



Reflections for the

*Season
of Advent
2018*

Edgewood College

Reflections available
during Advent at:
<http://www.edgewood.edu>

Catholic tradition sets 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.

Advent’s reflective, hopeful mood can be 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*

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Sunday, December 2

Jeremiah 33: 14-16 The days are coming, says our God, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land. In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure; this is what they shall call her: "The LORD our justice."

The dream of many good people is to live an ethical life within an economically sustainable justice-based community aligned with the common good. This dream is fueled by a divine promise housed deep inside our conscience.

During his lifetime, Jesus responded to this divine promise by doing "what is right and just in the land." He established a path for others to follow on both the individual and societal levels.

Three core virtues are respect, fairness, and honesty. Today, and many days that follow, challenge yourself to practice these virtues in difficult situations, and reach out and help someone in need.

Denis Collins, Professor, School of Business

Monday, December 3

Isaiah 2: 1-5. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.

This part of the scripture caught my attention: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again." I interpret it as things can be used in different ways and we make a decision on how to use them. For example, we all have character traits that could be used to make the world better or to create conflict. I see that this is relevant today because there are many instances where groups of people do not get along. We should not use our strengths and skills for things that will bring us apart but we should use them to bring peace to our world. Let us take some time to reflect on how we are using the special gifts that each of us has to enrich the lives of others.

Marisol Lopez, Assistant Professor, Biological Sciences

Tuesday, December 4

Isaiah 11: 1-10. Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox.

This reading from Isaiah brings hope and encouragement. Every day, there is conflict in the world that surrounds us. We see it on the news, we see it on social media, we see it in person with our very own eyes. It can be easy to get caught up in the negativity we are surrounded by, questioning others' beliefs and even our own. However, there is still a hope that one day all nations and individuals will be brought together in peace and harmony. The first line of this passage states "a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom." If it is possible something beautiful can come from a cold, hard stump, then so is it possible that all enemies can put aside their differences, and be brought together in peace. We must continue to spread the love and create a welcoming, compassionate world.

*Ryan O'Dell, Enrollment Specialist, Admissions
Edgewood College B.A., 2015, M.A., 2017*

Wednesday, December 5

Isaiah 25: 6-10. On this mountain the God of hosts will provide for all peoples a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines.

'The God of hosts will provide for all peoples', in my opinion, represents the idea that we are never really alone. Whether you believe in God, Buddha, Allah, or another spiritual belief, people can provide encouragement during a time of uncertainty, a stranger wishing someone a good day, or someone buying lunch for a friend financially struggling. Love is everywhere, even in moments of confusion and tragedy. No matter your spirituality, having faith that someone 'will wipe away the tears' IS an honest statement. In college, it may be inspiration of spirituality or belief in humankind that allows someone to sit next to a friend struggling with loss, a professor providing encouraging words for a student making a crucial life choice, and so many other situations. In the dark times and good times people can provide each other incredible love and mercy.

Carley Hilt, Senior, Child Life

Thursday, December 6

Isaiah 26: 1-6. For God is an eternal Rock. who humbles those in high places, and the lofty city God brings down...

The entire scripture has me reflecting on our own nation today; it is one that is divided, much unlike the one described in the scripture that has purpose, faith, justice and peace. As I read this I couldn't help but feel upset about the state of our nation today. However, the scripture reminds me that we must put our trust in God. The scripture states "For God is an eternal Rock, who humbles those in high places and the lofty city God brings down; tumbles it to the ground, levels it with the dust." No matter how "lofty" or arrogant a nation and its people may be, they are no match for God. Those with faith in God, and who act in faith, will be the ones left standing and it is then that we can have a "nation that is just, one that keeps faith."

Brea Janisch, Data Manager, Admissions

Friday, December 7

Psalm 27:1-4, 13-14. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear? The Lord is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid?

In sharing my reflection on this passage, I chose to focus on the phrases 'whom should I fear' and 'of whom should I be afraid.' The word that draws my attention is fear. I believe fear is the opposite of strength, so as I live my life, drawing strength gives me the courage to not be afraid. For me, strength is a result of an internal combination of confidence, conviction and a positive attitude. As I continue to learn about different faiths and belief systems in this world, I understand that there are many sources from which to find strength and it is clear that there are many ways to empower yourself to walk through life without fear. Whether you find your strength from a mountain top view, doing yoga, watching an eagle fly or praying to Jesus, Buddha or some other god, it is comforting to know that you can give yourself the power to not be afraid, from many different sources.

*Susan VanderSanden, Director of Facilities Operations
Edgewood College B.S., 2011*

Saturday, December 8

Luke 1: 26-38. And the angel said to her in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.”

