



Reflections for the
Season of Advent 2017

Edgewood College

Reflections available during Advent at: www.edgewood.edu/reflections

For centuries, the Catholic tradition has set aside “Advent” time, beginning the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day and concluding Christmas Eve. Advent, derived from Latin, means “arrival” or “coming.” Through December’s ever shorter and colder days, Christians await in hope the Light of the World, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas.

For contemporary American culture, Advent’s reflective, hopeful mood is easily overshadowed by the holiday season’s relentless details and events. We hope you will find this book a source of peace and inspiration in the midst of the season’s activities. The book offers a daily reflection from contributors throughout the Edgewood College community. Their reflections are based on Advent Scripture readings in the Common Christian lectionary. Because of space constraints, generally only a verse or two of the selected Scripture reading is included.

We welcome your feedback; please email jmaglior@edgewood.edu. Thank you.

*Dominican Life and Mission
Edgewood College*

Cover art based on Isaiah 7:14. Therefore the Lord will give you a sign: look the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

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Sunday, December 3

Isaiah 63: 16b-17, 19b; 64: 2-7. Why do you let us wander, O God, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?

Isaiah brings to mind the quote, “Not all who wander are lost,” as Isaiah asks, “Why have you made us sin against you?” Just as Isaiah asks, we may wonder too, why am I wandering? Why am I lost? As we wander in life, encompassing faith, career, vocation and self-development, God, parent-like, allows a course where we may seem lost. Yet, when we arrive at our destination, we are no longer lost and emerge from the challenge of wandering strengthened by finding our way. Supporting those who wander is at the heart of what we do as educators, parents, and leaders. While wandering, we may feel a distance from those we love and those who love us, yet when we welcome a wandering soul or are welcomed ourselves, we experience the hand upon the clay. The gentle touch of those that molded us tells us no, we are not lost.

*Angela Mihm-Nigro, Coordinator, Doctoral Dissertation
Ed.D. Program*

Monday, December 4

Isaiah 2: 1-5. Many shall come and say, “Let us climb God’s mountain that God may instruct us and we may walk in God’s paths. Come...let us walk in the light of our God!”

On the first weekday of Advent, we are presented with the prophet Isaiah’s vision of people from all nations choosing to focus energies in a common direction. Isaiah describes a stream of people inviting others to join them, encouraging one another to seek God’s guidance and to walk God’s pathways; transforming their weapons of war into equipment that readies the soil, cares for the earth and its inhabitants, opening a way for other travelers on this holy pilgrimage.

This communal vision seems impossible for our fractured, suffering world yet each of us is invited to join the groundswell of seekers from every land who long for God’s grace and mercy to light our way.

Want to walk together?

Mary Klink, Director for Spiritual Life, Dominican Life

Tuesday, December 5

Isaiah 11: 1-10. Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide.

In this scripture, I was drawn to the phrase, “not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide.” This passage caught my attention, because I think it’s incredibly important not to make quick judgments about people or let others sway our opinion. In my experiences working primarily with people who have disabilities, they often get judged before people get to know them. I believe if we all took time to truly get to know people and their intentions, we may find that we are more alike than different.

I believe this phrase is relevant today because our country is extremely divided by judgment. It is not fair to judge others for their differences. We should embrace each other and learn from diversity. What makes this world amazing is that we can be from diverse backgrounds, but come together to build a just and compassionate world.

Brianna Huebner, Cutting Edge Program, School of Education

Wednesday, December 6

Isaiah 25: 6-10. On that day it will be said: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us! This is our God for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that God has saved us!"

The scripture reminds us of the power our faith in our God can have. That such faith won’t just provide sustenance but, provide us with a great feast. Doesn’t just make things better but, wipe our tears away. We are also reminded to show our thankfulness for our God’s grace and to never forget our need for God in our lives.

Al Brisack, Director of Athletics/Baseball Coach

Thursday, December 7

Isaiah 26: 1-6. Open the gates that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in.... For God has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city. God lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust. The foot tramples it, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy.

To me, this says that each of us is a nation unto God. Our heart is that nation and we are being asked to open our heart and let others in and to do so with a just and peaceful heart. We are asked to care for those who have less, allowing them to be lifted up, not just those who are exactly like us but all who wish to gather in God's name without judgment. In this troubling time, this verse is a good reminder that we have been asked to be a nation of peace, for in that peace we will be strong. Although we may look, believe, and live differently, different is not wrong. It's just different.

Judi Culver, The Family Center, Clinical Coordinator

Friday, December 8

Luke 1:26-38. The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary... "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus."

