



Advent 2021

Each year I look forward to Advent as a time of slowing down and allowing the Lord of light to send me invitations to grow, messengers to be heeded, and surprise moments of God's radiant Word to warm and re-ignite the flame of my heart.

Last year Pope Francis talked about the manger as an invitation to contemplation, a reminder of the importance of stopping. He said that contemplation is sometimes called the "art of stealing time." That

really stayed with me, and I tried to shift into a lower gear. It's a challenge in our times of constant advertisements telling us what we need, an all-consuming culture, shortages of goods because of supply chain problems, staffing issues, postal issues. The list can go on, I'm sure. We are often bombarded with all the pre-Christmas sales, Black Friday sales, even now before Thanksgiving – so that those quiet moments can easily be snatched from us – and Advent gets lost.

My prayer for each of us is that we can manage to "steal some moments" this Advent to pay attention to God's invitations to us. Strangers, shepherds and angels may be speaking to us, but if we aren't attuned and listening, we may just miss those surprise messages or messengers. Just like our GPS, we might need to re-calibrate our journey, opening ourselves to being astonished by what God has done and is doing in our hearts right now.

Advent challenges us to be prophets for the Messiah; to be joyful proclaimers of his Word. We are called to make the barren desert new – places of welcome, inclusion, reconciliation for the forgotten, the hurting, the least among us – so that others can behold the presence of Emmanuel, God-with-us!

May your inner GPS be set on a course of transformation that leads to compassion, peace, justice, and joy; ultimately bringing you to our true home in the heart of the Beloved.

Happy Advent!

Sister Barbara





Advent Prayer and Reflection Weeks One and Two

Leader: Awaken my heart to your incomprehensible Mystery...

All: and open me to allow the Spirit of Love to flow into the world today in unspeakable nearness. Set the eyes of my heart on the suffering of our world. I will be Providence...
I will be Love.

Song: optional

Psalm 36: Nan Merrill: *Psalms for Praying*

Antiphon: May your steadfast love endure to those who love truth and justice.

➤ Ignorance lives deep in the hearts of those who know not Love; There is no reverence for Truth before their eyes. For they see themselves as powerful and are too proud to see how they deceive themselves and others. They speak not with integrity and act not with wisdom and love. At night their thoughts turn to plotting, driving them to seek more power; fear becomes their constant companion.

• Would that they knew that your steadfast love, O Holy One, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to all the world. Your saving justice is like the mountains, firm and sure, your judgments are like the mighty deep; Your love supports all of creation; Your love is everlasting.

➤ How precious is your steadfast love, O Compassionate Presence. We, your children, take refuge in the shadow of your wings. We feast on the abundance of the Earth; You invite us to drink from living streams. For in You is the very source of life; and in your Light do we see light.

• May your steadfast love endure to those who know You, your saving grace to those who love truth and justice! Protect us from the seeds of arrogance; the weeds of competition drive away.

Open the hearts of those who live in darkness, O Beloved, that they might rise up and live in your Light.

(Repeat Antiphon)

Psalm Prayer:

Compassionate Presence, be with me as I begin this Advent journey once again. Open my heart and ears to all the invitations you will present to me this season. Help me to recognize when I am not acting in truth and integrity and set me on the right path. May I always be about bringing the good news of the Gospel to others. In Jesus' name. Amen.



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Advent Scriptures for First and Second Week: Adaptations

“The days are comings says the Lord...in those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land.” (Jerimiah 33:14-15)

“May God and our Lord Jesus Christ direct our way to you, and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts to be blameless in holiness before our God at the coming of Our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. We exhort you, conduct yourselves to please God.” (1 Thesalonians 3: 12—4:1)

“Take off your robe of mourning and misery...be wrapped in the cloak of justice from God,... for God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company.” (Baruch 5: 1,2,9).

Reading/Reflection: Providence and Compassion p. 3 excerpt/adapted

What if, rather...than **competing** in a global economy, we had the goal of **living** in a global society? What if we used our God-given talents to make our own unique contribution to help all of creation flourish? In our society everyone and everything is interconnected. Aren't these some of the values that people of Providence proclaim? It seems that now, as never before, society bombards us with an opposing message. Perhaps now, more than ever, the counter-cultural value that bold and courageous people need to hold is that of the interconnectedness of all of creation. Our call this Advent is to bring our unique gifts and talents to help all of creation flourish. Hopefully, that is the message that we who call ourselves providence people not only speak, but also live into action. Let us wrap ourselves in the cloak of justice, love one another and do what is right for the common good of all people and lands.

