



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Advent December 4, 2016

Welcoming the Stranger

By Mary Katharine Deeley

About this time of year, nearly everyone is preparing to visit or be visited as families gather for traditional Christmas preparations, concerts, and meals. At our house, we also make way for those who have no one to visit—whether because of distance or circumstance.

I wonder, though, whether we'd welcome a stranger or someone who challenged the way we live or think about things. Paul tells everyone to welcome one another and to glorify God with one

voice. That's easier when everyone thinks alike. Not all of us want to reflect on the possibility that we may be wrong.

This is the issue facing the religious leaders when John the Baptist bursts onto the scene, calling on everyone to repent and prepare for the kingdom of God. John recognizes that they came to him for show—not because they sought repentance for sin. He wastes no time demanding evidence of the “good fruit” repentance brings and warning about the consequences if it's not forthcoming.

John is a challenging guest for us as well. Sometimes we want to dictate the outcome of our discussion and our lives, but John demands that we show the fruit of our efforts. It's not enough to go through the motions of living faithfully—we must give our very selves over to the will of God and the conversion of our lives. Only then can we welcome everyone in love and in the praise of God. †

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Sunday Readings

Isaiah 11:1–10

“A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.”

Romans 15:4–9

“Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God.”

Matthew 3:1–12

“[People in the whole region] were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.”

A Word From Pope Francis

The joy of the Gospel...consists in knowing one is welcomed and loved by God....He is always with us to help us to go forward. He is a God who loves us so very much, he loves us and that is why he is with us....Thanks to his help, we can always begin again. ...He is waiting for you, he is close to you, he loves you, he is merciful, he forgives you. Everybody! And so we are able to open our eyes again, to overcome sadness and mourning to strike up a new song.

—Angelus,
December 15, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- What is something you need to give back or offer up to God this Advent?
- Are you preparing for the spectacle of Christmas? Or are you ready to share the fruits of redemption?



'Tis the Season for All of Us to Sing Out

By James S. Torrents, SJ

The spirit of Advent and Christmas is best caught in the refrain of a hymn unconnected to the season: "How can I keep from singing?" The birth of a Savior for the family of Adam is such good news we are impelled to sing it out. Song is so expressive; it is an outing of the inner life at its most buoyant.

Christmas songs in English, such a wide variety, coalesce under the umbrella

of "carols." The staples of our caroling have their roots far in the past, like "O Come All Ye Faithful" (*Adeste Fideles*) or "What Child Is This?" (to the melody of "Greensleeves"). Some unforgettable voices, like Marian Anderson and Mahalia Jackson, have resounded with "Go Tell It on the Mountain" or have softened to "Sweet Little Jesus Boy," the great spirituals.

The Nativity season calls for a panoply of the songs of the world—Italian, French, Russian, Polish, whatever. The refrain of the posada, sung while Joseph and Mary go knocking on doors to find shelter for the birth, is a perfect opening for Advent.

It would not be Advent without the carolers who invade the streets and open spaces. They bundle up against the cold down at the South Street Seaport in Manhattan or go up on risers in churches and halls everywhere. The climactic moment for so many of the songful is to gather with their scores of Handel's *Messiah* and join in at the top of their lungs. So to everyone this Advent, "Sing out! Sing out!" †

Source: *Daybreaks*, © 2011 Liguori Publications

Maranatha

By Br. Victor-Antoine d'Avila-Latourrette

Advent: a quiet time of waiting and one of the year's busiest shopping times. There is great contrast between the two, so Christians who wish to take Advent and Christmas to heart are called to make serious choices. Instead of wandering from shop to shop, the Christian is asked to take time for quiet reflection and reading and to remain watchful in prayer, eagerly awaiting the coming of the Savior.

Deep within us, we hold on to the conviction that his arrival shall bring true peace to the world, the sort of peace that surpasses all understanding. As we travel through the sacred season, our desire and prayer for his coming grow in intensity. As the early Christians, we cry out from the depths of our beings,


"*Maranatha*, come, Lord Jesus, come!" At the beginning of Advent, at its very threshold, the liturgical readings invite us to be on guard and prayerful, keeping continual watch for the Lord's coming.

The whole meaning of Advent seems to be contained in this short prayer: *Maranatha*. It implies that Christ, the Messiah, is the sole object of our desires, the "Desired One" of our hearts, and so we long for his coming. As we express our longing for him through the frequent *Maranatha* praying, we notice the capacity of our hearts expanding.

Saint Bernard explains this phenomenon saying that as our longing and desire for God increases, so does the heart's capacity to receive and welcome him. As we daily walk our Advent journey, we ought to pause in a timely fashion, breathe the fresh air deeply, and from the bottom of our beings cry out: "*Maranatha*, come, Lord Jesus, come!"

The frequent recourse to the prayer would then allow the Lord's presence to take hold of us. Then, in our innermost beings, we shall experience the peace and joy of his intimate visitation. †

Source: *A Monastery Journey to Christmas*, © 2011 Liguori Publications



Lord, you have created me for goodness, love, compassion, and peace. Help me to make good use of the gifts you have given me to make a difference where I am today.

— From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*
Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 5–10

Mon. Advent Weekday:

Is 35:1–10 / Lk 5:17–26

Tue. Advent Weekday:

Is 40:1–11 / Mt 18:12–14

Wed. St. Ambrose:

Is 40:25–31 / Mt 11:28–30

Thu. Solemnity of the Immaculate

Conception: Gn 3:9–15, 20 / Eph 1:3–6, 11–12 / Lk 1:26–38

Fri. Advent Weekday:

Is 48:17–19 / Mt 11:16–19

Sat. Advent Weekday:

Sir 48:1–4, 9–11 / Mt 17:9a, 10–13