What a shock for a young, unmarried girl to have an angel appear and tell her she would be having a baby!

Yet Gabriel told Mary not to be afraid. He reminded her of Elizabeth's miracle pregnancy and said nothing will be impossible for God. God is reminding us to have faith and believe, when we are scared – even when the situation seems out of control. Jesus repeats this advice in Luke 18:27, what is impossible with humans is possible with God.

Remembering that all things are possible with God is a daily struggle for me. Too often we try to take things into our own hands. Mary's faith in God is a good reminder that we need to let go and believe! This verse brings to mind Nicole C. Mullen's song, —Call On Jesus. The refrain is, "When I call on Jesus, all things are possible!"

*Ruth Baier
Professional Advisor, Henry Predolin School of Nursing*

Saturday, December 9

Isaiah 30: 19-21, 23-26. God will be gracious to you when you cry out, as soon as God hears God will answer you.

The beginning of this passage is a mystery to me, how a God who loves us so much can allow pain and suffering. This prayer has been helpful to me:

“As we look at the world around us, we struggle as we see people afflicted with terrible pain and suffering. Our hearts ache for those whose lives have been touched by hatred, violence and discrimination. We don’t understand when innocent bystanders and children are affected. We want to remain hopeful, but sometimes it is difficult.

Remind us that you came to us in the fully human Jesus, lived among us, and died and rose for us, that you might take our sin and suffering upon yourself. Help us turn our uncertainties over to you, knowing that full compassion is more important than full understanding. As we see those who are suffering, empower us to help in the ways available to us” (United Church of Christ, 2006).

*Margaret Noreuil
Dean and Professor, Henry Predolin School of Nursing*

Sunday, December 10

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11. Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated.

In the world today, many people have to struggle in their lives. People suffer from the sadness of losing jobs and even people whom they love. They find life is so terrible and hard that they lose hope, joy, and faith in God. Through the prophet Isaiah, God calls us to bring comfort and love to these people. This message from Isaiah encourages and challenges us to be witnesses of God’s mercy. Opening our hands and hearts and then giving comfort to people is an important action we do during Advent to prepare for the coming of Jesus.

Vong Nguyen, O.P., Junior, Psychology

Monday, December 11

Isaiah 35: 1-10. They will see the glory of God, the splendor of our God.

This text from Isaiah trumpets the benefits to that earthly environment and by extension to our climate. It also screams of the miraculous benefits to people, to those from the feeble and frightened to the blind and lame.

What causes all this? The glory and splendor of God.
For whom? "...for those with a journey to make."

I like to see life as a journey, especially a life in and with God. It can be so difficult at times to walk in God's way, to live into the vision that the Coming Christ shared with us. We often struggle to see God in our midst, to know that God is walking with us.

This text assures us that God's way is THE right way on our life's journey – the way that can bless this earth, and uplift peoples of all ages with everlasting joy and gladness.

Ken Syke, Professional Development Outreach Coordinator

Tuesday, December 12

Zechariah 2:14-17. Many nations shall join themselves to God on that day, and they shall be God's people, and God will dwell among you.

No matter our nationality, race, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, spirituality, ability, or any other identity, we are all a part of God and God dwells within us. We are a part of the eternal family and can find comfort in God.

Think about a time you felt lost or helpless. Where did you find comfort? In what ways was God present in those moments?

Sometimes we may feel alone, unheard, or unloved but God is always with us and is listening. God answers our prayers even in ways we may not expect. Because we are a part of God's family, God will never abandon us. God's glory and unconditional love reign forever. So sing and rejoice for we are people of God and God is with us.

Gisela Mejia, Elementary Education

Wednesday, December 13

Isaiah 40: 25-31. Do you not know or have you not heard?

In this passage we see hurting people who do not fully understand the power of God. They are asked multiple questions-mostly rhetorical. What stands out most is the last sentence. They are asked, have you not heard the great things God will do for you? If you place your hope in God, you will be renewed, and you will gain the strength to carry on.

In many ways this is relevant to the world we are currently living in. At a time when there is so much hate, disgust, confusion, and hurting, we need to be reminded that our hope should lie with God. It is in God that we will have renewed strength to keep fighting for, pursuing, and creating a just and compassionate world.

*Tess McCulloch, Admissions Counselor,
Edgewood College B.A., 2013*

Thursday, December 14

Isaiah 41: 13-20. I will turn the desert into a marshland, and the dry ground into springs of water.

In the journey of life dark times are inevitable. We experience these moments ourselves and we see them occurring around us. Loved ones and people in our circles pass through times of struggle. We see people in our communities and the world suffering from issues of hunger, health and violence.

