



# Advent 2016



Women of

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

Each year we embark on the journey of Advent, the pilgrimage, if you will, toward the feast of Christmas and remembering our salvation history, beginning with the mystery of the Incarnation—God with us, among us, one of us! Hopefully there is great anticipation and a desire for preparedness.

Advent can be that season when we set aside time to ground ourselves, to remember God's presence in our midst as the source of peace we often speak of at Christmas and for which we earnestly yearn. We know on a global scale the world is in dire need of peace—universal peace and reconciliation among nations and religious sects, among ethnic groups and political parties, among internal and external antagonism and wars. Locally, what can we do to promote peace in our little corner of the world? How can we build the “peaceable kingdom” and promote kindness and understanding? What are we willing to let go of or leave behind as we embark on this pilgrimage? What will we do to create places of peace wherever we are? The choice is ours whether or not we wish to join the pilgrimage.

This year our Advent reflections again will be taken from our newest 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 each of the authors in the book. I've asked these reflectors to take the quote given them and reflect on it with an Advent lens.

I invite each of you, as Providence persons, to join the pilgrimage this year. Reflect on the readings of Advent daily. Reflect on the quotes chosen for the two days each week and on what our Providence writers have offered us. As we are attentive to the calls of Providence this Advent we will be agents of hope and peace, proclaiming the glad tidings of Christmas, God is here!

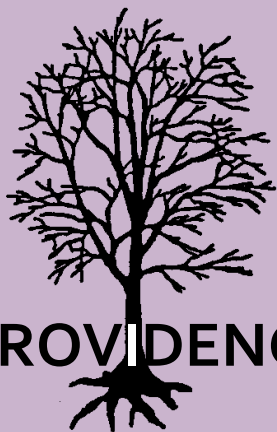
*Sister Barbara*



# Advent 2016



*First Sunday of Advent,  
November 27*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“We have come to understand Providence as the creative, unfolding Energy of Love calling us into being, sustaining, nourishing, challenging, and luring all creation toward its final fulfillment.” — Marie McCarthy, SP***

Several years ago I read “Meditation with Meister Eckhart” but one passage comes back to me year after year during Advent as I reflect on the incarnation of Jesus. He said “...humanity, and not Bethlehem is the true birthplace of God...for we are all meant to be mothers of God...What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I also do not give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time, when the Son of God is begotten in us.”

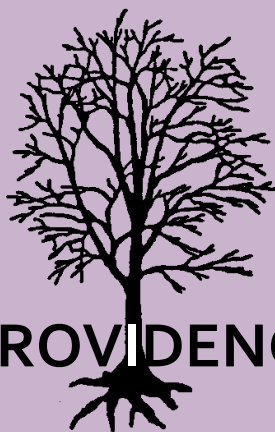
God’s Word became incarnate to show us how to live, to show us how to be more God-like, to be God’s face and to reflect God’s love to others. God calls us to love by reaching out to the poor, the vulnerable, and the voiceless, and to be Love’s living temple here on earth. God calls us beloved and calls us to become co-creators with Love here on earth.

During this Advent season, you might ask yourself how God is challenging you to give birth to the Son of God in your time and in your culture, in your Congregation, in your ministry, in your family, in your parish, and in your relationships so as to build the kingdom of Love. You might also ask yourself how you have been the face of God in meeting the needs of the poor and vulnerable and how have you been speaking out for justice when injustice is apparent.

*Sue Orlowski, SP  
Spokane, WA*



# Advent 2016



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“I am called to make Providence alive wherever I am called to be either locally or globally.” — Hong Nga Nguyen, SP***

Did you ever disturb a bee’s home? All of the bee friends maraud around you, hoping that you will pay the price for the disturbance. If we react by flinging our hands through the air, or by yelling ridiculous retorts, we become part of the problem. “Be still,” a voice within whispers, “and go your way.”

How many times have we cried to a myriad of advisors who are stating their most salient points at one time, “Quiet down so I can think.” As the Presence of Jesus enters the consciousness of our restless minds, we hear Him say, “Be quiet now, so that I may speak and you may listen.”

Advent quiet. Advent silence. These are the ways that we can hear our best friend. It is Jesus who calls us. It is not that easy to identify our Friend. The Voice comes in repeated waves. It is unyielding in its effort to break through. The Voice unites our heart and soul into an affirmative response. We are called to continually live Providence by bringing faith and confidence in God’s loving care for all.

