

# ADVENT NEWSLETTER 2013

DECEMBER 08, 2013



*"Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."*

## JOHN THE BAPTIST ECHOES TODAY

There is always a danger that we will consign the stories of the Gospel to long ago. "That was in the old days but we live in different times." Immediately the story of John the Baptist is placed on the shelf of politeness. It looks good! No one has to deal with it but just stand back and admire the history.

Advent is not a historical event. We tell the story of John the Baptist but we must hear it in terms of our life today.

God is always a God who is in the process of coming. No one can ever say that they have God nailed down. Never can we consign God to the past.

We tell the story of John the Baptist because we need to hear his call to a new awareness of God's workings breaking in on us today. The call comes to us to prepare: These are the times of the unexpected breaking in of God in our lives. What does God want to do with us today?

What direction is the Spirit of God leading us through all these political scandals of the last few months?

What direction is the Spirit of God leading us through the news that your spouse has cancer? heart trouble?

Or your nineteen year old has slumped into a serious case of depression?

Be alert! Be on guard for the coming of God among us.

# Our Healing Sun

By RUTH BURROWS

No one can give herself to the liturgy of Advent without being made aware that a sense of sinfulness is being forced upon us: Deliver us from our sinfulness: break the chains that bind us captive: bring it out of darkness into light. Come, come!

This urgent cry is for what? To set its free. Free from what? Sin. No exceptions are allowed. The whole people is sinful, and each individual calls out for his own personal deliverance and for that of the whole human race.

But there is nothing depressing in this cry for deliverance and the deep consciousness of sin which prompts it, together with the conviction that we are quite powerless to deliver ourselves. 'For what man can pay his own ransom . . . ?'

The cry the liturgy puts on our lips is a cry not of despair but of absolute hope — the certain hope that God will come and save us. He is by nature a coming God, always in movement towards His sinful creation, running to it with outstretched arms to enfold, to wipe away way all tears, banish fear and haunting guilt, affording us utmost security in His forgiving love.

Some may feel that I speak too often of sin, rub it in too much. Others point out that what we need is encouragement, we are too aware already of our own miseries. But are we? Often what we are meaning and what we are confusing with an awareness of sin is self-disgust, self-disillusionment, which nearly every human being suffers from.

We have an image in our minds eye of what we are like, or would want to be like, or think we are really meant to be like, and we fall short of it. We 'lose face' in our own eyes, and perhaps in the eyes of others. This makes us miserable and discouraged; and therefore we say we are in need of encouragement — not of having our deficiencies rubbed in more and more.

But this has nothing in common with what the liturgical texts are talking about and trying to induce in us. Accepted humbly, recognized for what it is — wounded self-love — our self-disgust can become a stepping stone to true sorrow for sin.

*He will  
baptized you  
with the  
Holy Spirit  
and with  
fire.*



What we bewail is largely our human poverty, and this our Lord has no intention of taking away. This is what we would like to have removed from us. We are often far more concerned with this than with sin, and while we are occupied with it, battling against it, wringing our hands over it, we cannot be shown where real sin lies.

An awareness of our real sinfulness is part of holiness. You simply cannot have holiness without it, for it is the inevitable effect of God's closeness; and this is why true sorrow for sin is never morbid, depressed. It carries with it the certainty of forgiveness.

