



Heading
to the
Manger

ADVENT MEDITATIONS FOR CATHOLICS
FROM GREAT WRITERS OF THE PAST





Wednesday, First Week of Advent

THE VALUE OF HUMILITY

And Mary said, “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; . . . he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate.”

Luke 1:46-48, 52

*T*here is no shame in appearing to be poor in the world’s eyes and serving others because of your love for Jesus Christ.

Take no glory in money, if you have any, or in influential friends. Glory in God who gives you everything and above all wants to give you himself.

Avoid boasting about the size or beauty of your body, which a little illness can disfigure or destroy.

Have no pride in your native wit or talent. Reject the thought that you are better than anyone else. God knows what is in you. There is no excuse for being haughty.

Pride about our good deeds is pointless. God has his own ideas regarding what is good, and he does not always agree with us. If there is anything good about you, believe better things of others. This will keep you humble.

It will not hurt at all to consider yourself less righteous than others, but it will be disastrous for you to consider yourself better than even one other person.

The humble are always at peace; the proud are often envious and angry.

—Thomas à Kempis

Prayer

I confess that at times I’m a little prideful, Lord. I worry about money; I covet the nice things of this world. But you sent your Son, surprising everyone by exalting those of humble estate. I want the peace that humility brings. Teach me in this Advent season that it is not about “stuff.” *You* are the reason for the season.





Thursday, First Week of Advent

SEEING CHRIST

And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:7

I had often called myself an optimist, to avoid the too evident blasphemy of pessimism. But all the optimism of the age had been false and disheartening for this reason, that it had always been trying to prove that we fit in to the world.

The Christian optimism is based on the fact that we do NOT fit in to the world. I had tried to be happy by telling myself that man is an animal, like any other which sought its meat from God. But now I really was happy, for I had learnt that man is a monstrosity. I had been right in feeling all things as odd, for I myself was at once worse and better than all thing.

—G. K. Chesterton

Prayer

I'd like to think that I would have gladly given up my room in the inn to your parents—seeing your mother ready to give birth to you, Jesus. But mostly likely, I would have snuggled into my comfortable bed without so much as a second glance. And that's how I live today, too. Especially in this Advent season, help me to have a heart for the needy around me, Lord. For as you said, when I help them, I am helping you. Then help me to continue to have a caring heart.





Friday, First Week of Advent

TRUST THE PROMISES

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

Jeremiah 33:14-15

*T*here was a castle, called Doubting Castle, inhabited by the Giant Despair. Christian and Hopeful were sleeping on the castle grounds. The giant caught them and took them inside. He put them into a very dark and nasty dungeon. He flogged them, beating them senseless.

On Friday the Giant Despair asked them, “Why do you want to live when life is so bitter?” He explained that since they would never escape his dungeon it would be best if they killed themselves with knife, rope, or poison. . . .

Left alone, the prisoners began to decide what to do. They agreed that the grave would be easier to take than this dungeon. And yet, they considered that the God who made the world might also cause the Giant Despair to die, or at least to be careless about locking them up. They decided to be patient and to endure. . . .

About midnight that Saturday they began to pray. They continued in prayer until almost sunrise.

“What a fool I am!” shouted Christian. “I am in this stinking dungeon when I could be free! I’ve got the key right here with me. It’s called Promise, and it will open any lock in Doubting Castle.”

—John Bunyan

Prayer

Help me to trust in your promises, dear Lord. You have never broken a single one and you never will. When I have doubts, lead me to the promises in your Word. Thank you for the promise of your Son who came and the promise that he is coming back.





Saturday, First Week of Advent

GOD WITH US

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 7:14

*W*e know in our Faith that God alone took our nature, and none but He; and furthermore that Christ alone did all the works that belong to our salvation, and none but He; and right so He alone doeth now the last end: that is to say, He dwelleth here with us, and ruleth us and governeth us in this living, and bringeth us to His bliss.

And this shall He do as long as any soul is in earth that shall come to heaven—and so far forth that if there were no such soul but one, He should be withal alone till He had brought him up to His bliss. I believe and understand the ministration of angels, as clerks tell us: but it was not shewed me. For Himself is nearest and meekest, highest and lowest, and doeth all. And not only all that we need, but also He doeth all that is worshipful, to our joy in heaven.

—Julian of Norwich

Prayer

Without you, I am without hope in this life and in the next. Thank you, Jesus, for coming so that I might be able to draw close to God. Thank you for taking on flesh like mine and becoming the Mediator between sinful me and holy God.





Second Sunday of Advent

CONCEALED IN THE FLESH

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. . .

1 John 4:2

*I*t ought not to be a matter of wonder that a miracle was wrought by God; the wonder would be if man had wrought it. Rather ought we to rejoice than wonder that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was made man, than that He performed divine works among men. It is of greater importance to our salvation what He was made for men, than what He did among men: it is more important that he healed the faults of souls, than that he healed the weaknesses of mortal bodies. But as the soul knew not Him by whom it was to be healed, and had eyes in the flesh whereby to see corporeal deeds, but had not yet sound eyes in the heart with which to recognize Him as God concealed in the flesh, he wrought what the soul was able to see, in order to heal that by which it was not able to see.

—Augustine

Prayer

I rejoice that you came as a man, in mortal flesh. You healed bodies and you saved souls. Thank you!





Monday, Second Week of Advent

FORSAKING ALL FOR HIM

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

Isaiah 53:2-3

*H*e was himself that Word, fulfilling all righteousness, blessed of God forever, the infallible Example, the eternal Wisdom, Love and Truth, the brightness of the divine glory, the express image of his Father, after whom the first man was created, understand according to the inner man, the eternal power of God, the Almighty Word of God, through whom all things were created, are governed, and in whom all things stand. He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; he is the true light of eternal life, and by the darkness, which is in the world, he is hated, blasphemed, rejected, despised, and trampled upon as the most degraded of men. The King of kings, the Lord of lords, became poorer than the foxes or the birds; for he had not where to rest his blessed head. On the day of his birth, there was no room in the inn; the manger was his couch. . . .

Therefore, my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord, take the crucified Jesus as your example, and also all the righteous apostles and prophets of God, and learn through them, how they all entered at this strait gate and forsook their all. They prepared their hearts and were endued and drawn of God, that they knew, sought, loved and desired nothing else than eternal, heavenly blessings, the unchangeable things, God and eternal life.

—Menno Simons

Prayer

Jesus, you are my example. I want to enter the “strait gate,” forsake all and follow you. I desire nothing more than I desire you.



*And they went with haste and found Mary
and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.*

Luke 2:16

Heading to the Manger

Advent Meditations for Catholics
from Great Writers of the Past

*L*ike the shepherds before us, all of us are heading to the manger during the season of Advent, but we are not making this journey alone. We have the voices of many of the faithful followers of Christ ringing in our ears as we draw closer to the newborn Christ. Listen to the voices of such Christian luminaries as St. Augustine, Thomas à Kempis, G. K. Chesterton, John Henry Cardinal Newman and others in these pages as they reflect on the miracle of Christmas toward which we are swiftly moving. Then, like the shepherds, use your voice to spread abroad the Good News of Christ's birth!

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