Mary and Joseph found Providence cradled in their arms, while they were surrounded by a cacophony of sounds, miraculous sights, and ordinary smells. They took the memories and brought them to their everyday lives as they raised the little one who was on loan to them from God.

Wherever we are, may we bring confidence in our loving Father as we sit in a wheel chair, drive in rush hour, minister to immigrants and the homeless, bury the dead, or rock a baby. Doing all with love, may we know that Providence calls in the calm of our heart.

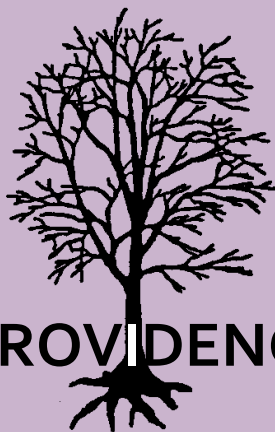
*Marilyn McMillin, CDP  
Allison Park, PA*



# Advent 2016



*Second Sunday of Advent,  
December 4*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***"I believe that Providence manifests itself in my relationships and that I should let it surprise me with what I cannot 'control' or plan. I should just let God be God."***

— Alba Letelier, SP

When I reflect on my own salvation history, I am struck at how the hand of Providence is woven throughout my story of relationships. I wandered about in my life track, running the game, making my plans, and keeping the score. And even then, the hand of Providence was present ... in my mother who prayed in thanksgiving for my birth, which came after a previous miscarriage and with birth complications ... and again, when I suffered severe leg burns and endured kidney disease complications ... in my parents who focused our family life around the Church ... in a boyfriend who led me into an encounter with the Sacred at a youth retreat ... in the various relationships Providence placed in my life that led to my entering a religious community ... in the many relationships that I encountered in my ministry that influenced my understanding of Providence ... to even today.

And woven throughout the same story is the many times I butted my head against the wall of control and planning. And, yet I have come to realize that the hand of Providence was also evident in the head-banging. Providence has surprised me with many different voices of relationships, both near and far, that influenced me to stop, listen and wait to let God be God in my life. And, therein lies the greatest surprise of all ... the hand of Providence leads to God being God.

*Sister Delia M. Herrera  
MCDP, San Antonio, TX*



# Advent 2016



Women of

PROVIDENCE

in Collaboration

***“My experience in El Salvador invited me to wake up to the daily revelations of God in the faces of the poor and needy and to look for ways to act with compassion in assisting such persons to find the help they need.” — Annette Suebert, SP***

When I began to reflect on Annette Seubert’s insight about her experience in El Salvador, this paraphrase occurred to me.: “The experience of Advent invites us to wake up to the daily revelations of God. . . .”

How fitting, I thought, to view this time as an invitation to awaken to God’s daily revelations in our lives. And yet . . . and yet . . . finding God revealed in the ever-ancient ever-new Advent liturgies while simultaneously finding God in joyful pre-Christmas events with family and community has long been troublesome to me. And so each year typically finds me striving to integrate my conflicted feelings while participating in Advent and pre-Christmas celebrations, and too often feeling restless and unsatisfied, despite many graced and peaceful moments.

The key here, of course, is the verb striving. Too often I find myself taking charge of the whole holiday operation:: choosing what form my Advent invitation will take, deciding when and where my revelations will occur, determining (for all the right reasons) to make this Advent/pre-Christmas season precisely as it should be.

Perhaps I can best learn to experience the joys of Advent and pre-Christmas by letting go of my own ideas (again) and placing myself gently into the hands of Providence, for although the official Year of Mercy is over, God’s gracious mercy never ceases. And surely the most loving, life-giving response to my self-fashioned dilemma is to have mercy on my own laughable controlling self and to live each day in gratitude and joy, remembering that no matter the time or season, our God is named Emmanuel.

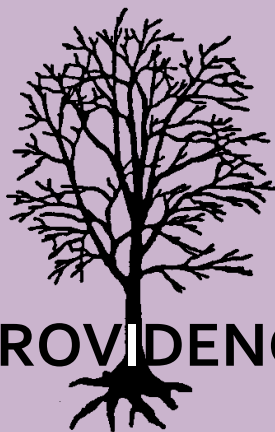
Rosemary Nudd, SP  
St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN



# Advent 2016



*Third Sunday of Advent,  
December 11*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***"The Providence person speaks the word of loving care as the word of compassion and from an attitude of deep respect and prayer." — Myra Rodgers, CDP***

Each year as Advent approaches, I sense an aura of newness/freshness, and a certain excitement begin to build in me. Advent has a certain 'feel' – flavour – mood, as we once again prepare for God's coming among us. I dare say that Advent invites us to see with new eyes—the eyes of a child.

