**solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Advent 2020**

**December 13, 2020 – Third Sunday in Advent**

*“When your star rises deep within,
Trust yourself to its leading.
You will have the light for first steps.”*

(Sister Raphael Considine in her poem “[Trasna](https://jpbennett.tumblr.com/post/62495573715/trasna-by-raphael-considine-pbvm)”)

**TECHNICAL CHECK-IN (Lynn Bufka)**

I’m Lynn Bufka and I welcome you here on behalf of Solidarity with Sisters.

* We sent the files of readings, responses, and lyrics.
* As a reminder, we are refraining from using the Chat feature from when our prayer begins until after the final blessing.
* Camera, Gallery/Speaker view. Second screen? Mute/unmute, even during singing.
* **Betty will now mute everybody.** Unmute to speak.

Now let’s put technical things aside.

**WELCOME (Lynn Bufka)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* My father, Norb, and I prepared today’s communal prayer. As noted in the email for today, it may last a little longer than usual. But that’s ok, this is God’s time. And a quick reminder – we’re making plans and we’d be delighted to celebrate with you and your guests on Christmas Eve at 4 PM - and on the following Sunday, a simple service of music and reading and sharing.
* Thanks to Charlotte Cook for lighting her Advent candles today.
* Thanks to Stu Sklamm, Linda Donaldson and Reggie Ott for leading our music.
* Thanks to my dad for sharing a relatively new Advent tradition in our family.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Suzie and Jim DeQuattro, Marilyn Voigt, Debra Ballard, Maryann Dolan, Betty Thompson, George Fulk, and Pat and Greg Campbell.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Lynn Bufka)**

Advent asks us to find out what happens when light dawns and God comes alive in us. And that begins in quiet. Let’s start with a deep cleansing breath. Let your breath slow and ease. As you inhale, let the Spirit flow in. With each breath, let the Spirit settle in deeper as you exhale tensions from your body and distractions from your mind. (Pause.) Feel God’s Spirit flowing through you. And now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to create space for God.

Now let us welcome the radiant light of God into ourselves and into any darkness that may be around us.

**OPENING AND LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH (Stu Sklamm and Linda Donaldson, and Charlotte Cook)**

Sung Antiphonal Opening:

Stu: You are Dawn, morning stars shall sing!

Linda (and all, muted): Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Stu: You are Dawn, birds awake and sing!

Linda (and all, muted): Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Stu: You are Dawn, rising sun shall sing!

Linda (and all, muted): Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Stu: You are Dawn, Son of Justice sing!

Linda (and all, muted): Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

*Next* ***Charlotte Cook*** *lights three Advent candles on Zoom. As she lights the candles, she says the following words – and everyone lights their own candles.*

**Charlotte Cook:** Please join us in lighting your Advent candles. (Light candles.) We pray:

**All, muted:** God of light, be with us in darkness. Bring light into our world.

**Linda** (and all, muted): Rejoice! Rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Suzie De Quattro)**

Beloved Community, we come together in Advent because it is with each other that we are able to keep watch in the darkness… to prepare the way… to recognize the Spirit among us… and to announce the good news of Emmanuel, God with us. We come together to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us. And so we pray: Emmanuel, God with us, we give you this next hour with confidence that you will act in us and through us. We believe that you will give us light for our next step. Amen.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Suzie De Quattro)**

We began our Advent season with the reminder that God isn’t coming in some theoretical way, but in actual flesh and blood, completely one with all creation. This is big news. This is good news.

Last Sunday we heard Isaiah prophesy, A voice cries out in the desert: prepare the way of the LORD! In the Gospel we heard this fulfilled in John the Baptist.

The excitement is building as today we rejoice in hopeful expectation of this “God with us.”

We continue to ponder in what ways we share with Mary in her pregnancy and to wonder what God hopes will be born in us and through us. How do we together incarnate God’s life in the world? We don’t need a full answer. God’s birth in us happens constantly, endlessly. The Spirit of the Lord is upon each of us waiting to give birth to God’s presence in the world through us.

Now Marilyn Voigt will read from the 61sth chapter of the book of Isaiah and the 1st chapter of the Gospel of John. See how these readings connect. Then Jim De Quattro will offer questions for our reflection, and you might stay with whatever question calls you.

**READING 1 –**   **(Marilyn Voigt)**

**(Isaiah 61:1-2)**

Our reading from Isaiah:

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has 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

from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God.

