

December 22<sup>nd</sup> , A.D. 2013  
**The Fourth Sunday in Advent**

Meditation

## Come to the Stable



Introit Verse for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent:

*“ Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness : let the earth open and bring forth a Savior.” (Isa. 45)*

*“ The heavens declare the glory of God : and the firmament showeth his handiwork.” ( Psalm 19 ).*

## Looking back so we may look forward

Sometimes, when we near the end of a journey, in this case, Advent, it is good to look at where we started, to realize the fullness of what we have accomplished. In that vein, we will go back to the beginning....from the Collect for the First Sunday in Advent: *“Almighty God, give us Grace that we may cast away the works of darkness and put upon us the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son, Jesus Christ, came to visit us in great humility, that in the last day, when He should come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to life immortal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, now and forever, A-Men”*

Advent is and has traditionally been a time of evaluation and preparation. It is not so much a time of penitential evaluation and preparation as in Lent, but more a search and rescue. Advent is a time of waiting for God in the coming Christ Child. *“It is high time to wake out of sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than when we believed.”* (Romans 13:8) A time for searching our souls more earnestly and honestly, of prayerful apology and appreciation; a general cleaning and reorganizing of our spiritual “home”....our heart...our soul. In Romans, we once again hear, *“The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light.”* How can we accomplish this?

*Come to the Stable...* It is the time before the coming of Christ. The royalty and upper class of the kingdom are fat and well fed. They steal from the poor who constantly suffer torment, hunger and degradation from soldiers and the like. Each end of the spectrum lives in fear. Herod, the king, in fear of losing his kingdom to a new king who has been prophesied to come *“for from you (Bethlehem) shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel...”* (Matt. 2:6). Herod, fearful and consumed with hatred and anger does not see the beautiful light from the star on that important night. Being enveloped in darkness, and with no guidance from the Wise Men, who had been warned in a dream to not return to Herod, he lashes out at all male children in the region under two years of age, and kills them all, perceiving them as a threat to his reign. Christ is never shown to Herod, in fact, He is hidden from him by his parents, who flee to Egypt. The light and love of Christ never enters the heart of Herod and he dies as miserably as he lived.

*Come to the Stable...* Many of the people in the region are frustrated. They work only to have their bounty taken, their villages are plundered, women violated and children frightened. Outwardly amorous activities are prevalent. Many are filled with hopelessness. Some are reaching for success any way they can...trickery, dishonesty and theft are common. They are too busy climbing all over each other to get ahead, too wrapped up in their own wants and desires. They listen to no one but themselves. They do not see the star or feel the warmth of its guiding light. They are also passed by, by God in the Christ Child.

*Come to the Stable...* The shepherds are familiar with this humble place. It serves as a place of refuge and rest for them. A place to regroup and regenerate. A respite from the harsh world outside. It is a peaceful place of quietude, warmth, and wonderful smells. The shepherds were simple people who led simple, yet harsh lives. They had nothing and at the same time had everything they needed. They denied themselves most of the comforts common to people of their times. Their lives were predominantly spent in nature, with their sheep and their God. Even with eyes constantly alert for threats to their flocks, they were able to pray, meditate and sing praise to God. They were childlike and pure of heart and watchful...constantly watchful. It was these humble servants of the sheep to whom God made Himself apparent in the Child, Jesus. It was those watchful eyes which saw the Star, the trusting, childlike hearts that desired to follow and see, and the simply humble knees which were first bent, in a barn, with the animals, the lowest of the lowly, in pure reverence to a Child king, Christ

3.)

Jesus, as the angels sang on high, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

How should we conclude an effective Advent of watching and waiting? *Come to the Stable*...sit in the hay, smell the smells that Jesus first smelled, listen to the rhythmic breathing and chewing of the animals who saw no threat in these unexpected Christmas guests. These were the first sights and sounds that surrounded the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, King of the Jews, God Incarnate....should this not be a good place for us as well?