Recently my friend broke her ankle. The pain of weight-bearing greatly restricted her mobility. Her five year old grandson, Alex, came for a visit. When he learned of her predicament, without hesitation he walked over to his father and asked, "May I borrow your cell-phone?" The father handed Alex the phone and he in turn handed it to his grandmother and said, "Put this on the table beside your bed. When you need help, phone me. You can phone me anytime, even in the middle of the night!"

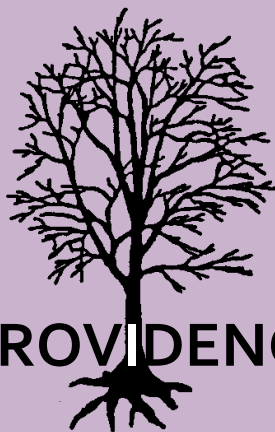
Advent reminds us of how God inserted God's Self into our world by taking on the vulnerability of a child—a baby. As Providence People we are called, like Alex, to respond to God's coming as we speak the word of compassion to our hurting world. True compassion moves one beyond feeling sorrow in witnessing the suffering of another. True compassion means entering deeply into the experience of another. It implies sensitivity and a vulnerability to be effected by the experience of the other and to be called to give aid to the other. Compassion then, is a uniting, a bringing into communion, of two individuals' experience.

This Advent, may we remember in the words of the Prophet Isaiah (11:6):  
"A little child shall lead them."

*Lucy Bethel, SP  
Kingston, ON*



# Advent 2016



Women of

PROVIDENCE

*in Collaboration*

***“We know the God of Providence as the God of possibilities who lovingly lures us, yet always allows us freedom in our decisions and choices.” — Michele Bisbey, CDP***

We are clay in the Potter's hand uniquely created with possibilities that no one else has. Each an original masterpiece created lovingly with freedom to make choices. Awesome! Mysterious!

The realization of being graced with personal freedom from our God of Providence can draw us to a contemplative place, to a deeper awareness of our uniqueness and call to further God's Kingdom in whatever way we choose.

It is difficult to make choices today as the ugliness of divisiveness, lack of civility and violence continually surface shattering relationships and deepening mistrust among families and friends, cities and nations.

There is an answer, if we allow ourselves to be lovingly lured by our God of possibilities to rest, relax and sink into the silence of the heart of God and to listen - to listen to the One whose language is silence. This is not always easy. Sometimes it takes courage to really listen and to respond to the urgings of the Spirit. Deep faith and trust in the Providence of God and the freedom we received can help and guide us in our choices and decisions. If we live in this spirit, the relationship with God deepens and freedom to make life-giving choices blossoms and the reign of God strengthens.

We are Providence people. We believe God is always with us. The liturgical season of Advent helps to deepen our awareness of Jesus' loving presence in our lives, always luring us to transformation and new life for ourselves and for the human family.

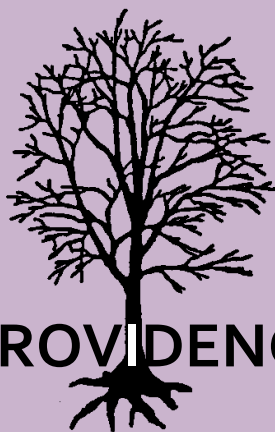
*Margaret McCleary, SP  
Holyoke, MA*



## Advent 2016



*Fourth Sunday of Advent,  
December 18*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“When care of Earth becomes an act of homage, it engages in active love for one’s neighbor particularly the poorest among us. Love requires justice, the virtue of right relationships.” — Mary Kay Nealen, SP***

A child is to be born—the God child—into poverty and simplicity. Children, each a child of God, are born. The children with blood on their faces, running from bombs, dying in the sea, are born into poverty and the complexity of disaster. What gift can we give? There are children with too many things and not enough love. What gift can we give?