Pause for Silent Reflection/Then Sharing

- What unique contributions can I bring to help all of creation flourish?

- How might I be attentive to the invitations and luring that Providence calls me to this Advent?

- In what ways can I be a compassionate presence to those I meet daily this Advent?

Closing Prayer: All

Provident God, help me to stay awake and be watchful this Advent season. The Holy One of Israel is coming. May I put on the cloak of justice and be a message of Love and compassion for the good of all creation. Amen.





Advent Prayer and Reflection Weeks Three and Four

Leader: Awaken my heart to your incomprehensible Mystery...

All: and open me to allow the Spirit of Love to flow into the world today in unspeakable nearness. Set the eyes of my heart on the suffering of our world. I will be Providence...
I will be Love.

Song: optional

Psalm 29: Nan Merrill: *Psalms for Praying*

Antiphon: The voice of Love invites me to freedom and joy.

➤ Give praise to the Beloved, O heavenly hosts, sing of Love's glory and strength. Exalt the glory of Love's Name, adore the Beloved in holy splendor. The voice of the Beloved is upon the waters; Love's voice echoes over the oceans and seas. The voice of Love is powerful, majestic is the voice of Love.

• The voice of the Beloved breaks the bonds of oppression, shatters the chains of injustice. Love invites all to the dance of freedom, to sing the Beloved's song of truth. The voice of Love strikes with fire upon hearts of stone. The voice of Love uproots the thorns of fear, Love uproots fear in every open heart.

➤ The voice of Love is heard in every storm and strips the ego bare; and in their hearts all cry, "Glory!"

• The Beloved lives in our hearts; Love dwells with us forever. May Love give strength to all people! May Love bless all nations with peace!

(Repeat Antiphon)

Psalm Prayer:

God of Advent longing, of all times and seasons, You reveal Your love in every generation. Your presence blesses me in every loving, nurturing relationship. As I have experienced Your generous and healing love, may I be a vessel of love and joy for all those with whom I meet. Bless me with a spirit of deep joy and gratitude in these last weeks of Advent, as like Mary and Joseph, I place my trust in You, the Giver of all that is good. Amen.



Continued on the next page.

Advent Scriptures for Third and Fourth Week: Adaptations

“Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! ...Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty Savior. He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love.” (Zephaniah 3: 14, 16-17)

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4: 4-7)

“He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the Lord, in the majestic name of the Lord, his God; and they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.” (Micah 5: 3-4)

“Then he says, Behold I come to do your will. He takes away the first to establish the second. By this will we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10: 9-11)

Reading/Reflection: Providence and Peace: Connecting and Co-Creating for Justice p.41, 44/adapted.
“How does Providence fit into the work of peace? Providence is the great connector of peace and the great conductor of peace. Providence makes it happen. How? Mostly through us. Perhaps, only through us. Providence is not afraid of conflict or chaos. Nor should Providence people be. Providence loves to work through conflict and chaos holding those opposing movements and polarities of life in some kind of creative tension until they can be resolved...Providence is in the holding and in the trusting. ...We Providence people live the tension of pain and reconciliation, injustice and hope in our own personal lives. In doing so, we contribute in some fashion to peace in our nations and our world. ...We know that contemplation brings tranquility and peace into our lives, and thus, into the world. ...Quaker spirituality says, ‘Life from the center is a life of unhurried peace and power.’ It is simple and composed.”

Pause for Silent Reflection/Then Sharing

- How have I been a witness to Advent joy in these days?
- What are my particular requests of God this Advent? Am I trusting they will be heard?
- In what ways have I been a connector/conductor of peace in these weeks of Advent?

Closing Prayer: All

Provident God, You know my needs better than I do. Come, make Your dwelling in my heart, illuminating my conscience with Your wisdom, healing my brokenness with reconciliation, alleviating my ears with hope, filling my spirit with joy and grace. Help me to be an ambassador of Your peace, speaking the Good News, and proclaiming Your love in the world. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

