

Advent 2015

Advent, the beginning of a new liturgical season, is always a time to create some sacred space in the busiest days to simply rejoice in the gift already given to us in our Emmanuel, God with us. It is a season of joyful and hopeful expectation; a season to take some time from the often frenzied preparations we put upon ourselves in getting ready for Christmas.

Because of the birth of Jesus we know that Divine Energy is at work within us and all around us, permeating this cosmic world. As we heard from Meister Eckhart, “we are all mothers of God, for God is waiting to be born in us.” At our Providence Event this year Sr. Ilia Delio, OSF, helped us to understand that we are surrounded by God’s providence at every moment and all we have to do is pause long enough to recognize it.

This year our Advent reflections will be taken from our new WPC publication: *Providence Alive in Us: Ever Unfolding Mystery*. Each Sunday and Wednesday we will hear from some of our WPC reflectors on the writings of the first five authors in the book. I’ve asked these reflectors to take the quote given them and reflect with an Advent lens and from readings of the day as well. It will be a challenging and exciting task!

During this Advent may we be nourished by the Scriptures of the season and our very own women theologians’ words as they are pondered in the hearts of our reflection writers! May this Advent be a time of ever unfolding Mystery for all of us!

Sister Barbara



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Providence is the mystery of God actively engaged with us, calling us to enter into the creative activity of co-creating the future. Marie McCarthy, SP

A new Liturgical year has dawned...once again we enter the time of Advent's ***waiting and anticipation***. We are people waiting for Christ to come ***again*** in glory as we recall the past and God's covenant with the people of Israel-and the fulfillment of that promise when the Son of God took flesh for our redemption--that feast of His birth which we prepare to celebrate in the present.

It is not only during Advent that we spend such a huge amount of time and energy in waiting. We wait for what comes next in so many aspects of our world, our faith, our families, our relationships. Let us pray that this Advent may be a time of preparing, not just to celebrate the first coming of Christ, but that it will also be a preparation for the second coming of Jesus as we hear the warning in our Gospel to be on guard and not let ourselves be weighed down with inappropriate behaviors and the worries of this life. To wait for Christ in His fullness is to act in His stead to those who need us to be Christ to them most.

Marie McCarthy has stated, ***"Providence is the mystery of God actively engaged with us, calling us to enter into the creative activity of co-creating the future."***

Let us then be women and men of Providence this Advent and beyond. Let us pray that each of us may not be weighed down by the worries of life, but rather cast off darkness and live in the light that is redemptive; the Light that puts an end to darkness. Grace us with strength through the mystery of God dwelling in us, that we might ***be*** Christ visible through living His Word.

Sylvia Resha, CDPA
Nashville, TN



Advent 2015

The Scriptures and contemporary theology make clear that this total response of living trust does not mean just sitting back waiting for God's work to burst into flame on its own.

Mary Kaye Nealen, SP

Today, the scriptures speak of a banquet, of sharing of food, and of healing, and I am reminded of a day in Peru when our Sisters and Associates celebrated the feast of St. Vincent de Paul by doing what Vincent would do, serving the poor.

Here were people who, with a living trust in Providence, chose a desperately poor community perched on the side of a dusty hill with no water or other facilities, as a place to do God's work.

There, they set up a "Health Day" inviting friends and family who were health professionals to give their services. There were free medications and clean water and, of course, two big cauldrons on a fire to provide what was to these people, rich food. In the days before, the children kept asking what the food would be and in their hope for good food, I could hear the longing of so many people for food, for clean water and housing, even in Canada.

And, I have to ask myself, what will I do this Advent to answer that longing? Can I give of my time, even for one day, to do God's work for justice

Una Byrne, SP
Kingston, ON



Advent 2015

***Many humans have lost touch with the beautiful way that mystics, poets, and children see the interconnect-
edness of all things and relate to creation with wonder,
reverence, and care.***

Ruth McGoldrick, SP

*F*all has arrived...the harvest is in...the foliage turns colors...the air nips our faces...the dried leaves are raked...the daylight grows shorter...the animals fatten and burrow...humanity seeks the warmth of home...the winter season is coming.

The scene is set for Advent, a time for quiet, for reflection, for listening. It is the season of preparation, of longing, of hope, of expectation.