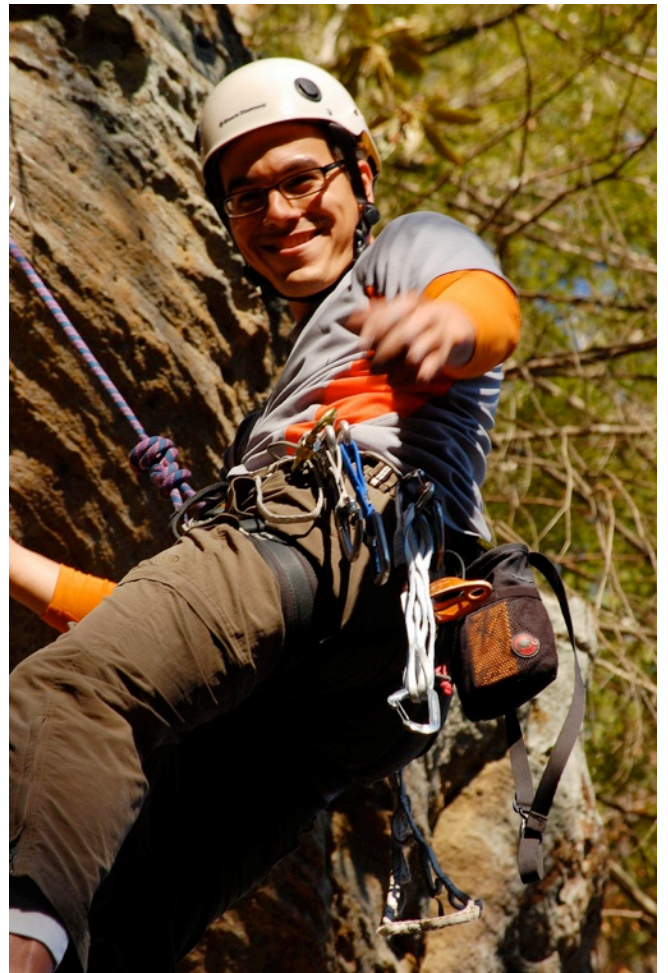
The liturgy assures us that the Lord comes precisely to heal our blindness. To a great extent, perhaps wholly, we choose how much we see. We cannot receive God unless we are prepared to see ourselves, our lives, our past and present as they are. Half-consciously we know this revelation would be terrible, so we make a choice not to see, or not to see too much.

Come and enlighten us, Sun of holiness. Show us our sloth, our pride, our shirking of the demands of life, our evasions. Reveal to us our sinfulness in the light of your mercy, and then we shall be healed and know perfect joy.

## **WE ARE CHARGED WITH A MISSION**

**Traditionally Advent is a time of waiting. In a flurry focused on family and friends, we wait for Christmas to unwrap our gifts and wrap our lives with meaning. In our churches and in our spiritual lives, we wait for Christ to come again to fulfill the hopes that remain unfulfilled from that initial coming. Spiritually, we are waiting. Well, it seems to me, as I look around, that we have waited long enough. . . .It is our responsibility to attend to all that was left undone by the One who was sent to prepare a way of justice and compassion. We, as disciples of Jesus, are not only his followers. We are leaders charged with a mission, believers filled with his spirit, messengers sent, as he was sent, to do the will of God."**

**Miriam Therese Winter**





## LISTENING



In a society with non-stop noise we do not pay attention to the ability to listen. There is so much going around us that we need to shut it out if we hope to get anything out of what is happening right in front of us.

We need to have the experience of complete silence. It sometimes happens when we are alone, in the great outdoors and there is no wind moving. Sometimes the silence can be overwhelming. At other times the silence can be comforting and very supportive.

The Scriptures teach us that it is never good enough to listen to God with our ears. Our heart must be involved. Silence is not absorbing just the words that are being communicated, but absorbing the very person of God. God's Word becomes revelation when it has become a part of our very lives.

Advent is a brief gift of time to slow down, get focused on God's Word, and be open to what God may be sending us this year.

John the Baptist came along calling all the people to be alert and ready. How are you responding to God this second

4 week of Advent?

## PRAY WITH JOHN THE BAPTIST

O Jesus, in an empty desert your prophet John proclaimed:

God is here, at your side.

God has come to bring about a kingdom where injustice and

suffering will be no more,

where tears will be wiped away,

and where those who turn to God will feast at a banquet.

"Turn now, your God is standing at your side.

Reform your lives, God's kingdom is at hand."

In an empty desert John said these things.

Give me faith like John's,

O Lord, strong enough to believe even in a desert

that you and your kingdom are no farther

from me than my hand.

Make my heart strong like his,

not swayed by trials or snared by false pleasures.

Give me courage to be faithful until your promises are fulfilled.