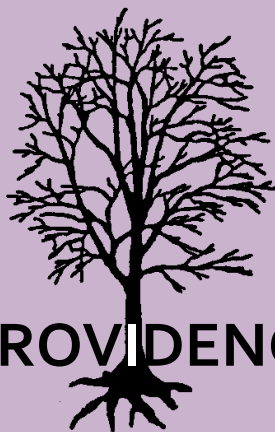
We give a gift they, and we, have already received—Earth, a place of beauty, security and where God’s glory is revealed. Some see this reality. For others, pain overwhelms the beauty and Earth absorbs blood, tears and cries of the children. We, the gifted, are to cherish and tend the gift of Earth in its beauty. We are to mend and restore the gift where it is being destroyed by greed and war. Land, water and air cry out for care so they can care for the children.

Providence of our God, giver of all that is good, we recognize you in the coming of the Christ Child, in all your children and in Earth. We hear the cries around us—of anguish and of awe. We know you. In love we will be Providence restoring, tending and reverencing Earth and gift the children, in your name, with a place of security and peace.

*Alice Gerdeman, CDP  
Melbourne, KY*



# Advent 2016



Women of

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“Providence doesn’t fit perfectly in our individual treasure boxes; amazingly, it’s an explosion or blending of all components in our evolving common universe.” —Anji Fan, SP***

Anji Fan offers three potent images to guide our thinking about Providence: confining, exploding, and blending.

Confining is a negative image, a call to move beyond individualism. True, Providence cares profoundly for each of us, numbering each hair on our heads (if we have any at all!). As God says about every human in William Young’s *The Shack*, “I’m very fond of you.” Yet that fondness is not a prize for us to clutch to ourselves. Instead, the tenderness of God requires us to burst through the walls of isolation.

Exploding can be a destructive or a creative experience. Providence exploded into Mary’s life, catapulting her out of the treasure box of her home in Nazareth, out of her serene preparation for marriage to Joseph. From the Annunciation onward, Jesus has been “a figure we could neither own nor manage,” says Thomas Howard in *Christ the Tiger*. Jesus calls us “to wildness and risk and humility and love.” Even now, Providence explodes into our worlds, sometimes startling us with beauty or joy, sometimes disrupting our comfort through suffering and compassion.

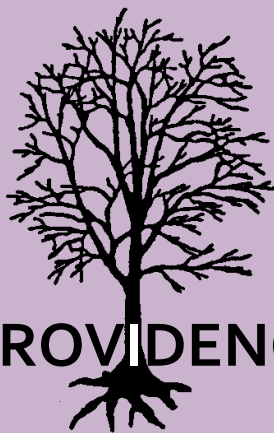
Explosions, in turn, open us to the blending that Providence accomplishes. Just as Mary set forth to visit her cousin Elizabeth, Providence stirs us into the lives of others, mixing their needs with ours and beckoning us to manifest—and receive—God’s mercy.

There is a rhythm, a yin and yang, to the action of Providence. God explodes our isolation, sends us out, then gathers us in. And the cycle goes on.

Mary Francine Danis, ACDP  
Associate, Sisters of Divine Providence  
San Antonio, Texas



*For unto us a child  
is born, to us a son  
is given...Isaiah 9:6*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“To develop a relevant spirituality of Providence today, we need to look at and reflect newly upon that mystery we call the Mystical Body of Christ.”*** —Ruth McGoldrick, SP

Jesus Christ is born! Rejoice! We remember the event of the mystery of the Incarnation—Christ among us—and we re-enter and celebrate the experience after an Advent of preparation.

Pope John Paul II in his address on December 18, 2002, said, "The liturgy of Advent...helps us to understand fully the value and meaning of the mystery of Christmas. It is not just about commemorating the historical event, which occurred some 2,000 years ago in a little village of Judea. Instead, it is necessary to understand that the whole of our life must be an 'advent,' a vigilant awaiting of the final coming of Christ."

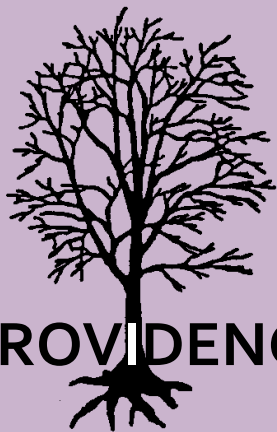
In our society the celebration of Christmas has become one of hectic motion, spending, decorating, wrapping and thus, frequently missing, or diminishing, the overwhelming gift of God's gift of Christ to us for which we have prepared during this Advent season. But as Catholic Christians and members of the Mystical Body, with Christ as our head, we are united through the mystery of God's grace to move beyond the norms of society and to live our "relevant spirituality of Providence" trusting in the presence of Christ in our daily lives.

