



Advent 2020

Advent, the season of waiting, expectation, and hope is upon us. The Scriptures often ask us to be alert and watchful so that we may discover all the ways that Emmanuel, God-with-us, is present in our ordinary lives.

However, in these days of the pandemic, watching and waiting has taken on new meanings. We find ourselves hoping for a vaccine, expecting that once we have it everything will return to normal. Yet, there is so much uncertainty in our world, and so many changes, that our normal will look much different. People are already saying there will be a “new normal” but no one really knows what that will be!

Providence people, though, know that our God is providing us with time this Advent season to plumb the depths of our inner selves, to allow God to speak to our hearts, to experience the transformation that Love alone can bring. We know Providence as that name of God that speaks of fullness of life and a future filled with hope.

This Advent the WPC office offers you two prayer experiences calling on the wisdom of spiritual writers, reflections of our own Providence Sisters and Associates, and the beautiful translation of psalms by Nan Merrill. In the spirit of the 40th anniversary of the Women of Providence in Collaboration I pray that your Advent will be filled with peace, justice, compassion, and radical hope for our future together. May each of us, like Mary, be that vessel, that disciple that “gestates faith, God’s promise, into real flesh!”

Happy Advent!

Sister Barbara



WPC Advent Prayer and Reflection Weeks One and Two



Leader: Provident God, help us to trust in You to unbar our hearts this Advent season that we may embrace Your Word in creative waiting and focus on Your desires for our growth.

All: May we be open, ready and eager to welcome You and receive Your graces of the season. *Amen.*

Song: Optional

Psalm 25: *Psalms for Praying* by Nan Merrill

Antiphon: *Unbar your heart and simply wait for God.
There is so much grace in waiting.*

To You, O Love, I lift up my soul; O Heart within my heart, in You I place my trust.
Let me not feel unworthy; let not fear rule over me.
Yes! Let all who open their hearts savor You and bless the earth!

Compel me to know your ways, O Love; instruct me upon your paths. Lead me in your truth,
and teach me, for through You will I know wholeness; I shall reflect your light day and night.

I know of your mercy, Compassionate One, and of your steadfast love. You have been with me
from the beginning. Forgive the many times I have walked away from You choosing to walk alone.
With your steadfast love, once again, Companion me along your way.

You are gracious and just, O Spirit of Truth, happy to guide those who miss their way;
You enjoy teaching all who are open, all who choose to live in truth.
Your paths are loving and sure, O Holy One, for those who give witness to You through their lives.

For the honor of your Name, O Beloved, forgive my separation from You. I bow down before You;
instruct me that I might choose the way of love and truth. I would live in your abundance, and
my children as well. Your friendship is offered to all whose hearts are open; You will make known
your promises to them. My eyes are ever on You, Beloved, keep my feet from stumbling along the way.

Protect me and free me; let me not live as unworthy, for I would make my home in You.
May integrity and wholeness fill me as I dwell with You, O Loving Presence. O Beloved,
as you renew me, redeem the nations, that we on earth may unfold your Plan.



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Reflection and Sharing for Weeks One and Two

Reflections:

If we desire to move into a deeper relationship with God this Advent it is essential that we live with unguarded hearts. Openness! Readiness! Patience! In order to go deeper into our interior life and be molded by the Source of all life, it is important that we learn the art of creative waiting. It does not suggest that we sit inertly on the sidelines; nor does it encourage us to try to do everything on our own. Creative waiting is a deep listening that is at the heart of everything. -Macrina Wiederkehr

Advent: a time to wait and watch. Advent is about preparing for new life. Watching and waiting allows the inner seeker 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 ordinary life. We watch and listen to the movement of God inside our inner selves and inside the outer events of history. Seek the Christ within; discover the joy of one who has taken the time to sit, wait, watch with active faith and trust in Providence that never fails us. All we have to do is be still, wait, and listen. -Diane Mason, SP

Questions for Reflection and Sharing

- How do you feel about waiting for God to make known the paths you should walk?
- Throughout these weeks of Advent contemplate your readiness, your patience, and your trust in Divine Providence as you offer the Holy One the troubles of your heart.
- Was there anything in the reflective readings that touched your heart?

Closing Prayer, All:

Come, Lord Jesus, into this Advent of our lives with your love and mercy. May we welcome You with hearts humbled by gratitude for the very life we have been given; may we learn to live in creative waiting for Your revelations to us. Let us live this Advent with faith in Your compassion and hope in Your grace. **Amen.**





WPC Advent Prayer and Reflection Weeks Three and Four

Leader: O Provident One, as we continue our Advent journey, speak to us through moments of our creative waiting, of quiet reflection, and in prophetic stances on behalf of peace and justice.

All: May our hearts grow in wonder and awe at your grace in our lives. May we, like Mary, be your disciple and learn to trust that your promises to us will be fulfilled. *Amen.*

Song: Optional

Psalm 21: *Psalms for Praying* by Nan Merrill

Antiphon: *Make of your life a declaration of faith and trust
in the living creative presence of God. Grace awaits!*

In your strength I rejoice, O my Beloved, and in your Presence my heart finds rest!
You heed the heart's desire, answering the cry of the soul, and You bestow blessing upon blessing;
Your Love is a crown of fine gold upon my head.

I asked for life; and life you did provide, eternal life comes through your Love. All glory be yours,
O Loving Presence, splendor and majesty are your raiment. Yes, your blessings are forever;
You delight me with the joy of your Presence. Forever I will put my trust in You; and as I
abandon myself to You in love, I am assured of peace.

You root out my fears; standing firm beside me as I face the shadows within. Like a blazing sun
your light shines. My fears flee from your sight; your fire consumes them. Generations to come
will sing to your glory in gratitude and joy for your saving power.

For You put fears to flight, that love and justice might reign. All praise be yours, O Wondrous One!
Forever will I sing and honor your saving grace.



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Reflection and Sharing for Weeks Three and Four

Reflections:

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.

—Associate Sylvia Resha, ACDP

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 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.

—Ron Rolheiser, OMI

Luke portrays Mary, in the words of the Magnificat, as the first preacher of the gospel. Those words are anything but the pious ode of a plastic saint: they are a prophetic, cutting edge declaration of faith and trust in the living, creative presence of God. Mary understands what God will do in the child she will bear. She knows that in the promise she has received from God, history is about to be turned upside down. She realizes that she herself is the first instance of this new upside-down world: she is the small one whom God has lifted up; she is the lowly servant on whom God has looked with favor. She embodies the good news she proclaims: the gospel of forgiveness, humble service to others, justice, and ultimately, resurrection.

—Jay Cormier

Questions for Reflection and Sharing

- How are you, like Mary, a vessel and preacher of the Word?
- During these days of creative Advent waiting, how has Christ revealed himself to you?
- How has this Advent, in light of the pandemic across the world, still given you hope?

Closing Prayer:

God of Providence, fill our hearts with wonder and awe at the graces of this Advent season. Let our love be a radical self-gift, an outpouring of our best selves for the good of others. May we, like Mary, be a vessel carrying your Word to a wounded world in need of healing. May we be the face of Providence to all to whom we are sent. May the remembrance of your birth among us help re-create every human heart so that peace and justice may reign in every season of the New Year. **Amen.**