I’ve never deeply thought about Mary’s great contribution to the world as the Mother of the Son of God until I read the Scripture text this time and it reminded me of the Sanskrit mantra I learned recently during yoga practice, “Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu,” which means, “*May all beings everywhere be happy and free, and may the thoughts, words, and actions of my own life contribute in some way to that happiness and to that freedom for all.*” Chanting this mantra makes me think of how my *thoughts, words, and actions* would have influenced the environment and beings around me so far. I believe that this time of Advent is a perfect time to ask myself how I could contribute in positive ways to the community through this mantra.

*Angela Oh, Education Degree and Licensure Programs Auditor
Administrative Assistant, School of Education
Edgewood College M.A., 2012*

Sunday, December 9

Baruch 5: 1-9. Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children gathered from the east and the west at the word of the Holy One...Led away on foot by their enemies they left you: but God will bring them back to you borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones.

After reading this passage, what strikes me most is the idea of coming home. In our lives, home can mean different things to different people. Home could be a physical location, a person, a passion, or through service we offer to others. The adage is true that Home is where the heart is. During the Advent season remember to participate in things that makes the heart happy: Sharing your time with others, giving forgiveness, having compassion, or having a merciful heart. This will bring you closer to home.

*Tracy Kantor, Data and Application Manager
for Graduate and Professional Studies*

Monday, December 10

Isaiah 35: 1-10. Strengthen hands that are feeble, make firm knees that are weak, say to those whose hearts are frightened: Be strong, fear not! Here is your God.

On this day of Advent, the text of Isaiah reminds us of the hope and trust in God's promises; versus 4-6 foreshadow Jesus's coming and the final verse speaks to heaven.

This is particularly notable in the tumultuous climate we live in today. While it may seem chaotic and tempt us to believe nothing makes sense in the world, through all of this God reminds us we are not alone. God's presence fills us with hope if we will allow it – not only for today, but for a future greater than we can imagine.

Hope changes our perspective and has the ability to be immensely powerful. What gives you hope?

*Rachel Icke, Program Specialist and Outreach Coordinator,
Henry Predoline School of Nursing
Edgewood College B.S., 2018*

Tuesday, December 11

Isaiah 40:1-11. A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of God! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; The rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of God shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of God has spoken.

This passage from Isaiah is most striking in its repeated references to communication: "voice," "speaking," "crying out," "answering," "the mouth of God," and "the word of God." Just as critical as knowing your beliefs and values is the ability to articulate them. We each have the opportunity – and more importantly – the *responsibility* to use our voice to act in the name of truth and justice. Often, a false distinction is made between "talk" and "action," when in fact speaking out IS acting. In this passage, we are further reminded that we must fear not of crying out at injustice and speaking out for what is right. Although the circumstances and events within our society are unstable and perpetually changing, the one constant we can embrace is the ability to use our voices to discuss these challenges of faith with one another.

Bonnie Sierlecki, Associate Professor, Communication Studies

Wednesday, December 12

Zechariah 2: 14-17. Silence, all, in the presence of the One who stirs forth from the holy dwelling.

According to Biblical Scholars, these Words from the Minor Prophet Zechariah were written in the Territory that the World now calls Iran around 536 BC. Zechariah is identified as “the Seer”, One who can make sense of the Contradictory and Chaotic Realities that the Israelites returning from Captivity were experiencing. In this Section, Zechariah is poetically describing eight symbolic “Visions in the Night.” This is the third Vision where he sees “the man with a measuring line in his hand.”

Today’s Feast celebrates another Vision, the Appearance of the Virgin Mary to Juan Diego in Tepeyac, Mexico about 2000 years later in the 1500’s AD.

As we hear them on this day of great celebration for the Hispanic Community in Madison and Globally, let us Rejoice! Let us Be Reverent! Let us BE the visible, loving Presence of God wherever we each walk.

*Sarah Naughton, O.P.
Library Archivist*

Thursday, December 13

Isaiah 41: 13-20. “I am your God, who grasp your right hand; It is I who say to you, “Fear not, I will help you.”

Fear Not, do not be afraid. This message appears over and over throughout holy scriptures. Fear not, for the great I AM is with you and me, working with us to make the mountains of our fears and grief into molehills that become chaff in the wind. Thus, allowing and imploring you and me to get up, go and do Holy work. We are, as it is said in the Talmud, called to “*Not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You and I are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are we free to abandon it.*” May we choose to be still and know; may we see Holy Love in ourselves and one another; and may Thy will be done.

*Joan Lampert, Adjunct Instructor,
School of Education*

Friday, December 14

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.

