

Joyce Rupp, O.S.M.

*Welcome
the Light*

DAILY DEVOTIONS FOR ADVENT

Welcome the Light

Daily Devotions for Advent

AN ENTHUSIASTIC DANCE OF HOPE stirred in me when I began writing this Advent booklet. Almost immediately, my thoughts moved toward Christ's coming into our world as a light-filled being. I thought of how much I have grown spiritually because of this radiant presence, who is my teacher of virtue and companion of love.

Physical light is a precious gift and essential for many things. Imagine our planet without sunshine sustaining and nurturing vegetation. Light is also a valuable treasure for our interior lives. What would we do without intellectual moments of clarity or intuitive glimpses into life's unfolding mystery? No wonder the Gospel of John introduces Jesus with the following description:

*What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race.* (John 1:3-4)

Christ is our light. In ways parallel to physical illumination, Christ's light provides growth and gives guidance for each step we take on life's journey. This divine radiance draws forth goodness from the seed of our heart, just as the sun's energy draws forth green from a kernel of wheat. Christ's presence comforts and assures us, like a blazing fireplace welcomes and settles those who sit by it.

What better time than Advent to refresh our awareness of Christ's coming to us as divine light? What more appropriate season for opening our minds and hearts to welcome this treasure? May each day we pray with this Advent booklet draw us toward renewed appreciation of Christ's enriching presence. May we allow this inner light to generate kindness and goodwill toward all.

— Joyce Rupp, O.S.M.



As you begin *each day* of Advent prayer, I invite you to use the following approach:

Light a candle. Pause to remember the presence of God filling you with Light and Love.

Pray this opening prayer before reading the reflection for the day:

**Radiant Creator, awaken me to your presence.
Jesus, Light of all Lights, kindle love in my heart.
Spirit of Illumination, guide my path today.**

Read and ponder the day's reflection.

Set your intention for the day. (Today I will...)

Then, turn back to this page to *pray the following closing prayer*:

**Emmanuel, you are the Everlasting Light.
Help me to bring your love
everywhere I go.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so fully this Advent
that all my life will be a radiance of you.
Shine through me and be so in me
that everyone I come in contact with today
may feel your presence in my spirit.
Let them look and see, not just me,
but you, Light of all Lights,
shining through me. Amen.**

(adapted from John Cardinal Newman's prayer)

As you blow out the candle and the light is gone, *remember you have a divine light within you that will never go out.* You take the light of Christ with you into your day.

Scripture quotations from the *New American Bible with Revised New Testament and Psalms*. © 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of the *New American Bible* may be reprinted without permission in writing from the copyright holder.

First Sunday of Advent

A Faint Hint on the Horizon

Be vigilant at all times... Luke 21:36

AS WE ENTER ADVENT, the gospel urges us to brush the dust off our awareness. We are to become alert to God entering our lives as Emmanuel, the One sent to be our “light forever” (Isaiah 60:19). Becoming vigilant about this radiant presence is like patiently waiting for a sunrise: as we sit in the predawn’s deep darkness, our eyes strain to see form and shape. Gradually a faint hint of light spreads over the sky and we begin to notice outlines of trees, buildings, mountains. Eventually (on a good sunrise day) the entire eastern horizon blazes with glorious color, filling our eyes with beauty.

The people of old waiting for a savior were like people waiting for a sunrise. Eventually the Christ-Light came to dispel what kept them from seeing clearly. The Beloved Child who came to dispel the darkness in human hearts was much greater than a magnificent sunrise. The loving radiance of this divine being in human form blazed through the bleakness of the world, although many were not alert enough to recognize who was living among them.

Advent invites us to turn our hearts toward Emmanuel, who called himself the “light of the world” (John 8:12) and whom John’s Gospel describes as “the light of the human race” (John 1:4). No longer the Babe in Bethlehem, the Risen Christ is always near.

How easy it is to forget God is with us. Advent calls: “Stay awake! Watch for this ever-present love within you and among you. Welcome the wonder of this astounding gift. Share this blessed light with others by your loving deeds.”

Today

I will look for the ways the Divine Light is evident in my life.

Monday, First Week of Advent

Why These Lights?



*If your face shine upon us,
then we shall be safe.* Psalm 80:4

THE FOUR CANDLES of the Advent wreath indicate four weeks of waiting, of course, but why use *candles* as the symbol for the passage of time? Why not add a flower to a vase each week or turn the hand of a clock instead of lighting a candle?

The use of light reminds us that Emmanuel came as a shining radiance into a turbulent world, one much in need of his healing presence. In the gospel stories it is easy to see how Jesus is filled with light. Love easily flows forth from his compassionate presence. His whole self radiates warmth and goodness. Everywhere he goes, the inner light of his God-ness, his goodness, shines out to others. No wonder people are drawn to him.

