

# Advent 2014

Advent, the season of waiting, hope, expectation, and alertness is upon us. We are asked to be watchful, to stay awake, to notice and to have our eyes and ears attuned to discover all the ways that Emmanuel, God-with-us, is present.

For us at the Women of Providence in Collaboration, Advent is a call to discover the Providence moments in our ordinary daily living, whether it is in the changing scenery around us, an 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 abundance of our Provident God is evident all around us. Sometimes in the hustle and bustle of this season we might miss those "providential moments" in time.

This Advent, in preparation for our Providence Event and celebration of our 35th anniversary as WPC, we turn to quotes from our 2005 Providence Event where we looked at the cosmos and our role in it as agents of an on-going Providence. These cosmic quotes are being seen with an Advent lens as well as by our own Providence Sisters and Associate writers. It is my hope that you will also be reflecting on the quotes during this Advent season and looking with your own vision of compassion, justice and peace on the ordinary events of daily living and seeing Providence surrounding you in new ways.

With our speaker, Ilia Delio, OSF, we will be looking at the universe with our "providence lens" at this next Providence Event in June at St. Mary of the Woods, IN. Another writer with whom you may be familiar is Diarmuid O'Murchu. One of my friends sent me his quote, which also is very much in sync with our theme for this Providence Event. I leave you with this quote:

*"God is not distant from the universe but a sustaining presence in all of creation. God's presence is not inseparable from creatures but present and involved with the universe while still being independent of it....The universe is pregnant with the presence of God whose creative action is at the heart of the evolutionary process. God acts as a compassionate partner, as lure toward the future and as co-creator. Indeed, God labors on humans' behalf."*

**Barbara McMullen, CDP**  
**WPC Executive Director**



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***We do not define power as force, control, and domination but as invitation, vulnerability to influence, empowerment of others, and ultimately love.***

***Mary Christine Morkovsky, CDP***

*A*dvent questions gestate in our spirits before a backdrop of world-wide despair.

We are prone to lose heart in the wake of everyday reports of escalated violence, terror, war, poverty, disease and injustice of every form.

Is there no end, God? Is there no one who will put things right? Has the force of insidious evil overpowered humankind with its unyielding grip?

It is so easy to utter a feeble, "Perhaps..." Yet, even in the fray of struggle, we are graced to cry out, "Perhaps not!"

These Advent questions keep stirring an alternate answer within your remnant of faithful believers...your *Anawim* for this age.

Dare we let go of a psyche fueled by increasing fear and anxiety?

Dare we reach out to you and one another with only the power of love?

Dare we live our lives in union with you as our Alpha and Omega, trusting your word and promise through the ages?

Dare we strive to make Gospel choices every day of our lives, following Jesus with a joy and freedom only forgiven ones know?

Dare we allow God's Provident Spirit to transform every part of us, ever-nudging humanity along the Way of Love?

The heart of your remnant, your *Anawim*, cries out in one voice, "Amen!"

***Patty Baker, CDP***



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***....by our deepest freedom we participate in God's own creativity.***

***Mary Christine Morkovsky, CDP***

*G*od's greatest gift to us is our human freedom. We first learned to exercise it when, as children, we were taught right from wrong. We learned that justice is intrinsically connected with respecting the dignity and the human rights of others. All human beings share this precious gift, because we are created in the image of God.

Advent is a good time to reflect on how Jesus, while retaining his divinity, freely chose to take on a human form to reveal God's love and compassion.

We contemplate the power of God's creativity in us and how we empower others to live up to their potential. Like Jesus we spend ourselves in order to improve the quality of life for others.

As women of Providence, we have freely chosen to be members of religious communities which call us forth to be creative with our diverse gifts and talents. We follow Jesus' way of service to others by engaging in good works which build up individuals, families, and peoples of diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, and religions.

"...by our deepest freedom we participate in God's own creativity." This means that we participate in God's own creative work in our world today by our educating others, being a voice for the voiceless, welcoming the immigrants, healing the wounds of sickness and abuse, standing in solidarity with the poor, defending our human rights and the rights of our less fortunate brothers and sisters, comforting those in prison, and giving witness to God's infinite love and compassion.

