

DAYbreaks

Daily Reflections for
Advent and Christmas

We hope you enjoy these sample pages. For ordering
information, visit Liguori.org or call 800-325-9521.



Introduction

When I was a child, my family filled Advent with pre-Christmas activity. We placed a Nativity scene on a low cabinet. We surrounded it with a village of tiny houses, a Christmas bulb shining through each one's window. We put up a tree. We hung Christmas cards on strings stretched across thresholds. We made chains from strips of red and green construction paper and fastened them from the four corners of the dining room ceiling to the suspended lamp in the middle. To the front of the house we tied life-size, two-dimensional wooden images of a choir.

We drew names so that each kid could buy a gift for one of our siblings. We went shopping. We waited in anticipation for the annual visit of Grandma Turner and Aunt Billie. We baked cookies and fudge...and peanut brittle. We set a centerpiece on the dining-room table—a sleigh made from the Thanksgiving turkey rib spray-painted silver. We sang carols at the piano.

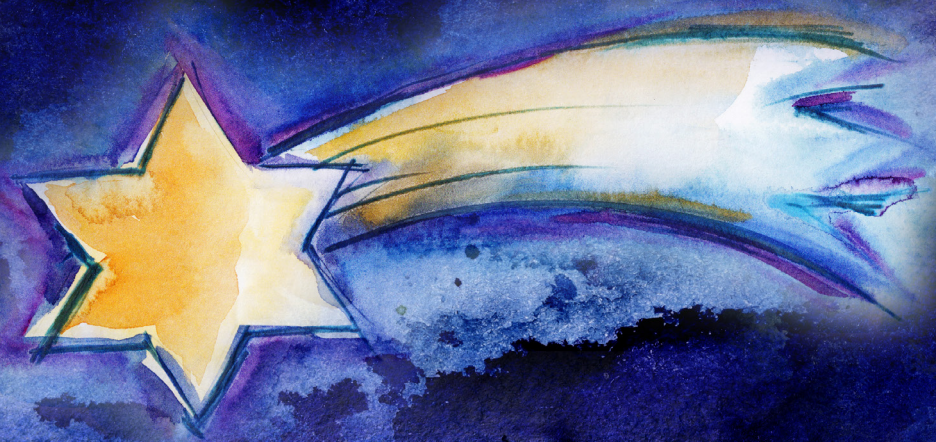
On Christmas Eve, as a family we prayed the rosary and then opened gifts. On Christmas Day, we woke up to the presents that “Santa” had placed beneath the tree. Opening the boxes brought squeals of unbridled joy.

Then, as a family, we went to Mass. Christmas wasn't Christmas without the parish Mass.

Looking back on it all, preparing our home for Christmas also prepared our hearts. I hope you also had memorable customs and that you still celebrate them with another generation.

The meditations that follow come from my ministry as a priest. The stories are true, but I've changed most of the names.

These meditations are inspired by entrance antiphons that begin the Mass each day, but you can follow them with a Bible. They prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. The biblical verses herein are still being passed down from one generation to the next.



Daily Prayer

*Open the eyes of my heart, O God,
to see your Son today.*

*Open my ears, O God,
to hear his holy word.*

*Open my hands, O God,
that through my humble deeds
others may experience your coming.*

First Sunday of Advent

Hopeful Waiting

The tumor inside Pete's brain is a metastasized site from the kidney cancer he survived eight years ago. No one saw this coming. He was fine, or thought he was fine, until he walked into a wall at work. Literally.

The diagnosis was bad enough, but the delicate surgery it required put his vast array of family and friends at prayer. Real friends; not just the passing ones people can establish through online social networks.

After the surgery, the doctor told the family that she successfully removed part of the tumor. However, she left behind the part that attached too closely to the brain.

That sounded promising. Much of the tumor was gone. The brain was protected. Then the surgeon told the family how much of the tumor she removed: thirty percent. "We'll try radiation on the rest," she said.

That alarmed one of Pete's children. "That means seventy percent of the tumor is still in there."

"No," said another child. "That means that thirty percent of it is gone. Focus on that." Thinking about all the prayer and support that had carried the family this far, he continued. "We have to keep hoping. We only have seventy percent more to go."

Advent is our season of hopeful waiting. It is not an unrealistic season. It doesn't pretend that there are no problems, sorrows, diseases, or enemies. It just keeps waiting for something better in the midst of it all.

The word "advent" means "coming," and it refers to both comings of Christ. He came long ago to a manger in Bethlehem. He promises to come again at the end of time.

When he comes, he will bring many good gifts—peace, justice, and happiness, for example. But there are days when you may be at war with people you love, when civil authorities who protect justice don't give it to you, and when you cannot find happiness doing the simple things that used to bring joy.

Maybe some misdeed from eight years ago has reappeared with a consequence you never saw coming. You blindly walked into a wall. You tried to fix it, but you were only partially successful. Maybe thirty percent.

Advent has a message for you: That means thirty percent of it is gone. Focus on that. We have to keep hoping.

O God, let no one who waits for you be disgraced.

No one is disgraced who waits for you.

Psalms 25:3



Monday, First Week of Advent

Do Not Fear

“**H**e might be a terrorist.” Amy looked frightened. She was speaking about Omar, a homeless man who hangs around our church.

