

AND THE
WORD
WAS
GOD

ADVENT DEVOTIONS



INSPIRATION FROM
HENRIJ. M.
NOUWEN



This booklet, as you would expect, is filled with words. Words from Scripture, words from Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Catholic priest, psychologist, professor, writer and pastor, and words from well-known Creative Communications author Christopher Klofft.

But more importantly, it is filled with spiritual truths from the Word Incarnate. When heaven touched earth in such a unique way more than 2,000 years ago, God fulfilled his promise of a Messiah and Jesus was born. *And the Word Was God* (John 1:1).

Henri Nouwen (1932-1996), through his more than three dozen books that have sold more than seven million copies worldwide, has had a tremendous impact on the spiritual enrichment of millions. Here, in *And the Word Was God*, we are presenting excerpts from some of Nouwen's most beloved works. These excerpts are accompanied by select Scripture passages, original reflections and prayers. All of these ingredients are designed to inspire you to be more prayerful, more reflective, more focused on your faith.

We hope and pray that you will allow the words in this booklet to help you more fully celebrate Advent and, therefore, be better prepared to celebrate the joy and wonder of the Incarnation.

Terence Hegarty, editor

The First Sunday of Advent

MAY I HAVE A WORD?

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

Matthew 24:35

It is through the incarnation of the Word in us that we enter eternal life. "Heaven and earth will pass away," Jesus says, "but my words will never pass away." Jesus is the Word, and his words are everlasting life. His Word is the bread that takes our hunger away, the light that dispels our darkness, and the life that allows us to face death without fear. (The Selfless Way of Christ, 80)

Before the advent of even creation itself, God eternally speaks but one Word. This one Word, this one image, this one idea of God is perfect as he is perfect and thus is nothing less than God himself. All of creation comes to be through this Word, and all that ever will be will be finally summed up again in this same Word. In the time and space between "what was" and "what will be," we live. We live, always listening for that Word throughout all of our days.

In a special way, as we now enter this new season of Advent, let us quiet ourselves so that we can attentively listen for that one Word that is the fulfillment of all things. In history, that one Word became flesh. In our lives now, let's make room for that Word to be incarnate anew in us. In doing so, we prepare ourselves to have the fulfillment of all our most heartfelt longings.

Lord, at the beginning of this season, quiet my heart and my mind so that I may listen for your Word. Amen.

Monday, the First Week of Advent
HEARTS FULL OF HOPE

...hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

Romans 5:5

In the prayer of hope, there are no guarantees asked, no conditions posed and no proofs demanded. You expect everything from the other without binding the other in any way. Hope is based on the premise that the other gives only what is good. (With Open Hands, 70)

We all put so much hope in so many things every day. We hope that the weather will be better, we hope that traffic will be light on the way home from work, we hope that we get what we really want for Christmas. Most of these “hopes,” however, are not really hopes at all. Rather, they are merely expressions of desire—sincere wishes to be sure, but not the same as the hope that God offers to us.

The virtue of hope is the confidence that God is in complete control of our lives, and as such, we have nothing to fear. When we think of the struggles of our lives, it can be really hard to let go and trust in this way! And yet, Christ calls us to do just that: to rest in peace with his Holy Spirit in our hearts. In the hopeful space we make for him, he assures us: “I have it under control.”

Heavenly Father, I want to trust that my life is totally in your hands. Grant peace to my heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, the First Week of Advent

NEW BEGINNINGS

And the one who was seated on the throne said, "See, I am making all things new."

Revelation 21:5

The Christian witness is a critical witness because the Christian professes that the Lord will come again and make all things new. The Christian life calls for radical changes because the Christian assumes a critical distance from the world and, in spite of all contradictions, keeps saying that a new way of being human and a new peace are possible. (With Open Hands, 105)

The season of Advent does not immediately point us toward the feast of Christmas. Rather, the first half of Advent invites us to reflect, not on the coming of Christ in the historical past, but rather the second coming of Christ at the end of time. The whole drama of salvation history follows the movement of God's saving love: He creates out of love, we reject him in our selfishness, he restores us by his love, and he then invites us to participate in his love toward the perfection of all creation.

The inauguration of the new creation effected by Christ began with his coming in history. Now the work continues through us, his mystical body. Each season, he makes things new. This Advent season, what will I do to distance myself from my own selfishness and move toward the fullness of my humanity in Christ?

Jesus, I know that you call me to live for you and not for myself. Erase the selfishness from my heart so that I can be filled by you. Amen.

Wednesday, the First Week of Advent
THE POWER OF MERCY

...through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Colossians 1:20

God chose to enter into human history in complete weakness. That divine choice forms the center of the Christian faith. In Jesus of Nazareth, the powerless God appeared among us to unmask the illusion of power, to disarm the prince of darkness who rules the world, and to bring the divided human race to a new unity. It is through total and unmitigated powerlessness that God shows us divine mercy. (Finding My Way Home, 33)

We live in a world in which people increasingly distrust or even fear people in power. There are simply too many examples every day for many of us to ignore. Even though God makes temporal power possible for some people, it is meant to be used for the building up of communities and the building up of the kingdom of heaven. Because of human selfishness, however, power often ends up serving darkness rather than the light.

Christ reveals to us the true meaning of power and invites us to reflect on it this season. The world may be in the grip of the powers of darkness, but the true power of the universe arrives in secret, in the form of a tiny baby. This baby becomes the model for all of us: by letting go of our desire for power and control, we receive God's mercy.

Lord Jesus, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Amen.

Thursday, the First Week of Advent

OUTSIDE THE LINES

...when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman...in order to redeem those...under the law, so that we might receive adoption...

Galatians 4:4-5

In the center of our faith as Christians stands the mystery that God chose to reveal the divine mystery by unreserved submission to the downward pull. God not only chose an insignificant people to carry the Word of salvation through the centuries, not only chose a small remnant of those people to fulfill God's promises, not only chose a humble girl in an unknown town in Galilee to become the temple of the Word, but God also chose to manifest the fullness of divine love in a man whose life led to a humiliating death outside the walls of the city. (The Selfless Way of Christ, 29-30)

Some people now refer to our world as “post-Christian.” The idea behind this term is that secular culture has moved past the Christian faith that civilized so much of the world. By this reckoning of history, having a connection to Christianity is having a connection to an old order whose time has passed, a former power in the world from which humanity needs to move on.

Such a view of history fails to see that God has always operated “outside the lines” of power. God chooses the weak and insignificant through which to work his will. The incarnate God stands against the unholy powers of the time and accepts his end as a rebel against them. Far from being the power of the world, the Christian faith is intended to be profoundly countercultural. This Advent season, how can I choose to grow closer to Christ? How can I choose to stay away from the powers that failed to recognize him?

Lord, give me the wisdom to understand the world and my place within it. Give me, I pray, the courage to be your witness. Amen.

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These reflections will inspire you to practice a more focused, prayerful and reflective Advent season. Featuring daily Scriptural inspiration, accompanied by the writings of **Henri J .M. Nouwen**, a theological master, this gem of a spiritual resource will guide you through Advent with hope, faith, joy and peace. Original reflections and prayers, written by well-known Creative Communications author Christopher Klofft, are also part of the daily inspiration provided on the pages within. With the help of this resource, may you come to know that the Word Incarnate is accompanying you every day of Advent and beyond.



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