

ADVENT NEWSLETTER 2013

22 DECEMBER, 2013

Mary will lead us through this season of Advent to see the birth of Christ within our families, our church and our very person.



CHRIST MUST BE BORN IN OUR OWN TIME, OUR OWN SPACE

There has been a wonderful shift in our thinking about the mystery of Christmas. We firmly believe that the Son of God was conceived in the womb of Mary by the Holy Spirit. There was a true birth in the stable of Bethlehem.

But it must never stop there. There is always a danger that people will be captivated by the simple event in the town of

Bethlehem. But now, the birth of Christ must happen in the life of each believer. This is not God breaking into the life of Mary; it must always be God breaking into the life of the believer.

Everyone must give birth to Christ in their lifestyle. We give birth to Christ in our daily prayer when we focus on living and doing the very will of God in our lives. The event of

the Incarnation happens when we give ourselves to the service of God in the Sunday Eucharist. The birth of Christ happens when we reach out to the poor in their need.

Advent helps us to give our attention to the event of Christ coming alive within us.

Our Lady's Advent

By RUTH BURROWS

Our Lady is so close to God, yet she stands before us in all her glory to show what marvels God will accomplish in us, what heights, what nearness to Himself, if we but give ourselves to him as she did, and allow Him to work in us.

She is God's most perfect design, the most perfect image of Christ Jesus. She submitted herself without reserve to God's action, carried out with unswerving fidelity all those things He had reaped beforehand for her life, whether little or great.

From moment to moment, Mary looked for God's guidance and followed one step at a time. She embraced with all her heart whatever he willed or permitted. Her life was a continual 'fiat' to His operations. She sought only to please Him, to be docile in His hands, whether what He asked was painful or sweet. In fact all was sweet because it was Love's will.

Mary passed from one duty to another — from prayer to work, from work to repose, with the same tranquility and singleness of purpose; ever hand in hand

with the Beloved, her eyes upon Him. She accepted all with the same simple, unquestioning love. She did not ask to understand, to see the pattern of her life, to know what torments were in store. That was God's affair, not hers.

Every Christian life must be a contemplative life overflowing in loving sacrifice. A Christian knows, loves, and serves. Let us learn from Our Lady how to co-operate with the divine action. Let us learn to recognize it always and everywhere in hidden ways— its majesty obscured by lowliness, humiliation, suffering. Let us discern it too in the condition of our bodies: in weariness, aches and pains, as well as in a feeling of well-being. God's action is always there. He is always carrying out His purpose of deifying us.

We must have unshakable faith in Divine Providence directing our lives. In the measure in which we surrender to God, in like measure does His loving providence surround us. We must have an ardent faith in His constant care, never ceasing to trust in His love.

Pray for the faith of Mary to trust in God's request even when everything appears impossible by human standards.



Fear not for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. *Isaiah 43:1,2*

What greater joy can there be, what greater glory than that we should seek to glorify our Creator by being what He wants us to be? Each has her own special path to the goal. Only by being true to our own unique calling can we glorify the Lord.

God is in the simple, the routine, the uneventful, the drab things of life. It is there that we encounter Him and can embrace Him as did Mary, for He is Emmanuel —God with us. Our task is to be with Him—always.



May God bless you with discomfort at easy
answers,

Half-truths, superficial relationships,
So that you will live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice,
Oppression and exploitation of people
So that you will work for justice, equality
and peace.

Bethlehem Prayer

O Mystery as grand as the universe

O Mighty Force of all creation,

O Power beyond all our power,

You have come to us as an infant.

Vulnerable, fragile, beautiful.

You have come to us in the midst of poverty, powerlessness and longing.

Come again, O Promiser of Peace.

Come again, to the city of your birth mired in fear, oppression and injustice.

Come again, where bullet holes still pock the walls of Sanctuary.

Come again, where Children dream of homes they have never seen.

Come again, where a single key or the number 194 cry out again of forced journey to Bethlehem.

Be born again in the camps.

Be born again in stables and homes.

Be born again in many cities and languages.



Be born again among nations.

Be born again in places of injustice.

Be born again a promise of hope, a sign of love and joy to the world.

Be born again in our hearts, that we too might be called Makers of peace and Children of God.

The Right Rev. David Giuliano, Moderator of The United Church of Canada

Notes:

Bethlehem is now walled off from Jerusalem and is home to three Palestinian refugee camps.

And may God bless you with the foolishness

To think that you can make a difference in the world,

So that you will do the things which others tell you cannot be done.

The "single key" refers to the many Palestinians in Bethlehem who still have keys to homes from which they fled in 1948.

The number 194 appears in many places in Bethlehem, and refers to United Nations Resolution #194 granting Palestinian refugees the "right of return" to their home villages.

The Church of the Nativity is still pocked by Israeli bullets that ended a 42-day siege in 2002 after Palestinian soldiers had taken refuge there.

May God bless you with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, starvation and war,
So that you will reach out your hand to comfort them and change their pain into joy.