Come, Lord Jesus, and fill us with your spirit of creativity!

*Angela Erevia, MCDP*



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***Our increased cosmic awareness impels us to become liberators.***

***Mary Christine Morkovsky, CDP***

*I* love the story of Julian of Norwich, telling of the “showing” she experienced when God showed her “a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut.” God explained that it was “all that is made.” And it was further explained to Julian that “It lasts and shall last for God loves it.”

Think of what Julian would have understood of that “little thing”: earth, with sun and moon and stars moving around earth. But then think of what we know, of what we are constantly learning of “all that is made,” of our universe, of the possibility of other universes, of the cosmos.

And yet it is God who created all this, who became human, became a helpless babe, in a poor family, in an occupied little country, where the politics became so awful, so dangerous, that the family had to flee for their lives, refugees in a foreign country, leaving all behind.

And the story continues, as we see on the news each day, refugees fleeing for their lives to comparative safety in Turkey, children looking for safety at our own borders, the poor right in our own cities and neighborhoods.

So what does all this call us to this Advent?  
To continue to learn what is to be known about the cosmos. To continue to care for this speck of the cosmos which we call Earth. To continue to care for the helpless babes, the poor families, the refugees in a foreign country, especially those at our own borders. To continue to care for one another.

*Margaret Quinlan, SP*



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***If we look at the story of Earth's evolution, it's hard to deny the possibility of anything; again and again, what should be impossible becomes real.***

*Lucy Zientek, CDP*

*A*s women of Providence we have experienced and have come to know that our God is a God of abundant possibilities. We hear Jesus say that "...for God, all things are possible." (Mt 19:26). John Martin Moye, founder of the Texas and Kentucky Sisters of Divine Providence, reminds us of this truth when he says that "God who is all powerful has a thousand means, a thousand ways to accomplish" what is God's desire.

As we observe the marvels of our universe and of the earth itself, we come to better understand this truth. We are invited again and again to ponder on the vastness of God's creation and to stand in wonder and awe.

During this time of Advent we are particularly being invited to reflect on the miracle of all miracles – the wonder of God's Son coming to dwell among us. What could have been more wonderful or more impossible than our God coming to live as one of us, willing to give his life that we might become more fully alive?

We can say with Mary, "How is this possible?" How is it possible that our God, who is creator of all, would choose to come to us as a small child, so very dependent on his human family to love and care for him? What seems impossible becomes real for a God who loves so much that God is willing to spend a lifetime teaching and showing us what that love means.

Surely, each one of us has experienced the wonderful works of God – the miracles of Providence – in our own lives. What impossible events or unexpected graces have I received? What are some of those miracles of Providence that have touched my life?

We may want to make a list of these graced moments. . . and then send thank-you notes to those who played a part in mediating God's grace to us.

*Helen Marie Miksch, CDP*



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***The Universe...is a breathtaking organization of reality far beyond our ken yet, before which we are humbled and bow in adoration to the ONE, the Cosmic Intelligence, Providence, whom the Universe mirrors.***

***Barbara Doherty, SP***

*M*alala Yousafzai is the young Pakistani girl shot in the head by the Taliban on October 12, 2012. Two years later at age 17, Malala is the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate. She is known mainly for human rights advocacy, for education and for women.

Recently, Malala spoke to a Youth Forum at the United Nations, "Pick up your books," she urges. "Pick up your pens. They are your most powerful weapons."

And again Malala tells us, "One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world."

The ONE to whom we bow and adore has again entered our Universe in the person of this young girl to awaken our souls, calling us to use our minds and not arms to make peace and to change the world.

As we look into the face of this young woman, she resembles and reminds us of the one we call Blessed. Malala reflects the same humbleness, the same youthful innocence, courage, purity, and wisdom of Mary, and the humbleness that Providence desires to mirror.

In this season of Advent may we pray for Peace for our world and for the safety of all who seek to serve God in the pursuit of Peace and Justice.

*Suzanna Harland, SP Associate*



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***We have been drawn into this Mystery (of God) because we live in a time when the revelation of Providence is necessary to humankind.***

***Barbara Doherty, SP***

*I* think the Mystery Sister Barbara asks us to ponder here is what we mean when we speak of or pray to a Provident God and how we might share this with the world.