Christmas is about the birth of Christ in you. Let us pray this Christmas that we may remember the event and re-enter the experience of the birth of Christ within ourselves. This could be the most profound meaning of the celebration of Christmas for us as Providence women and men.

*Sylvia Resha  
CDP Associate  
Antioch, TN*



# Advent 2016



Women of

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

Each year we embark on the journey of Advent, the pilgrimage, if you will, toward the feast of Christmas and remembering our salvation history, beginning with the mystery of the Incarnation—God with us, among us, one of us! Hopefully there is great anticipation and a desire for preparedness.

Advent can be that season when we set aside time to ground ourselves, to remember God's presence in our midst as the source of peace we often speak of at Christmas and for which we earnestly yearn. We know on a global scale the world is in dire need of peace—universal peace and reconciliation among nations and religious sects, among ethnic groups and political parties, among internal and external antagonism and wars. Locally, what can we do to promote peace in our little corner of the world? How can we build the “peaceable kingdom” and promote kindness and understanding? What are we willing to let go of or leave behind as we embark on this pilgrimage? What will we do to create places of peace wherever we are? The choice is ours whether or not we wish to join the pilgrimage.

This year our Advent reflections again will be taken from our newest 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 each of the authors in the book. I've asked these reflectors to take the quote given them and reflect on it with an Advent lens.

I invite each of you, as Providence persons, to join the pilgrimage this year. Reflect on the readings of Advent daily. Reflect on the quotes chosen for the two days each week and on what our Providence writers have offered us. As we are attentive to the calls of Providence this Advent we will be agents of hope and peace, proclaiming the glad tidings of Christmas, God is here!

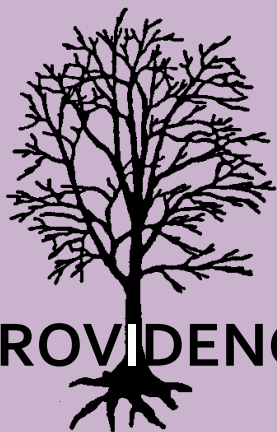
*Sister Barbara*



# Advent 2016



*First Sunday of Advent,  
November 27*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“We have come to understand Providence as the creative, unfolding Energy of Love calling us into being, sustaining, nourishing, challenging, and luring all creation toward its final fulfillment.” — Marie McCarthy, SP***

Several years ago I read “Meditation with Meister Eckhart” but one passage comes back to me year after year during Advent as I reflect on the incarnation of Jesus. He said “...humanity, and not Bethlehem is the true birthplace of God...for we are all meant to be mothers of God...What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son if I also do not give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time, when the Son of God is begotten in us.”

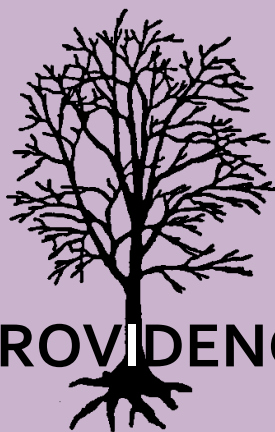
God’s Word became incarnate to show us how to live, to show us how to be more God-like, to be God’s face and to reflect God’s love to others. God calls us to love by reaching out to the poor, the vulnerable, and the voiceless, and to be Love’s living temple here on earth. God calls us beloved and calls us to become co-creators with Love here on earth.

During this Advent season, you might ask yourself how God is challenging you to give birth to the Son of God in your time and in your culture, in your Congregation, in your ministry, in your family, in your parish, and in your relationships so as to build the kingdom of Love. You might also ask yourself how you have been the face of God in meeting the needs of the poor and vulnerable and how have you been speaking out for justice when injustice is apparent.

*Sue Orlowski, SP  
Spokane, WA*



# Advent 2016



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“I am called to make Providence alive wherever I am called to be either locally or globally.” — Hong Nga Nguyen, SP***

Did you ever disturb a bee’s home? All of the bee friends maraud around you, hoping that you will pay the price for the disturbance. If we react by flinging our hands through the air, or by yelling ridiculous retorts, we become part of the problem. “Be still,” a voice within whispers, “and go your way.”

How many times have we cried to a myriad of advisors who are stating their most salient points at one time, “Quiet down so I can think.” As the Presence of Jesus enters the consciousness of our restless minds, we hear Him say, “Be quiet now, so that I may speak and you may listen.”