In gentle and simple ways each day, we can allow the interconnectedness of all things to be revealed. We see our breath in the cold air...hear the whistling wind blow through the leafless trees...smell the aroma of newly baked bread...taste the goodness of a shared meal...touch another with a smile. We feel the presence of God in these gifts and blessings.

With the awareness of the mystic, the poet, and the child, we come to relate to creation with wonder, reverence, and care.

*Frances Popko, ASP,
Holyoke, MA*



Advent 2015

We are called to be caretakers of human virtue not underground arsenals, to sow and harvest the seeds of cooperation, mutuality, and the flourishing of life, not the seeds of dissension and destruction.

Marie McCarthy, SP

Isaiah, prophet of hope, understands the human condition, the weariness and despair that result from the fatigue of human work, of struggling for sustenance, and most of all of desiring and dreaming of peace. This mirage of peace seems to blow away like the sand in the desert, blown away by the hot breeze. The people are left with the heat of oppression and unending agony.

Yes, many people among us can resonate with the feelings described by Isaiah, questioning whether the One we believed in, the One our parents and grandparents taught us to trust even exists. If God does exist, does he even care about our misery? Does God really love us as a mother hen loves her chicks? How can we sow seeds of mutuality and cooperation when our hands are empty? What can we offer to a suffering world when we ourselves are suffering?

In spite of this reality, Isaiah's promise rings out and bursts through this wall of despair and lifts God's people one more time, and thousands of times throughout the ages, even up to today. Our God still has the power to save and desires to renew our strength, to inspire us into greatness in a way that allows us to see our purpose more clearly, to run instead of stagger toward a new vision of a better world where we experience healthier and holier relationships with one another, with those in our ministries and in the communities throughout the world that we hold in our hearts. Hope frees us to move beyond the pettiness within our convent walls, to breathe the air of self-forgetfulness and genuine joy.

Christ invites us in the Gospel of Matthew to go to Him. He is the source of our strength. He calls us to rest, rest, rest in Him. He is eager to carry our burdens of limitations, frustrations, and helplessness when our plans for doing good are thwarted by the obstacles we encounter along the way. These obstacles sap our physical, spiritual and emotional strength. Advent is a time of expectant hope. Do we have the humility to gratefully give Christ our burdens so we can be truly free to live in hope?

Guadalupe Ramirez, MCDP
San Antonio, TX



Advent 2015

You are not just the recipients of the Creator's beneficence, but participants in the ongoing renewal of creation.

Michele Bisbey, CDP

*Y*es, we have received the beneficence of the Creator's generosity, in all of creation. As I traveled here in Indiana this fall, so many times we saw the harvest being gathered, farmers riding their equipment, gathering the corn and beans in fields to the horizon, and in other places workers picking the squashes and pumpkins. It was a generous harvest this year.

And in other ways, we gather the beauty of the Creator's beneficence, the awesome beauty of sunsets and storms, of wildflowers and hummingbirds, of the sun's energy and warmth. All day long, every day, the show continues, if we just have eyes to see. (Even as I sat here at the computer, thinking this through, the sunrise was awesome, though ethereal, changing from moment to moment.)

But this generous beneficence also reminds us of our own part in it all. We are not just recipients, but also participants, not just outsiders, but a part of the whole. When the people asked Jesus, "What must we do?" he answered, "Anyone who has two tunics, must share with the person who has none, and those who have something to eat must do the same." We must care for one another. Not just with the family, not just with the neighbor who lives in the house next door, but with the neighbor who lives on the other side of the world, in Syria or Afghanistan, refugees from the Middle East to Europe, or people in our own country dealing with injustice and poverty. What can we share with them? What can they share with us?

This Advent of this Year of Mercy, let us remember that Jesus and his parents were homeless and refugees in a foreign country, fleeing from danger. Their story is being repeated constantly. What is our part in it?

Margaret Quinlan, SP
St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN



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When we step into the waters of our lives and let go into the flow of Providence, no matter how fearfully or timidly, then we will be carried by the divine current.

Ruth McGoldrick, SP

Readings of the day: Isaiah 45: 6-8, 18,21-25; Luke 7: 1

When I was a little girl, I remember hanging on to my dad's wrist and sailing over the waves. One time, things went awry. A huge wave came along and tore me from my dad's grasp. I remember flowing out to sea. My eyes were open. There was no struggle. I just flowed. I thought that I was on my way to see our God. Finally, my dad grabbed at a hue of blue just a little off from the rest of the ocean's color. He not so gently hoisted me from the depth of the sea and onto the sand.