As an Associate of the Community of Divine Providence, I have come to know and believe that God's Providence is everywhere in all things because God created all things and loves every created thing. Further, I am called to have "a spirit of unbounded trust and openness to the Providence of God" (excerpt from the CDP Associates Mission Statement).

This idea of unbounded trust is what called me to become an Associate and challenges me spiritually every day of my life. How to let God be God and trust that there is purpose and direction in the world even though I may not see it.

The world we live in today seems full of darkness. The hatred and devastation in the Middle East, the Ebola outbreak in Africa, the natural disasters and the continued economic inequality in the United States. People tend to feel helpless, angry or just plain disengaged from the suffering of others. There are many who are asking where God is in all this.

How can we who trust and hope in the God of Providence find ways to share this hope with the world? As Providence people, we have faith that God brings order out of chaos and shines light in the darkness eventually and we know that God does this through humankind. How can we be open to our role as an individual and as part of a community bringing this about?

Let's reflect and pray on these questions during this season of Advent in this year of 2014. The church celebrates Advent as a season of waiting for the coming of God to be one with humankind. My faith tells me that this is the most Providential event in the history of the world.

As we spend this Advent waiting patiently, with openness to the mystery of our active relationship with the God of Providence, may we come to know better our role in showing the face of Providence to the world.

Advent is about waiting and listening with hope.

*Julia Lynn, CDP Associate*



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***Providence is that name of God, which brings the motions of human existence into meaning.***      *Barbara Doherty, SP*

Growing up in a deeply rooted Catholic family, the name of God that I was most familiar with was "Father." As a child, I could believe that God was loving because my own father modeled this for me and the most common prayer I knew was the "Our Father." It was only later in my teens that I became aware that other Christian traditions emphasized different names for God. One of my Protestant friends always referred to God as "the Lord." It wasn't until I started working for Providence Health System that I began to understand the rich meaning of "Providence" as a name for God.

The early 15th century Latin etymology of the word "providence" is from *pro* (ahead) + *videre* (to see). This illuminates the deep belief in a God that provides (sees ahead). The way that God provides is through human existence.

In First Corinthians 2:9, the scripture tells us: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him." When I think of Advent as a season of anticipation, the meaning of Providence is a belief that God anticipates even more than we can see, hear, or have knowledge of. It is only through looking backwards in our life we can see the true meaning of Providence.

## *Reflection questions:*

What are the early names of God that you learned in your family?

When did you start learning "Providence" as a name for God?

Can you look back and tell a story of how God was providing for you in ways that you could not see at the time?

*Rene Campagna, SP*



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***The discovery that reality is not absolute but participative and contextual challenges all of us to consider to what extent our vision shapes our world.***  
***Lucy Zientek, CDP***

Advent – the expectant anticipation of the fulfillment of God’s promise of Salvation and the celebration of the birth of Jesus. I ponder the idea that distinguishes the fact that we celebrate the Incarnation....the on-going process of salvation, and the Nativity...the once and for all historical event in Bethlehem, and that we are not passive by-standers of either.

We participate through what Eugene Cullen Kennedy calls the “sacramental element of ordinary life and ordinary time, the critical baseline for the reception of belief: human experience”. Contextualized in the circumstances by which one is surrounded, reflected back to us in “real rather than abstract human experience”, we live, as Providence people, in the present moment, in the reality of our own portion of “ordinary time”.

The awesomeness of the mystery calls for us to be “women wrapped in silence”, to take time to find a quiet place within, that place untouched by all the activity of our lives, that is capable of wonder, a place that nurtures humor and laughter, compassion and understanding, the capacity to forgive and be forgiven, to love and be loved.

With so much darkness in our world – violence, discrimination, injustice and suffering – we hold on to the promise that God, Emmanuel, is with us. Challenged out of our comfort zone we reach out to others encouraging them to live in the mystery, to trust in the fidelity of the Promise, that in God there is the hope that a new reality may yet be born – in the Nativity and ever unfolding promise of the Incarnation – eternal Salvation.

*Joan Mullen, SP*



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