**(pause)**

**(John 1:6-8, 23)**

Our reading from the Gospel of John:

A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light, but came to testify to the light.
He said: “I am *the voice of one crying out in the desert,
‘make straight the way of the Lord.’”*

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**   **(Jim De Quattro) (Betty:** Slide 1**)**



How are you preparing the way of the Lord? For yourself? For others?

How do you make your heart open to the coming of Jesus in your life right now? Every day?

**SILENCE** (Slide 2. Sound a chime and stop Slide 2 after 2 minutes.)  **(Betty:** Slide 2**)**



**Betty**: Now Debra Ballard will read from the 1st chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

**READING 2 –**   **(Deb Ballard)**

**(Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54)**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked upon his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:

the Almighty has done great things for me, **(Betty:** Slide 3**)**

and holy is his Name.
He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**   **(Jim De Quattro) (Betty:** continue slide 3**)**

How do you feel the Spirit of the Lord upon you? How do you know it’s the Spirit and not something else?

If you were to create a canticle, a hymn of praise to God, what image or phrase would be at its center this Advent?

**SILENCE** (Move to slide 4. Sound a chime and stop Slide 4 after 2 minutes.)  **(Betty:** Slide 4**)**



**Betty:** Now Maryann Dolan will read an excerpt from Bishop Untener’s homily.

**READING 3 –**   **(Maryann Dolan)**

**(Bishop Untener's Homily)**

Advent is a season that is meant to shake us up. Not in a bad way, but rather to shake us into awareness - to wake us up to the deep and wonderful truths about God, about ourselves, and about the meaning of life. We get used to these truths, and take them for granted, and forget how unusual and how wonderful they are. …

This is not to say that we should be giddy. There are struggles, sufferings, and sadness in life. But those are more toward the surface. Deep down, at the deepest level, underlying everything, there should be a quiet joyfulness. It is a steady, down-deep sense of peace and joy.

We're preparing for Christmas, which is a time when we wish each other a Merry Christmas, not a mournful Christmas. And today, the Third Sunday of Advent, is traditionally called Gaudete Sunday. "Gaudete" is the Latin word for "rejoice". The Introit for the Mass on the Third Sunday of Advent always begins with that word: Rejoice. And in today's second reading Paul says, "Rejoice always."

The very first line of today's Gospel is: "A man named John was sent from God."

Those same words can be used of each of us. Try putting your name in there: "A man named *(pause)* was sent from God." "A woman named *(pause)* was sent from God." It's true. God formed each one of us, with our own special gifts, and put us on this earth at this time and in this place for a purpose. We are made in the image and likeness of God, and God acts through us to move creation gradually toward its destiny. "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." …

Take Paul's words to heart: "Rejoice always. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you."

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**   **(Jim De Quattro) (Betty:** Slide 5**)**



What gets in your way of experiencing that deep down quiet joyfulness?

What’s it like for you to hear your name in “A person named *(pause)* was sent from God”?

**SILENCE** (Move to Slide 6. Sound a chime and stop slide 6 after 2 minutes.)  **(Betty)**



**Betty:** Now Lynn Bufka will lead us in sharing reflections.

**SHARING TIME (Lynn Bufka)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. To help everyone glimpse the many ways God is among us, we ask you to speak with some conciseness, and only once until everyone has had an opportunity. That helps us to glimpse the many ways God is among us. We welcome new voices, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

As you share your feelings, please use "I” or “me". And let's leave a bit of silence between speakers. A bridge of silence allows us to take in what was just said and gives others the chance to gather their feelings to share.

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. (Pause for 30 seconds.)

Now who would like to start our sharing? Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

(Sharing)

Is there anyone else who would like to share? [Pause.]

And/or: 11:25 PM – I am sorry to say that we will have to bring our spoken sharing to an end. For those who would still like to share, jot down a word or phrase now so that, after our final blessing, you can add a thought in Chat for Betty to send out later.

Thank you.

Now Linda and the Campbells will lead us in prayer.

**COMMUNITY PRAYERS (Linda Donaldson, Campbells) (Slide: Betty)**

**Greg:** Let us pause and gather the prayers that are rising in us, as we wait on the Lord.



**Betty:** Show slide while Linda sings. Art ©Jan Richardson, used with permission.

**Linda:** Contemplative musical meditation: Wait on the Lord whose day is near. Wait on the Lord. Keep watch, take heart. (Repeat for about 45-50 seconds.)