Saints in literature and history are often recognized or depicted by a glow or an aura of light around them. There is something about them that draws others into their presence. This “something” is the light of God’s goodness radiating forth from them. The Sufi poet Hafiz suggests that God kisses us on the forehead in the morning and lights “a Holy Lamp” inside our hearts. What an inspiring image for us to carry this Advent as we welcome the presence of Emmanuel each day. Every morning as we awaken, the first thing to remember is that our inner being is a lantern of God’s love. This eternal flame of goodness is at the core of who we are. As this divine love permeates us, we will increasingly live as a loving reflection of Christ’s light.

Today

**I will pray for the part of myself that needs
God’s light to shine more fully within it.**

Tuesday, First Week of Advent

Seeing With the Eyes of Christ

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. Luke 10:23

WE CAN HAVE THE BEST EYES in the world, but in pitch-black darkness, our eyes are of little use to us. We need light in order to see our way. Advent is a season for Christ, our Light, to break through our spiritual darkness. When I consider the shadows that pervade my heart, they are usually the results of the way I see things. This seeing involves illusory notions I have of other persons, limited understandings of a situation and unreal expectations that I foist upon others.

Sometimes my lack of seeing is due to my failure to know myself as I truly am or because my blind spots hide a part of myself from me. It always takes a while before I have the *eyes* to see how foolish my thoughts, feelings and actions are. I come to see more clearly when I accept the guidance and insight offered to me by the Indwelling Christ. The light of this inner guidance is essential for my spiritual growth and well-being. Without this divine direction, I would continually judge others falsely and unkindly.

Jesus told his disciples they were fortunate to be able to see what they did. He helped them look beyond and beneath their limited perceptions to the deeper reality of each one's goodness. Jesus continually guided his disciples by the light of his message, encouraging them to understand and accept the kingdom of love. It was up to them to follow and live out the clarity he offered to them.

Today

I will look with the eyes of Christ on one person or situation that causes me distress.

Wednesday, First Week of Advent

Comfort Amid Distress

*The Lord GOD will wipe away
the tears from all faces.* Isaiah 25:8

ADVENT IS MY FAVORITE Church season. The combination of hope and joy inherent in this rich period of anticipation and remembrance stirs my heart with renewed confidence in God's abiding presence. But I do not always feel Advent's optimism right away. It might take the whole four weeks for this stirring to happen, but the turn toward renewed hope is well worth the wait.

Few of us will go through the four weeks of Advent without some burden, some struggle that seems an inescapable part of our lives. And we are not alone, for in many parts of our world, the absence of joy and hope are keenly felt. This time of year is not a happy one for those who are experiencing hurts such as grief, financial stress or persistent warfare. Others struggle with living with AIDS, worry about rebellious children, the challenges of remaining faithful to recovery programs or feelings of uselessness due to aging or extended disability. We all know someone in need of hope in his or her life. We all have a relative, friend or coworker who reminds us that joy is something many desire but lack.

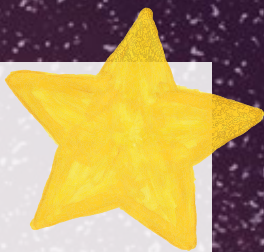
The distraught and distressed are part of our Advent preparation. If we have the heart of Jesus, we will desire consolation not only for ourselves, but for all whose faces are filled with tears. Our inner Source of Light offers us assurance, care and comfort amid the unwanted parts of our days. Let us turn inward, rest in this loving light and daily extend God's great love to others through our prayer and our compassionate action.

Today

**I will bring into my prayer and my heart
someone who is hurting right now.**



A Christmas Prayer



Source of divine Light, Emmanuel, God-with-us,
your radiant love illuminated our waiting world
with the surprise of your Bethlehem birth.

Each year since then we celebrate this astonishing event,
rejoicing in your coming anew, not as a newborn Babe,
but as the hidden presence of divinity contained within each of us.
To our great astonishment, we have become your dwelling place.
We are now your Bethlehem.

Now you are Treasure birthed in the secret place of our soul.
Now you are Light gleaming through our gestures of generosity.
Now you are Hope radiating inside the core of our courage.
Now you are Joy shining into the dark caves of our gloom.
Now you are Peace glowing quietly in the crevice of our anxiety.
Now you are Love brilliantly reflected within our kindness.

O Christ, Light of all lights, Star of all stars,
dweller within these human homes of ours,
open our wandering minds and hesitant hearts
so your endless goodness radiates more completely in us.

We welcome you again and again, with gratitude and trust,
not only in this Christmas season of remembrance and celebration,
but all through the new year that awaits us.

— *Joyce Rupp*

What better time than Advent to refresh our awareness of Christ's coming to us as divine light? What more appropriate season for opening our minds and hearts to welcome this treasure? Through Scripture-based devotions, Joyce Rupp, O.S.M., makes the most of images and metaphors to deepen our spiritual senses and open our minds and hearts to welcome the treasure of Christ's light within us.