This scripture brings a reminder that dark times pass. God promises to turn “desert into marshland” and “dry ground into springs of water.” Through the different faiths we follow, we can find strength within to become “fresh and new” and to “thresh the mountains” we face. Our faith in lightness after darkness aids in replacing fear and anxiety with hope and determination. This belief can lighten our load, allowing us to move forward more freely and to give to those struggling around us.

*Erin Bykowski, Asst. Director of Transportation & Security,
Edgewood College B.S., 2007, M.A., 2012*

Friday, December 15

Isaiah 48: 17-19. I, your God, teach you what is for your good, and lead you on the way you should go. If you would hearken to my commandments, your prosperity would be like a river, and your vindication like the waves of the sea; your descendants would be like the sand.

This Scripture reading speaks to the importance of a spiritual life as a follower of God who will “lead you on the way you should go.” While the benefits are not tangible, the rewards are of the highest. That “prosperity would be like a river” signifies to me a life in harmony with God’s teachings and a life that sustains those people around me. That the “descendants would be like sand” lets us know that a holy life benefits not only those we serve for now, but also the people that come after.

It is an extremely relevant passage for today as it reminds us that following the teachings and serving others may not seem to result in immediate gains but will result in the presence of God in the lives of others for generations.

Jessica Doyle, Senior Adjunct Instructor, School of Education

Saturday, December 16

Psalms 80: 2ac, 3b, 15-16, 18-19. Take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted, the one whom you yourself made strong.

In the middle of Advent, in anticipation of God’s promise we look forward with hope. This psalm reminds me, not unlike the people of Israel, during trying times we need signs of hope or we will withdraw and doubt will overcome. We need God’s attention and through prayer and ritual desire to awaken God. To find reassurance that God will make safe what God has planted – us. Not unlike the people of Israel, we seek signs in exchange for renewing our covenant with God. As the days continue to get shorter and we are still waiting, there is no better sign than the celebration of Christ’s birth to renew that covenant and let hope overcome doubt.

Michael Guns, Vice President for Business and Finance

Sunday, December 17

Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11. The spirit of God is upon me, because God has anointed me, and sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor and a day of vindication by our God....As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will God make justice and praise spring up before all the nations.

During trying times in our lives, when we are the most disillusioned, it can be easy to lose our faith in God. But it is especially during those times we must trust in God for the strength to continue and to hope for a better future. We must believe in God's message of salvation and justice for all nations. The relevance in today's world is especially pronounced. The seeds of distrust and injustice seem to be sprouting everywhere, between people and between nations. It can be increasingly difficult to find forgiveness, compassion, graciousness and hope when we are bombarded with negative and divisive rhetoric from the time we wake until the time we sleep. This passage gives me hope for a better future and calls me to renew my belief in God's message of salvation and justice for all nations.

Jan Eddy, Board of Trustees

Monday, December 18

Jeremiah 23: 5-8. ...and from all the lands to which I banished them; they shall again live on their own land.

The line "and from all the lands to which I banished them; they shall again live on their own land," stands out to me with its connection to modern day occurrences. Today, all too often, we hear stories of groups of people being forcibly removed from places they consider home. Families are torn apart, suffering occurs, and injustices are present. We are called by God to live compassionately, provide a sense of community, and seek justice for those who are affected by such events.

Sydney Wilcox, Sophomore, Accounting

Tuesday, December 19

Psalm 71: 3-4a, 5-6b, 16-17. For you are my rock and my fortress.

The magic of reading the Psalms has always been a wonder to me. Psalm 71 is a psalm of comfort and praise. It makes me feel safe. “For you are my rock.” God is forever within us. There are few things in life that we can say are “forever.” God is our refuge. Our rock. Our strength.

The Psalms are the best way of praising God. In praising God, we come to know God, and in knowing God, we come to love God. And there we find our happiness. “I proclaim your wondrous deeds.” To praise, to know, to love, to find our happiness.

Psalm 71 is a psalm of comfort and of praise. During this time of Advent, let us praise God and proclaim God’s “wondrous deeds.”

Margie Afifi; Edgewood College B.S., 1989

Wednesday, December 20

Isaiah 7:10-14. I will not ask! I will not tempt God!

As I read this scripture my thoughts have wandered to burdens. “I will not ask! I will not tempt God!” God has given us guidance for our burdens. After some reflection I found myself listening to a song by Alison Krauss, “Lay my burden down.” I share the last verse of the song,

When I was young my mom would say
Well life is hard, but that's OK
If you can make it through the day
It's not that far
No, it's not that far

I invite you to take 5 minutes of your day to let your mind wander along as you listen to the same on YouTube. (<https://goo.gl/N5Af1J>)

*John Graham
Web Manager, Marketing and Strategic Communications*

Thursday, December 21

Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21. The plan of God stands forever; the design of God's heart, through all generations.