Advent quiet. Advent silence. These are the ways that we can hear our best friend. It is Jesus who calls us. It is not that easy to identify our Friend. The Voice comes in repeated waves. It is unyielding in its effort to break through. The Voice unites our heart and soul into an affirmative response. We are called to continually live Providence by bringing faith and confidence in God’s loving care for all.

Mary and Joseph found Providence cradled in their arms, while they were surrounded by a cacophony of sounds, miraculous sights, and ordinary smells. They took the memories and brought them to their everyday lives as they raised the little one who was on loan to them from God.

Wherever we are, may we bring confidence in our loving Father as we sit in a wheel chair, drive in rush hour, minister to immigrants and the homeless, bury the dead, or rock a baby. Doing all with love, may we know that Providence calls in the calm of our heart.

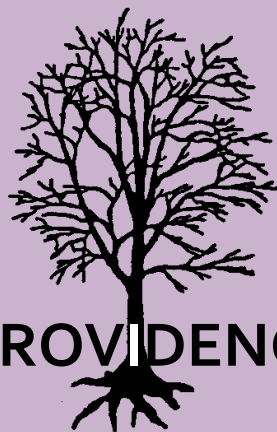
*Marilyn McMillin, CDP  
Allison Park, PA*



# Advent 2016



*Second Sunday of Advent,  
December 4*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***"I believe that Providence manifests itself in my relationships and that I should let it surprise me with what I cannot 'control' or plan. I should just let God be God."***

— Alba Letelier, SP

When I reflect on my own salvation history, I am struck at how the hand of Providence is woven throughout my story of relationships. I wandered about in my life track, running the game, making my plans, and keeping the score. And even then, the hand of Providence was present ... in my mother who prayed in thanksgiving for my birth, which came after a previous miscarriage and with birth complications ... and again, when I suffered severe leg burns and endured kidney disease complications ... in my parents who focused our family life around the Church ... in a boyfriend who led me into an encounter with the Sacred at a youth retreat ... in the various relationships Providence placed in my life that led to my entering a religious community ... in the many relationships that I encountered in my ministry that influenced my understanding of Providence ... to even today.

And woven throughout the same story is the many times I butted my head against the wall of control and planning. And, yet I have come to realize that the hand of Providence was also evident in the head-banging. Providence has surprised me with many different voices of relationships, both near and far, that influenced me to stop, listen and wait to let God be God in my life. And, therein lies the greatest surprise of all ... the hand of Providence leads to God being God.

*Sister Delia M. Herrera  
MCDP, San Antonio, TX*



# Advent 2016



Women of

PROVIDENCE

in Collaboration

***“My experience in El Salvador invited me to wake up to the daily revelations of God in the faces of the poor and needy and to look for ways to act with compassion in assisting such persons to find the help they need.” — Annette Suebert, SP***

When I began to reflect on Annette Seubert’s insight about her experience in El Salvador, this paraphrase occurred to me.: “The experience of Advent invites us to wake up to the daily revelations of God. . . .”

How fitting, I thought, to view this time as an invitation to awaken to God’s daily revelations in our lives. And yet . . . and yet . . . finding God revealed in the ever-ancient ever-new Advent liturgies while simultaneously finding God in joyful pre-Christmas events with family and community has long been troublesome to me. And so each year typically finds me striving to integrate my conflicted feelings while participating in Advent and pre-Christmas celebrations, and too often feeling restless and unsatisfied, despite many graced and peaceful moments.

The key here, of course, is the verb striving. Too often I find myself taking charge of the whole holiday operation:: choosing what form my Advent invitation will take, deciding when and where my revelations will occur, determining (for all the right reasons) to make this Advent/pre-Christmas season precisely as it should be.

Perhaps I can best learn to experience the joys of Advent and pre-Christmas by letting go of my own ideas (again) and placing myself gently into the hands of Providence, for although the official Year of Mercy is over, God’s gracious mercy never ceases. And surely the most loving, life-giving response to my self-fashioned dilemma is to have mercy on my own laughable controlling self and to live each day in gratitude and joy, remembering that no matter the time or season, our God is named Emmanuel.

