



Gloria Dei (Old Swedes') Advent Reflections 2021

December 1, Wednesday

Reflection by Sally Daly (written November 23, 2013)

I have a book of knowledge. The title is *Holy Bible*. It is not like any other book. When I read it, I find answers to my questions and while I apply what the *Bible* teaches me and while I live by God's instructions, I draw closer to God and I get a peace with the Holy Spirit. If there is only one book I could read, it would be the *Holy Bible*. It has everything in it I need to know to be a Christian and a child of God.



December 2, Thursday Reflection by Koshy Mathews

An Advent Meditation

The Season of Advent does not get the importance it deserves in our calendar as it falls between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The secular concerns of our culture crowd the season with its activities of parties, preparing for parties, shopping, decorating, etc., and thus leaving no time for the primary purpose of the season: waiting. Waiting on God in hopeful expectation of the birthing of the Son of God in our lives is what Advent season is for. In the Eastern Church I grew up in India, Advent is observed with the same practices we are called to do during Lent. It is called the short lent of twenty-five days with fasting, prayer, and other rigors of big lent. Advent is a time of spiritual preparation, a time of making room for God by getting rid of all that crowds our lives. Young couples do this when they are expecting their young ones. Just as important is spiritual preparation. In a culture of instant gratification, it is hard for us to practice waiting, especially waiting in anticipation. Waiting is countercultural. Advent Season itself is countercultural. Waiting on God is a spiritual discipline. Let us as Christians be countercultural by observing Advent the way it is supposed to be, then Christmas will be more meaningful.

December 3, Friday Reflection by Re Henning

“God our Father, you see your children growing up in an unsteady and confusing world: show them that your ways give more life than the way of the world, and that following you is better than chasing after selfish goals. Help them to take failure, not as a measure of their worth, but as a chance for a new start. Give them strength to hold their faith in you, and to keep alive joy in your creation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen”

Book of Common Prayer, 47 For Young Persons, page 829



December 4, Saturday Reflection by Rita West

Find your purpose
Live each day with open eyes, open ears,
And a heart for the Lord
He will open your mind and transform it
To his purpose for your life



December 5, Sunday Reflection by Carol Jenkins

Advent is a time for preparation
The act of preparing our heart and mind for what is to come
It is a time of hope, love and great expectation
The anticipation of the coming babe
We light this candle and protect it from going out
We encourage hope in the form of this light
Reflect this light both inward and outward
Let us share this light and spread love and hope to all we meet
As we journey on towards Christmas



December 6, Monday Reflection by Jim Ufheil

From ancient times, celestial events have portended the birth of a king. What the Magi saw in the sky made them travel to Jerusalem to ask Herod “Where was this king?”

Their journey to find the Christ Child may have taken them much longer than arriving in time for Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem. They may not have arrived until up to 2 years after his birth, but they did arrive bearing gifts...gifts “fit for a king”...and there may have been more than three of them!
Our journey through Advent doesn’t take years and we still seek the Christ Child bearing the gift of our faith in His Coming.



December 7, Tuesday Reflection by Rhian Jeong

The Advent wreath is a clock ~ the wreath-calendar counts time by lighting candles for four weeks leading up to Christmas. For centuries, three *purple* candles help us compartmentalize our emotions, visually linking Advent with another *purple* season, Lent. The *purple* prepares the way for the bursting joy that is to come. The exuberant joy of Christmas (and Easter) hope, is intensified, precisely because the *purple* propels us into a more penitential, reflective emotional space. The contrast of intentionally entering low-lows helps us eventually feel the Holy High. The *purple* purging helps us repent from that which prevents us from fully experiencing the gift who is Jesus.