I am drawn to the line, "The plan of God stands forever; the design of God's heart, through all generations." God has a plan for all of us, one that is mysterious and everlasting. We may come to think we have an idea of how our lives will play out, but then everything changes. We may grow frustrated that our lives are unorganized and unpredictable, but that is the beauty of God's will. Whatever you believe you are meant to do, God's plan for you is better, and God will guide you on that path. I think this is very important to keep in mind, as many of us college students, especially those approaching graduation, feel anxious and lost when thinking about the future.

Kayla Nytes, Senior, Nursing

Friday, December 22

Luke 1:46-56. My soul proclaims Your greatness, O God; my spirit rejoices in You, my savior.

I'm thinking that Mary is very, very thankful to her God for what has happened to her. She praises God's greatness and seems very happy that she will be considered BLESSED for all time. Don't we all have those moments when we feel truly blessed...with good fortune, luck, family, success?

Unfortunately the other things she praises God for: scattering the proud in their conceit, sending the rich away empty, casting down the mighty from their thrones....et al..... don't seem to be coming to fruition these days. In fact, it seems the opposite is true.

In this world and these difficult times, it's basic to human nature to waiver in confidence that things will be better. Being thankful for, and humble with what we have, strengthens our ability to navigate in a disgruntled society with a sense of morality and decency. If we can hold on to that God will indeed bless us.

Jane Fasse, Senior Lecturer, Art Department

Saturday, December 23

Malachi 3: 1-4, 23-24. And who can stand when he appears?

These verses speak to the dual reaction people have to anticipation. On the one hand we have fear and on the other hope. We doubt we have the abilities to pass any tests as the question asks, “And who can stand when he appears?” We fear failure and suffer great anxiety about change. However, we have teachers, mentors, family who like “Elijah, the prophet” guide us and offer us hope so we can be optimistic and see the positive potential in any change. We must prepare ourselves as the future can be seen as “the great and terrible day.” I find these verses relevant to us today as we are living a time of great uncertainty and should look to those that love us to help in our preparations for the future.

Danielle Skupas, Continuing Assistant Professor of Spanish

Sunday, December 24

Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16. Your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.

What does this Scripture text mean in the everyday life of a 20-something year old in the midst of striving for a degree? Maybe it means that moment when you are drowning in papers and running low on hope for graduating on time, and yet you attend one service and some quality time with your parents and cry tears of joy as you realize all the blessings you have been provided. Maybe it means that moment when you realize you’re the poorest of poor college students but you’re desperate to attend your favorite band’s concert and miraculously you win some radio competition and now not only do you have tickets but also meet and greet passes. Maybe it’s the moments of pure desperation when you realize all the coincidental miracles that pull you through, that make you more thankful and more hopeful. Maybe, just maybe those moments are God shining through. Maybe it isn’t pure coincidence and rather God providing the hope and happiness you need to survive that week of overflowing assignments. Maybe it’s realizing that as long as we put our hope and trust into God, God will shepherd and guide us to a full, abundant life. The relevance of this topic in a 20-something year old’s life lies in the fact that, day to day, God provides, keeps our thrones, or lives, firm and fulfilled forever.

Sadie Cordova, Junior, Communications

Monday, December 25

Luke 2:1-20. Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.

Today's reading reminds me of the many thousands of refugees who find themselves in a similar situation as Mary and Joseph, far from home with no place to stay. Yet, this Christmas Day we hear the hopeful words "Do not be afraid, for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy **that will be for all the people.**" The good news is the birth of an infant. Yet the deeper theology of Christmas is not the nativity, the birth, but rather the Incarnation - Emmanuel, GOD WITH US, and that makes all the difference. Incarnation is both pure grace and a work in progress. With Pope Francis we can proclaim "Where God is born, hope is born. Where God is born, peace is born. And where peace is born, there is no longer room for hatred and for war." May our Incarnate God be born anew in us all.

*Colleen Settles, O.P., Edgewood College B.S., 1971
Member of the Leadership Team, Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa*

Thank you for sharing this Advent Journey with us — to all who contributed reflections, and to you who have taken the time to pause, read, reflect, and pray during this Season. We wish you the joy, hope and peace of this holiday season.

*Dominican Life and Mission
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We welcome your feedback. Please email jmaglior@edgewood.edu



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