Rosemary Nudd, SP  
St. Mary-of-the-Woods, IN



# Advent 2016



*Third Sunday of Advent,  
December 11*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***"The Providence person speaks the word of loving care as the word of compassion and from an attitude of deep respect and prayer." — Myra Rodgers, CDP***

Each year as Advent approaches, I sense an aura of newness/freshness, and a certain excitement begin to build in me. Advent has a certain 'feel' – flavour – mood, as we once again prepare for God's coming among us. I dare say that Advent invites us to see with new eyes—the eyes of a child.

Recently my friend broke her ankle. The pain of weight-bearing greatly restricted her mobility. Her five year old grandson, Alex, came for a visit. When he learned of her predicament, without hesitation he walked over to his father and asked, "May I borrow your cell-phone?" The father handed Alex the phone and he in turn handed it to his grandmother and said, "Put this on the table beside your bed. When you need help, phone me. You can phone me anytime, even in the middle of the night!"

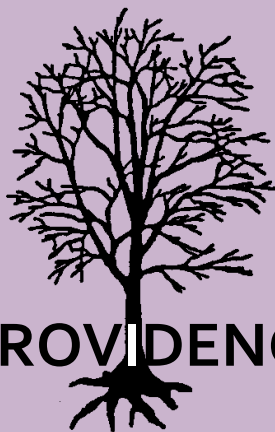
Advent reminds us of how God inserted God's Self into our world by taking on the vulnerability of a child—a baby. As Providence People we are called, like Alex, to respond to God's coming as we speak the word of compassion to our hurting world. True compassion moves one beyond feeling sorrow in witnessing the suffering of another. True compassion means entering deeply into the experience of another. It implies sensitivity and a vulnerability to be effected by the experience of the other and to be called to give aid to the other. Compassion then, is a uniting, a bringing into communion, of two individuals' experience.

This Advent, may we remember in the words of the Prophet Isaiah (11:6):  
"A little child shall lead them."

*Lucy Bethel, SP  
Kingston, ON*



# Advent 2016



Women of

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“We know the God of Providence as the God of possibilities who lovingly lures us, yet always allows us freedom in our decisions and choices.” — Michele Bisbey, CDP***

We are clay in the Potter’s hand uniquely created with possibilities that no one else has. Each an original masterpiece created lovingly with freedom to make choices. Awesome! Mysterious!

The realization of being graced with personal freedom from our God of Providence can draw us to a contemplative place, to a deeper awareness of our uniqueness and call to further God’s Kingdom in whatever way we choose.

It is difficult to make choices today as the ugliness of divisiveness, lack of civility and violence continually surface shattering relationships and deepening mistrust among families and friends, cities and nations.

There is an answer, if we allow ourselves to be lovingly lured by our God of possibilities to rest, relax and sink into the silence of the heart of God and to listen - to listen to the One whose language is silence. This is not always easy. Sometimes it takes courage to really listen and to respond to the urgings of the Spirit. Deep faith and trust in the Providence of God and the freedom we received can help and guide us in our choices and decisions. If we live in this spirit, the relationship with God deepens and freedom to make life-giving choices blossoms and the reign of God strengthens.

We are Providence people. We believe God is always with us. The liturgical season of Advent helps to deepen our awareness of Jesus’ loving presence in our lives, always luring us to transformation and new life for ourselves and for the human family.

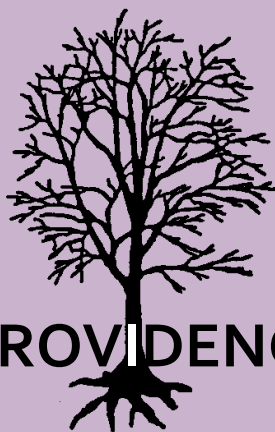
*Margaret McCleary, SP  
Holyoke, MA*



## *Advent 2016*



*Fourth Sunday of Advent,  
December 18*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“When care of Earth becomes an act of homage, it engages in active love for one’s neighbor particularly the poorest among us. Love requires justice, the virtue of right relationships.” — Mary Kay Nealen, SP***

A child is to be born—the God child—into poverty and simplicity. Children, each a child of God, are born. The children with blood on their faces, running from bombs, dying in the sea, are born into poverty and the complexity of disaster. What gift can we give? There are children with too many things and not enough love. What gift can we give?