This reading centers around genuine listening and the good things that can come from really opening oneself to hearing, reflecting on and then acting according to what you hear. I've found that one of the pieces about working here at Edgewood that I really value is the Dominican studium. Study, reflection and action are three steps in a continuous cycle of learning. A vital piece of that cycle is to listen, not with the end in mind, but with a mind that is open to hearing and acting on what you've actually heard. It's so natural to follow what I think is best or right for me, but it's so much more powerful to listen and do what is best for those that exist outside of myself. True richness can be found in the joy of those around me.

*Claire Mand, Director of Residence Life
Edgewood College M.A., 2018*

Saturday, December 15

Psalms 80:2ac, 3b, 15-16, 18-19. Once again, O God, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted...

This passage brings to mind the image of a farmer or even a gardener tending a plant that has been very deliberately and carefully planted. The Psalmist sees the one who cultivates as being called upon by the plant itself to remain present, active, and protective. Vulnerable to the elements, the vine's very survival is dependent upon the constant watch and care of the gardener. The Psalmist recognizes that for humans to become their full potential, the One who planted them must be continually involved with them, showing constant attention in order to bring them to full flower. We enter this holy season at the beginning of winter, a time not normally thought of as one of tending and growth. However, the stories of Divinity engaging with humanity remind us that our Gardener is intimately involved with us, the growing vines.

Kevin File, Night Receptionist, Campus Assistance Center

Sunday, December 16

Philippians 4: 4-7. Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Right away, this passage tells us to *rejoice*. It repeats the word twice, urging us not merely as a suggestion, but as a command. This command gives us instructions on how we should conduct ourselves, knowing the Lord is in our midst. Carrying this out can be quite difficult, especially in our society which prides itself upon worries, anxieties, and sadness. But there is a hope among all the confusion and despair: God. There is nothing, nor will there ever be, any turmoil that God cannot handle. It often feels that we must carry our crosses on our own, but the Bible shows us that the burden is never a solo act. God, who is all mighty and all powerful, knows the way, and we must allow ourselves to follow Christ. Putting our cares, worries, and anxieties into God's hands will bring us more joy than we could possibly imagine.

Sarah Meffert, Junior, Psychology

Monday, December 17

Psalms 72: 1-4b, 7-8, 17. Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more. May he rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Even as our worlds and our earth change, the pursuit of peace and justice will be a constant. We can trust that the poor and afflicted will be defended and protected. We can find solace in nature – in the mountains, the sea, the hills, and the sun. And we will all experience God's blessings as many nations, but one earth. Especially at this time of year, I hope that we can all contribute to being stewards of God's blessings and agents of profound peace.

Christine Benedict, Vice President for Enrollment Management

Tuesday, December 18

Matthew 1: 18-25. All this took place to fulfill what God had said through the prophet: *Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means “God is with us.”*

My fingers tapped a quick ‘good night’ as I shifted my belly to the side. The quiet of the house welcoming the night. And then she kicked. Yet, not just a kick. She kicked in response to me. It was the first time we ‘talked’. A shared secret just for us that I will always remember.

When reflecting on the events that led to the birth of Christ, the one thing I come back to is Mary. Every aspect of her life was changing due to events beyond her control. Yet, through all of that, there were those moments. Those secrets that only she and her baby boy knew. She fell in love with Jesus not just because of his miraculous healings or his message of salvation. She first fell in love with Jesus in their quiet, shared space. The trace of her fingertip against his first ‘Hello.’

Lindsey Marsh, Clinical Coordinator, Family Center

Wednesday, December 19

Psalm 71:3-6. For you are my hope, O God; my trust, O God, from my youth. On you I depend from birth; from my mother's womb you are my strength.

“On you I depend from birth...” From the time I was old enough to understand that God's love was unconditional, I have experienced a wonderful life filled with love and security. God gives the strength to help people fight injustices and help me preach the word of God. I find that God's love allows me to offer refuge to people needing faith and security in their lives. Without all the gifts God bestows on me I know I would not be able to share my time and treasures with others.

J.P. Richards, Head Softball Coach

Thursday, December 20

Luke 1: 39-45. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.

Mary was told that she would have a baby and she had faith that what God promised would be true. Even Elizabeth's unborn baby rejoiced in hearing Mary's greeting for he was so moved by the presence of the Holy Spirit in Mary.

This passage speaks to me in the following way: In our busy lives, it is all too easy to forget that the promises made by God will be fulfilled. When we are faced with adversity, it is easy to question the purpose of the event. This passage reminds us that the promises made will be fulfilled as long as we are strong in our faith in God. For if we are strong with our belief, then we too will be blessed.

