
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Year after year, Advent jump starts our belief in God's promise and our hope in its fulfillment. Beware! The possibility is real that we may be in danger of becoming complacent with the message—the “usual”: Christ's healing, his compassion towards the hungry, the poor; his words of consolation and forgiveness. In Scripture, we find that those who endured the greatest tragedies of this earthly life found solace, health, relief, and peace through the presence of Christ coupled with faith and ever-present hope. This Advent, may we seek new enthusiasm and depth in these readings and our own experiences of Christ's actions in and through our lives. “As usual” can mean death to the Gospels for us.

To rekindle the wonder of God's word and the hope that comes with belief that we can achieve personal union with God through faith, intuition, and insight is a mystical experience. Advent is a time for a new emphasis on God's word and promise, to define, or redefine, the intensity and meaning of hope in that promise and its fulfillment for us personally. There is no greater model than Jesus' mother, Mary:

“... Mary shows us hope: not only did she believe the promise, she became pregnant with it, gestated it, gave it her own flesh, went through the pains of childbirth to give it reality, and then nursed a fragile new life into a powerful adulthood that saved the world.

...Advent is the season for us to imitate Mary's hope by, like her, gestating faith, God's promise, into real flesh.”

(Advent: Gestating Hope into Reality ~ Ron Rolheiser)

**Sylvia Resha, Associate
Sisters of Divine Providence
Allison Park, PA**



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