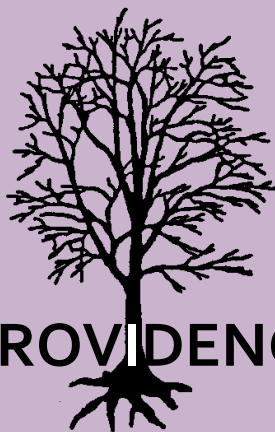
We give a gift they, and we, have already received—Earth, a place of beauty, security and where God’s glory is revealed. Some see this reality. For others, pain overwhelms the beauty and Earth absorbs blood, tears and cries of the children. We, the gifted, are to cherish and tend the gift of Earth in its beauty. We are to mend and restore the gift where it is being destroyed by greed and war. Land, water and air cry out for care so they can care for the children.

Providence of our God, giver of all that is good, we recognize you in the coming of the Christ Child, in all your children and in Earth. We hear the cries around us—of anguish and of awe. We know you. In love we will be Providence restoring, tending and reverencing Earth and gift the children, in your name, with a place of security and peace.

*Alice Gerdeman, CDP  
Melbourne, KY*



# Advent 2016



Women of

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“Providence doesn’t fit perfectly in our individual treasure boxes; amazingly, it’s an explosion or blending of all components in our evolving common universe.” —Anji Fan, SP***

Anji Fan offers three potent images to guide our thinking about Providence: confining, exploding, and blending.

Confining is a negative image, a call to move beyond individualism. True, Providence cares profoundly for each of us, numbering each hair on our heads (if we have any at all!). As God says about every human in William Young’s *The Shack*, “I’m very fond of you.” Yet that fondness is not a prize for us to clutch to ourselves. Instead, the tenderness of God requires us to burst through the walls of isolation.

Exploding can be a destructive or a creative experience. Providence exploded into Mary’s life, catapulting her out of the treasure box of her home in Nazareth, out of her serene preparation for marriage to Joseph. From the Annunciation onward, Jesus has been “a figure we could neither own nor manage,” says Thomas Howard in *Christ the Tiger*. Jesus calls us “to wildness and risk and humility and love.” Even now, Providence explodes into our worlds, sometimes startling us with beauty or joy, sometimes disrupting our comfort through suffering and compassion.

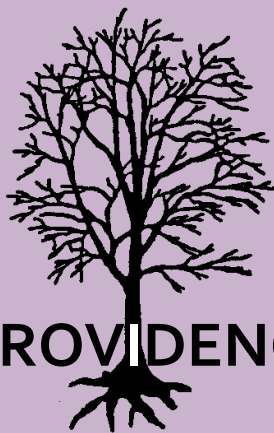
Explosions, in turn, open us to the blending that Providence accomplishes. Just as Mary set forth to visit her cousin Elizabeth, Providence stirs us into the lives of others, mixing their needs with ours and beckoning us to manifest—and receive—God’s mercy.

There is a rhythm, a yin and yang, to the action of Providence. God explodes our isolation, sends us out, then gathers us in. And the cycle goes on.

Mary Francine Danis, ACDP  
Associate, Sisters of Divine Providence  
San Antonio, Texas



*For unto us a child  
is born, to us a son  
is given...Isaiah 9:6*



*Women of*

**PROVIDENCE**

*in Collaboration*

***“To develop a relevant spirituality of Providence today, we need to look at and reflect newly upon that mystery we call the Mystical Body of Christ.”*** —Ruth McGoldrick, SP

Jesus Christ is born! Rejoice! We remember the event of the mystery of the Incarnation—Christ among us—and we re-enter and celebrate the experience after an Advent of preparation.

Pope John Paul II in his address on December 18, 2002, said, "The liturgy of Advent...helps us to understand fully the value and meaning of the mystery of Christmas. It is not just about commemorating the historical event, which occurred some 2,000 years ago in a little village of Judea. Instead, it is necessary to understand that the whole of our life must be an 'advent,' a vigilant awaiting of the final coming of Christ."

In our society the celebration of Christmas has become one of hectic motion, spending, decorating, wrapping and thus, frequently missing, or diminishing, the overwhelming gift of God's gift of Christ to us for which we have prepared during this Advent season. But as Catholic Christians and members of the Mystical Body, with Christ as our head, we are united through the mystery of God's grace to move beyond the norms of society and to live our "relevant spirituality of Providence" trusting in the presence of Christ in our daily lives.

Christmas is about the birth of Christ in you. Let us pray this Christmas that we may remember the event and re-enter the experience of the birth of Christ within ourselves. This could be the most profound meaning of the celebration of Christmas for us as Providence women and men.

*Sylvia Resha  
CDP Associate  
Antioch, TN*