Advent is a time to be carried by the divine current of Providence. It is only when we struggle against the current that we are filled with fear and we will drown. Come, Lord Jesus, come into the consciousness of my mind that I can share with others the confidence I have in your love for me as a child of Providence. Grant me the confidence to honor your care with a strength that overcomes all my fears, all my hesitations and doubts. Let me exhibit compassion for those finding their way and mercy for those who have crowded my effort to trust you.

Marilyn McMillin, CDP
Allison Park, PA



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The mystery of our lives and our world eventually brightens with the "one bright Light" proceeding before us and leading us ever onward in our journey of life."

Myra Rodgers, CDP

As we rush around paying attention to the minutiae of our busy lives we can lose our focus on what is important. We lose the 'light' so that our path is a dark one. That is particularly easy in the dark, cold days of Advent when we can focus on all the "to dos" rather than on our Goal. Our lives become a struggle -- for ourselves and those around us -- rather than mysterious sources of joy.

But if we watch for the light leading us forward, we are also drawn to focus on the Light within. If like Mary we focus on radiating joy and compassion, if we reach out in loving service to the little ones around us, if we share our lives as we touch the other, we receive the confirmation that each of us carries within us the "Light".

As Elizabeth's exclamation "Blessed are you among women!" rings out, we too recognize that in loving service we are ourselves blessed. We recognize the Author of all Love who lights our path. We share the light of love with each other and know in our hearts that our journey will ultimately lead us towards Love.

Christine DiZazzo, SPA
Kingston, ON



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Like the biblical prophets of the Old Testament and like the historical Jesus, we are called to be intimately immersed in the word of God while at the same time attuned to the groans and laments of God's people.

Michele Bisbey, CDP

We have much in common with the prophets of old, including John the Baptist. Like them, we had a mother whose “time came for her to be delivered,” and surely people asked when they looked at our innocent little faces, “What then will this child be?”

As we grew, God called us into relationship, and as Sisters and Associates of Divine Providence, we not only embrace God's Word but also accept the obligation to listen to the cry of the poor, to be “God with skin on” to the most vulnerable. This includes, of course, the countless refugees trying to make some semblance of home in a strange land; the families caught in the violence perpetrated by ISIS; the victims of human trafficking. But “most vulnerable” also describes the family who lost someone in a car accident; the seventh grader who didn't make the cut for junior high basketball; the shut-in whose family doesn't bother to visit; the person who just went through a miscarriage or whose teenager ran away.

As we prepare for Christmas, we need only to watch and listen to those around us to discover that Jesus is here in our midst. Like the words in the song “Consciousness Waking” tell us: now is the time, we are the space, for the Holy to rise in our midst.

As women and men of Providence, let us offer love and encouragement to those in vulnerable moments so that they may get past their rocky spots. In doing this we embrace Jesus and glorify God.

Mary Helen Bertolini, ACDP
Melbourne, KY



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***We are born out of darkness with a presence
stirring within us that brings our night into day.***

Myra Rodgers, CDP

Throughout my life, I've made a regular practice of observing the morning light. As an avid student of beauty, I love to watch the sunrise as the brilliant oranges, soft lavenders, and vibrant pinks dance across the morning sky, lighting up the horizon. Sometimes I notice that the sunrise has an absence of color. It contains simply the presence of gray light that cuts an opening through the dark sky and brightens the surrounding landscape, indicating that we are being blessed with a new day.

Light and darkness remain in stark contrast, but paradoxically are necessary to each other. Just as the light breaks through the darkness each morning, we are reminded of the enduring love of the God whose name is Providence.

Providence is birthed in our world each day. This unmistakable presence signifies life and hope, and reminds us that "all will be well" no matter what we face. Providence transforms and restores a world that is desperately searching for meaning and value. We who carry the brilliance of this name, Providence, have a special responsibility to make manifest the hope that brings our night into day. We are called to make believable the God of Providence as we wait hopefully for the dawn. During times of challenge and when faced with difficulty, we encounter Providence in its purest form when we have the courage to reflect the light of God within each of us as an example of the light to a world seeking its warmth.

Margaret (Maggie) Pastro, SP
Seattle, WA



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