Amy comes to daily Mass, and Omar sometimes walks in when we unlock the door. He leaves promptly when it’s time to close up. In between, he uses the men’s room. He naps in a pew.

People have strong opinions about Omar. Either he’s a lost child of God who needs kindness, or he’s a reckless danger to the neighborhood. Some local organizations offer outreach to the homeless, but Omar usually declines their help. Even in winter.

I couldn’t make sense of Amy’s concerns. I’d never seen Omar threaten violence. In fact, he seemed as docile as a puppy. Nonetheless, he made some people nervous.

To me, Omar just wanted to get out of bad weather for an hour at the start of the day and go to a place where people wouldn’t hassle him. I had no fears about him. But Amy did. I could not make her fears go away.

Fear is uncontrollable. It can provoke us to draw hasty conclusions, or it can move us to take helpful action.

During Advent, we celebrate our expectation of the Second Coming of Christ. Some people fear Judgment Day. Others welcome it. For the upright of heart, the coming of Christ removes fear.

O Christ, our Savior, come. Show us that we need no longer fear.

***Be strong, do not fear! Here is your
God, he comes with vindication.***

ISAIAH 35:4

Tuesday, First Week of Advent

God's Holy Ones

I'll get the font on Sunday," Fr. John texted me. I was relieved but worried.

Our parish recently replaced one old marble baptismal font with another. The "new" old font matched the sanctuary furnishings. The "old" old font occupied space in a downstairs corridor, hidden behind folding chairs.

A font deserves a better home. It deserves to be used.

Fr. John needed an old font that would match his sanctuary furnishings. He heard about ours. He asked for photos. I "messed" them. He promised to come on Sunday. I was relieved that the font would get a new home.

But I was worried. It's solid marble. It's heavy. Fr. John would need help. "I have help," he confidently texted. Sunday afternoon three of his parishioners arrived with a pickup truck, ramps, and a dolly.

It wasn't enough. This was a heavy font.

Fortunately, it was Sunday. One commodity we have on Sundays is people. Several came downstairs. It took eight of us to load the font onto the truck!

How many times have I confidently started a project only to find I couldn't do it alone? How many times have I foolishly tried it alone anyway? How simple it would be to ask for help.

During Advent, we ask our Savior to come. He comes to us every day through the hands of other people.

Come, Lord Jesus, and bring along your holy ones.

*Then the LORD, my God, will come,
and all his holy ones with him.*

ZECHARIAH 14:5

Wednesday, First Week of Advent

On Time

I like to start Mass on time, but occasionally I don't. I may do one too many tasks before leaving the rectory. Or someone may stop me on my way to the church door.

I try to remember my occasional late starts when I'm ready to begin Mass but others are not. The musicians may need extra time to post the numbers. Latecomers may be arriving through the front door. The lector may stand at the ambo, double-checking the reading. And I have to wait.

There's no point in getting annoyed. I may be on time today, but I'm not punctual every day. Even under the best of conditions.

At times it feels as though God is late. We'd like to have a prompt answer to our prayers, a timely diversion of bad weather, green traffic lights when we drive, and a parking space where and when we need it. But it often seems that God is late.

"Late" for me may be "on time" for God. Things are probably working out just fine in God's schedule. Ultimately, God will rescue us from what really matters at just the right time.

Each Advent, I connect emotionally with the Chosen People who waited centuries for the Messiah. It was worth the wait. From God's perspective, there was no delay. Jesus arrived right on time.

Come, O Lord, and do not be late.

*The vision...will surely come, it will not
be late.*

HABAKKUK 2:3

Preparing for Jesus during Advent is like awaiting the return of a friend. There are preparations and rituals we go through every year so we can be sure nothing is forgotten. But as the years go on, things change, traditions may be forgotten, or life may be too hectic for us to feel we have the time for our friend's visit.

Through everyday accounts of his pastoral ministry, Rev. Paul Turner brings the focus back to what is important as we get ready for Christmas Day. Through change, fear, and our struggle to be patient, these daily meditations will help you see God in daily life and remind you why it's important to make time to prepare for Jesus this Advent season.



Rev. Paul Turner is pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Kansas City, Missouri. A priest of the Diocese of Kansas City–St. Joseph, he holds a doctorate in sacred theology from Sant'Anselmo in Rome. He is a former president of the North American Academy of Liturgy, and he is a member of Societas Liturgica and the Catholic Academy of Liturgy. In 2013, he received both the Jubilate Deo Award (National Association of Pastoral Musicians) and the Msgr. Frederick R. McManus Award (Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions). He serves as facilitator for the International Commission on English in the Liturgy.

Imprimi Potest: Harry Grile, CSsR, Provincial, Denver Province, The Redemptorists.

Published by Liguori Publications, Liguori, Missouri 63057.

To order, call 800-325-9521, or visit liguori.org.

Copyright © 2014 Liguori Publications

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior written permission of Liguori Publications.

ISBN: 978-0-7648-2540-8

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible*, © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C., and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Liguori Publications, a nonprofit corporation, is an apostolate of The Redemptorists.

To learn more about The Redemptorists, visit Redemptorists.com.

Cover design: Lorena Jimenez. Images: Shutterstock

Printed in the United States of America • First Edition

18 17 16 15 14 / 5 4 3 2 1



Liguori

ONE LIGUORI DRIVE
LIGUORI MO 63057-9999

ISBN 978-0-7648-2540-8



9 780764 825408