How do we conclude an enlightening Advent...at the beginning, of course! We must go back to the Stable, to Christ's beginning and ours as well, when we were first children, children of God, pure, innocent, humble and simple. The time for readjustment is here. "*We must put on the armour of light,*" and with open arms and pure hearts, prepare to receive Christ into our hearts anew. Then, and only then, are we able to approach the Table of Christ, in the Holy Sacrament of the Christmas Eucharist and kneel, with the same reverence, as those shepherds of long ago. *O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!*

- - - *From a meditation by Sr. Mary Francis Benedict, O.S.B.  
given at Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory*

### **A Short Prayer for the Week**

Lord! Even as Thou all-present art,  
Oh! may we still with heedful heart  
Thy presence know and find!  
Then come what will of weal or woe  
Joy's bosom-spring shall steady flow :  
For though 'tis Heaven Thyself to see,  
Whereby Thy Shadow falls, grief cannot be !

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*"I looked for Evil, stern of face and pale : Came Good too fair to tell.  
I leant on God when other joys did fail ; He gave me these as well. " - - S. Williams*

*" Oh ! For the joy Thy presence gives ! What peace shall reign when Thou art here!  
Thy presence makes this den of thieves A calm, delightful house of prayer. "  
- William Cowper, Poet & Hymnodist, 18<sup>th</sup> cent.*

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**PLEASE NOTE: PUBLIC SUNDAY MASSES WILL RESUME IN THE SPRING.  
CONVENTUAL MASSES ONLY FOR THE WINTER.**

### KALENDAR

Holy days and Saints days for the week of December 22<sup>nd</sup> to December 29<sup>th</sup> A.D. 2013 as observed at the Priory.

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Sunday, December 22 <sup>nd</sup> .....	<b>Fourth Sunday in Advent</b> .....	<i>O Emmanuel</i>
Monday, December 23 <sup>rd</sup> .....	.....	<i>O Virgo Virginum</i>
Tuesday, December 24 <sup>th</sup> .....	<b>Vigil of the Nativity</b> .....	<i>Commence Feast at First Vespers.</i>
<b>Wednesday, December 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ</b>	
Thursday, December 26 <sup>th</sup> .....	<b>St. Stephen The Protomartyr</b> .....	<i>In the Octave of Christmas.</i>
Friday, December 27 <sup>th</sup> .....	<b>St. John, Ap. &amp; Ev.</b> .....	<i>Comm. Bl. Godfrey of Winchester (1.).....In Octave.</i>
Saturday, December 28 <sup>th</sup> .....	<b>Holy Innocents, MM</b> .....	<i>In Octave.</i>
Sunday, December 29 <sup>th</sup> --	First Sunday After Christmas..	<i>Comm St. Thomas of Canterbury (2.) .....</i> <b>In Octave.</b>

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**KEY:** *Ab.* = Abbot, *Ap.* = Apostle, *Bp.* = Bishop, *C. or Conf.* = Confessor,  
*Doct.* = Doctor of the Church, *M.* = Monk, *Myr.* = Martyr, *P*= Priest *Po.* = Pope, *Vir.* = Virgin,

**Note:** 1.) *Prior of Winchester, known for his learning and piety and observance of the Holy Rule. Died. 1160.*

2.) *Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury. Murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by supporters of King Henry II this day in 1190.*

### MISCELLANEA:

**SUBSCRIPTIONS;** If you know of anyone who would like to be on our e-mailing list to receive this weekly offering, please either feel free to copy and pass this along to them, or have them send us their e-mail address and we will gladly add it to our mailing list.

**CANDLE OFFERING:** Our supply of altar candles is nearly exhausted. We would gratefully welcome all monetary offerings to help us replenish our supply in time for Candlemas ( Feb. 2nd ) ...the traditional date for the blessing of candles to be used in the new year. Please send your donations to our address: Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Priory, 4 Shaw Road, Raymond, Maine 04071 , marked "Candle Offering". If you would like to make your offering as a memorial, please include the name(s) of those you want remembered. God Bless you for your generosity!

**THE ANIMALS:** We are always looking for benefactors to help us with the animals in our care. If you are interested in helping, or know someone who might be, please send checks to the address above designating "for the animals". All donations are tax deductible. Thank you!