Yet, in reality, the Advent season has become less defined as a solemn month sifting through sins. Instead, each week has felt like a *pink* candle, a happy relief from the metaphorical and literal winter. The *pink* candle provides a foretaste of the joy ahead. Here, I feel invited to truly join Mother Mary in happy-nervousness for the Holy Birthday. In the *pink* days, I feel especially moved by the Eucharist, where we receive the Holy Spirit into our own bodies, and for a fleeting moment, the whole congregation is pregnant with Jesus. *Pink* is pregnancy, that has, and is, and will be. Perhaps, this is why I was happily intrigued by a parish within the Church of England, who debuted *blue*! Their Advent candles were *blue* because the color represented Mary herself. The *blue* represented her calm, happiness. The *blue* felt more spiritually honest for our contemporary culture. Many of us are already living the *blue*, happily decorating homes and sanctuaries, happily thinking about preparing gifts for loved ones, happily feeling generous precisely because God's own generosity inspires us. If, however, our Advent is burdened by consuming stress ~ if our Advent is distracted with family and/or financial obstacles ~ penitential *purple* may assist us in confessing Christmas capitalism away, but lasting conversion to Christ, is through genuine happiness. The happy *blue* symbolizes the happy rest we have when we melt into Jesus'

arms and rest in God's promises. The happy *blue* represents connection to Mary, as well as connection to our whole spiritual family, including the saints and spiritual ancestors who prepared the way before us. The happy, joyful, love that bursts forth from relationships with Jesus, with one another, as well as with all of creation, is the food of spiritual transformation. *Blue* emphasizes conversion over confession.



December 8, Wednesday

Reflection by Christine Pickup

Love your neighbor, no exceptions. I saw this sign while walking in the city. I love the simplicity and directness of this directive. Simple though it reads, it is very difficult to do.



December 9, Thursday

Reflection by Barbara Potts

From Linus Van pelt -

And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the Glory of the Lord shone round about them, and the angel said unto them "Fear not".....

For behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly, there was with the angel, a multitude of heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." That's what Christmas is all about.



December 10, Friday

Reflection by Paula and Jim Minacci

Look around and see and touch and listen to the goodness of life.

This shared journey we are now immersed can guide us to a true inner light...

One to be Lit, Shared, and Celebrated.

Take this Energy with you on your journey

Raise people up, don't flatten them down,

Practice Forgiveness

Teach Kindness.

Bring people into your shared light and experience...

Let love rule...It's just a kiss away...

All you need is love...and so on.

If anyone says different, or that you need more than "LOVE,"

Forgive them and move on...

They are not to be trusted.

December 11, Saturday

Reflection by Omega and Charles Moore

CHRISTMAS A Time for Sharing

Aching feet hurry, everyone's in a scurry,
Tired shopkeepers must work and stay.
Superstores open till late at night,
So shoppers could buy to their hearts delight.

Kitchens get lighted, stoves are ignited,
Cookies and candies and goodies are made.
Families that are parted have now been united,
There's sweet aroma of newly baked bread.

Trees are bright with gay decoration,
All are prepared for the grand celebration.
Little girls hug and give grandma a kiss,
For they want in their gift box a nice pretty dress.

There in the big room are gathered the boys,
They, too, are waiting to open their toys.
They've waited for this day to come at last,
They want toy cars and trains and bicycles fast.

But out on the street is a poor hungry man,
He rummages for food from the dirty trash can,
He shivers from the weather, he feels sick and cold,
The coat he is wearing is so tattered and old.

He wishes this Christmas for a place to stay,
He wishes his children had toys to play,
He wishes they could sleep in a soft, warm bed,
He wishes they were smiling and not crying instead.

He politely asks help but nobody cares,
He gets nothing from shoppers but cruel angry stares,
How dare this stranger disrupts our shopping spree,
Go on your way now and do leave us be.

So this tired sad man goes home again today,
With nothing at all for his poor family,

He kneels down to cry, but takes time to pray,
"Lord, thanks anyway for this fine Christmas Day."

Dear godly people, as you shop and shop around,
Just look about you, many beggars can be found,
Some are the there to fool you, but others are sincere,
They truly are suffering and hungry throughout the year.

When you sit at your table to dine at Christmas time,
Think of the man at the corner __ without food, without a dime,
He is cold and hungry and his children need care,
The blessings at your table, with him will you gladly share?



December 12, Sunday Reflection by Megan Bartlett

An Advent Reflection on Waiting

Advent is a season of waiting.
We can wait with impatience or with calm presence.
We can wait with dread or with hopeful expectation.
How we wait doesn't change the outcome of whatever is anticipated,
but it does change the experience of the moment.
Waiting -- whether for a baby to be born, a loved one to pass into the next life, or a pandemic to end --
can be a moment of connection with God, if we allow it to be.