**Greg:** Now let us pray.

**Pat (sung):** Come quickly, Lord, in mercy, come.

**Greg:** God within us, we rejoice in you. May our lives magnify your presence in the world. For this we pray.

**Pat** (and all, muted): Come quickly, Lord, in mercy, come.

**Greg:** God among us, thank you for those who welcome your call to a life committed to knowing your presence among people who are poor, marginalized, or unseen. With the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, may we ground our solidarity in your Gospel. For this we pray.

**Pat** (and all, muted): Come quickly, Lord, in mercy, come.

**Greg:** God beyond us, shine in our darkness and make us your light. For this we pray.

**Pat** (and all, muted): Come quickly, Lord, in mercy, come.

**Greg:** God of breath, may your Spirit flow through us so we can give birth to God’s presence in our world today. For this we pray.

**Pat** (and all, muted): Come quickly, Lord, in mercy, come.

**Greg:** God of today, teach us patience as we wait. For this we pray.

**Pat** (and all, muted): Come quickly, Lord, in mercy, come.

**Greg:** God of justice, give us the strength to stand up to evil in our world. For this we pray.

**Pat** (and all, muted): Come quickly, Lord, in mercy, come.

**Greg:** For what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute yourself afterwards.

(Shared prayers)

**Response to each (sung by Pat, and by all, muted):** Come quickly, Lord, in mercy come.

When prayers become less frequent – **Greg:** Would anyone else like to offer a prayer? [30 sec.]

**Greg:** Thank you. O God, we will do all we can to make our prayers real, and we entrust the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Betty Thompson and Norb Bufka)**

**Betty:** Each of us has traditional ways of Advent preparation. Today Norbert Bufka will speak about his and his wife’s giving tradition.

**Norb:** (1-2 minutes – the tradition and its value as I prepare for Christmas.)

**Betty:** Knowing all that we have received from God, let us now take time to name within ourselves something we will do this week to crate space for God’s coming in us and in the world. [Pause.]

In thanksgiving for the presence and power of Jesus Christ, and in unity with the Holy Spirit, let us pray. God of abundance, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures so that we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (George Fulk)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in us. [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. [Pause.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence. [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with Christians throughout the world as Norb Bufka leads us in the words that Jesus gave us:

**OUR FATHER (Norb Bufka)**

**All (muted):** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Lynn Bufka)**

Please extend your hands to bless one another.

God of hope, who brought love into this world,
be the love that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought peace into this world,
be the peace that dwells between us.
God of hope, who brought joy into this world,
be the joy that dwells between us.
Bless each of us to be Your hope, Your love, Your peace, Your joy.

Amen.

**CLOSING SONG People, Look East (2 verses) (Reggie Ott)**

 People, look east. The time is near

Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the guest, is on the way.

Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim,
Shining beyond the frosty weather,
Bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today:
Love, the star, is on the way.

**RESOURCES:**

**Sharing by Norbert Bufka:**

My wife, Sue, loves to buy and wrap presents for Christmas. That has been our Advent tradition for many years. It was a joy not a drudgery. Our immediate family involves eleven people with whom we exchange gifts. After the election in 2016, one of our family suggested to us all that we use the money we spend on gifts to give to groups and organizations who would most likely be adversely affected by the new administration, such as immigrants, women, people of color, and others.

Last week Sue sent an email to the eleven asking what charity they have chosen for this year and to share that with all. On Christmas morning when we open gifts, we still have stockings, we also share information about the group. This not only benefits the group but it benefits each of us in learning more about ways to help others...

My chosen organization for 2020 is Homeboy Industries.

Homeboy Industries

130 W Bruno St,

Los Angeles, CA 90012

their website is [www.homeboyindustries,org](http://www.homeboyindustries,org)

Homily: Bishop Ken Untener (1937-2004) of Saginaw, Michigan, originally gave this homily on December 15, 2002. <http://www.visitationnorth.org/index.php/year-b-mark/29-third-sunday-of-advent-year-b>

Photo of path in Wales by Lynn Bufka



<https://www.ibelieve.com/faith/the-incredible-meaning-of-jesus-words-the-spirit-of-the-lord-is-upon-me.html>



<http://www.robynsandanderson.com/magnificat.html>

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