Rebecca Vander Zanden, Lab Manager, Geosciences and Physics

Friday, December 21

Zephaniah 3:14-18a. Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem...Your God is in your midst, a mighty savior, who will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in God's love.

As I read this passage from the Book of Zephaniah, I was reminded of the many times in my life when some experience or event that I thought was going to be especially difficult or depressing turned out instead to be a moment of superlative beauty and grace. At those times, I have laughed at the sheer rightness of what turned out to be and at how far that moment was from the judgments that I had made about it and the judgments that I feared were to be made upon me. There is a lightness to this feeling of liberation that the Prophet captures in his exhortation to the daughter Zion. It is a lightness that perhaps only a song of joy or praise can fully embody or express.

John Fields, Associate Professor, Philosophy

Saturday, December 22

Luke 1:46-56. Mary said: "My soul proclaims Your greatness, O God; my spirit rejoices in You, my savior. For you have looked upon your lowly servant...You have mercy on those who fear you in every generation. You have shown the strength of your arm, and have scattered the proud in their conceit. You have cast down the mighty from their thrones and have lifted up the lowly. You have

filled the hungry with good things, and the rich you have sent away empty.”

Mary’s song of praise is very profound given that she was an unwed, peasant, teenage girl. Although she could have negatively taken this news that would drastically change her life, she used it to clearly demonstrate her deep personal relationship with God and accepted her mission without hesitation. She confidently knew that God would guide her through this very important mission. How many times in our life do we doubt the tasks ahead or doubt our own ability to overcome daily challenges? If we focus our hearts and minds on knowing that God will lead us through all situations and keep God the focus of our lives, we can live a more confident and fulfilling life, just as Mary did. She proceeds with a description of who will receive mercy and who will be left empty and wanting. God will not fill believers with superficial hope but rather with an abundance of grace and blessings.

*Kari Gribble
Director of Edgewood Central and Financial Aid
Edgewood College M.B.A., 2009*

Sunday, December 23

Micah 5: 1-4a. He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of God...his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.

The prophet Micah lived during a time when his society had to endure the oppressive policies of Assyria. In this passage Micah predicts a new king will be born in Bethlehem, who will rule through the strength of God and shepherd God’s flock. Today, in our world, we need this type of shepherd. Many live under constant oppression. People don’t feel safe. Leaders are not reassuring or comforting. As we navigate through life during these trying times, we need not be fearful. Through our faith in Christ, and by accepting His love, we do have a shepherd. He lives among us. He will not abandon us. We are protected. Like sheep we know our shepherd’s voice, and run towards it when we are frightened. During Advent, take time to listen to His voice through the scriptures and through prayer. Our souls are safe from the wolves, so we can rejoice and find peace in His care.

Mary Sambrook, Campus Assistance Center Supervisor

Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24

Isaiah 9: 1-6 . The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing, as they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as people make merry when dividing spoils.

The words in this scripture that speak to me are, “those who dwell in the land of gloom,” “a child is born to us,” and “Joy.” Some of us have never felt more that, in the current political climate, we dwell in the land of gloom and darkness. Some of us have lost hope that kindness and generosity of spirit can prevail amid hostility and hatred. As I write, lives have been lost through hatred at a Jewish synagogue. But after the horror and brutality in the scripture passage, comes hope. For a child is born to us. There is something existentially joyous in the birth of a baby. New Life. New Hope. New Promise. New Beauty. New Beginnings. Rejoice!

Joan Schilling, Professor and Chairperson of Psychology

Christmas Day, Tuesday, December 25

Luke 2: 1-20. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people...And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

The incarnation of God, the human birthing of the Word, was only a little over 2,000 years ago – a blink of an eye compared to the 13.8 billion years that preceded it. In truth, it could have happened today. Perhaps that’s the message of this timeless Scripture. Perhaps Mary, knowing she was neither the first human being nor the last, pondered what her Child would mean to the generations to follow; what he meant to those who came before; how the miracle of the Word would live on long after she was gone. And so *we reflect, we ponder in our hearts, right along with Mary. How will we be light in our world today? Will we recognize Christ in the faces of every one of our sisters and brothers, in all of Creation that surrounds us? How will we birth Christ in a world so desperately in need of Love and Light? We are called, not just to read this Scripture every Christmas, but to live it daily because, in the words of the Dominican mystic Meister Eckhart, “We are all meant to be mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born.”*

*Kathy Flynn, O.P.
Edgewood College B.S., 2016*

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
Christmas.

*Dominican Life and Mission
Edgewood College*

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We welcome your feedback. Please email jmaglior@edgewood.edu



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