December 13, Monday

Reflection by Jeanette Woehr

Before dawn on December 13th, Swedish families are awakened by the eldest daughter dressed in white and wearing a crown of candles. She is accompanied by other female members of the household. Warm Lucia buns and hot coffee are served to the family. As they travel through the house, they are singing the traditional song "Santa Lucia". The Julian calendar marked the winter solstice on December 13th, when the hours of darkness begin to diminish and the daylight hours begin to lengthen.



December 14, Tuesday

Reflection by Eric Michael Sanchez

Be kind this holiday season. How? Smile! Be friendly, say hello. Let go of any old grudges. None of these actions costs a cent, yet they can create a wealth of community and harmony.

December 15, Wednesday

Reflection by Jill Duink

December 15, the anniversary of the day Esther and I first met

“There is a simple way to connect to the divine, anytime you feel like it. If God is love, and love is action, you’ve only got to get out there and *do* it. You’ve only got to get out there and *receive* it.”
Love is the Way, pages 29 and 30, by Bishop Michael Curry



December 16, Thursday

Reflection by Julie Daye

Come Thou

Golden leaves drop and,
skeletons of trees emerge.
Night shortens the light.

The Earth breathes silence.
A Baby cries out a song
like a winter sunrise.



December 17, Friday

Reflection by Janet Pinkerton

The last month of pregnancy is intense: things are getting real, you are ready for this to be over, you wonder what the future holds. So, as we prepare for Advent, I think of Mary - what she must have felt, experienced and thought. One doctor said to me, when I was pregnant and after a period of medical uncertainty, pointing to my large belly: "This is the most control you will ever have over that baby." He was right. When you have a child, all of a sudden your heart is walking out in the world. You rejoice in their successes; you fear for their safety and want to assuage their hurts. But when you are pregnant, waiting for your first baby, you don't yet know any of that. You have no idea what's in store for you and your child. So you wonder, and maybe you fear, but all you can do is wait - ideally with patience and relaxed expectation - to meet what comes with courage and fortitude.



Extra Reflections by Christine Pickup

“I shall pass through life but once. Let me show kindness now, as I shall not pass this way again.” ---- William Penn

I have been reading up on the history of Philadelphia and came across a series of quotes by William Penn. This quote reminds to be kind every chance that I get as the chance may not come again

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension: it is the presence of justice." Martin Luther King Jr.

I used to think of peace as a passive state of calm. MLK reminds us that peace, like justice, requires effort. It's hard work! May God give us the strength to work peace in our world.

December 18, Saturday Reflection by Ann Brilliant

A perfect sunset to enjoy with loved ones.

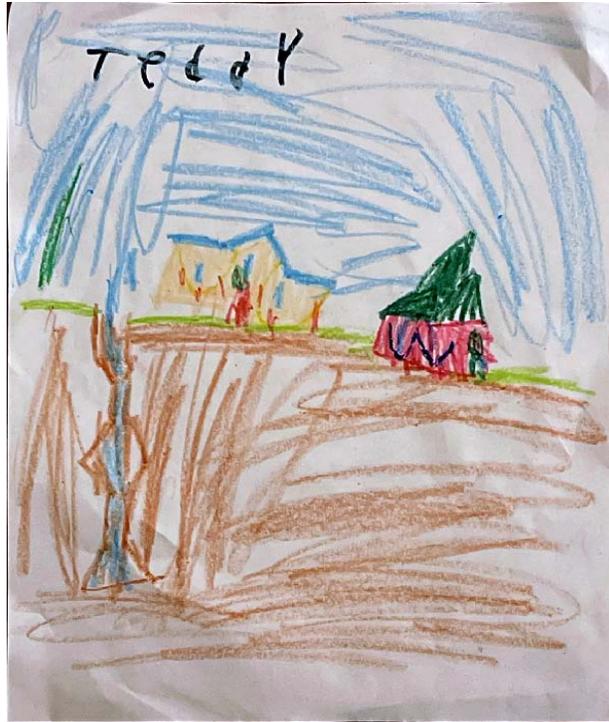


December 19, Sunday Reflection by Jaime Konowal

He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth – Luke 1:14. On December 19th 2015 I was officially in labor. I was anticipating the birth of my son. I always wanted a son and my wish was about to come true. The exciting part about this time of the year is also the anticipation of the birth of Jesus. Many times during the two (almost three) days that I was in active labor, I had thought about Mary and how she was feeling with the anticipation of the birth of her son. In Luke 1:46-49 Mary says to Elizabeth about carrying Jesus, “Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me.” This passage speaks to me because after many years of trying to get pregnant it was finally happening and I knew that the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. What do you anticipate during this time?

December 20, Monday Happy Birthday Teddy!

Reflection by Teddy Konowal



Church and house decorated for Christmas with a mine shaft going into the ground

December 21, Tuesday Reflection by Nora Melley

December 21st has always been one of my favorite days of the year. As a child, it was a sweet spot in the days of Christmas preparation - classes were winding down while anticipation was ramping up, and there was a pleasant hum of busyness as we prepared special outfits and secret gifts. As a teenager, I explored pagan customs and was drawn to the lights and rituals that are present in many cultures on this day of the winter solstice. As an adult, while I disliked the imperialism that led to Constantine celebrating Christ's birth in December, I appreciated the symbolism of linking the birth of Jesus to the returning of the light. Six years ago, as a new mother with an infant in the NICU, I was struck by the convergence of new life growing stronger with the slowly lengthening days. And now, each year, I light a candle or a fire and welcome the returning light.

December 22, Wednesday Reflection by Cathy Ufheil

A newly betrothed couple is forced to register for a census in a town far from their own. The woman is nine months pregnant. They must travel about 90 miles on unpaved roads during the winter in the Judean desert when it is cold during the day, freezing at night and it frequently rains. In her condition, they probably could cover 10 miles a day. There are bandits and wild animals to contend with. And when they reach their destination, the hardships continue...there is no room at the inn. The Son of God is born in a cave.



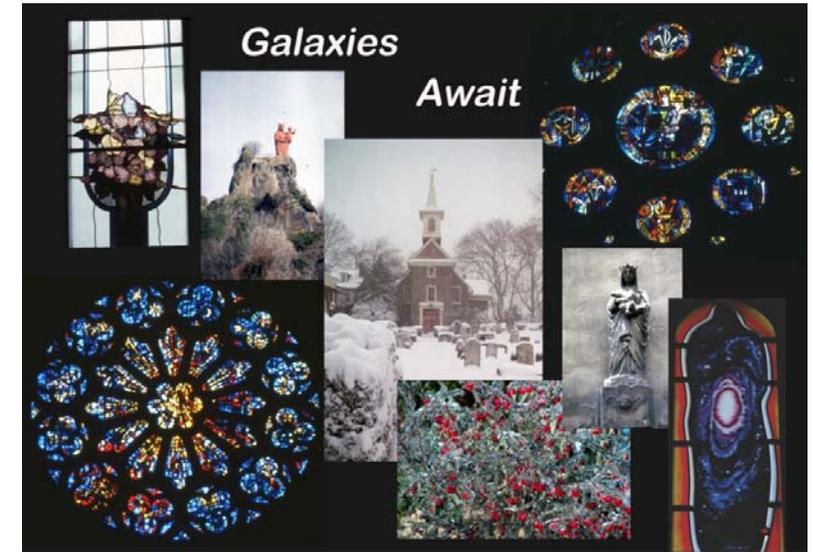
December 23, Thursday

Reflection by Heather Myers



Never too old to believe

Reflection by Paul Fejko



December 24, Friday Happy Birthday Bella!

Reflection by Bella and Sarah Eisenstein

December 24th, Christmas Eve, Holy Night or The Good Night, the anticipation, waiting for the birth of Jesus. In our family, Christmas Eve is also the day we celebrate the birth of Isabella Katherine Eisenstein, our first born and the beginning of our beautiful family story. 18 years ago, as our family prepared for Christmas, we were also preparing, anticipating, patiently waiting for our miracle to arrive and on the morning of December 24, 2003 at 7:18 in the morning, she was born, forever changing our lives and our understanding of love and light.



So this year and every year since we celebrate, we celebrate miracle births, we celebrate light and we celebrate hope.....Merry Christmas!

