**Solidarity with Sisters’ Communal Prayer for Advent 2021**

**Nov. 28– First Sunday**

*“And what is it we should do?” (Luke 3)*

*“Make the pathway straight and the highway smooth*

*for the coming of God.” (Luke 3 and Isaiah 40)*

**HELLOs and then Betty mutes everyone. (Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Betty)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Suzie and I had the pleasure of preparing this communal prayer.
* Thanks to Suzie and Nora for lighting their Advent wreath with us this week.
* Thanks to Stu Sklamm, Linda Donaldson, and Reggie Ott for leading our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Ann Masters, Suzie and Nora De Quattro, Sister Grace Hartzog, Mia and Tim Brown, George Fulk, Nancy Sushinsky, Rose Marie Smith, Charlotte Cook, Joan Sklamm, Kathleen Cross, Paula Lake, and Donna Ellerman.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Ann Masters)**

Let’s move from greeting each other to making our hearts quiet for the coming of God. Let your body settle into a comfortable position. Notice your breath as it goes in and out. in and out…. Now let’s take 3 deep breaths. One to be here… one to be together….and one to hear God singing in you.

Now let us welcome the light.

**OPENING AND LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH (Stu Sklamm, Linda Donaldson, Suzie De Quattro and Nora De Quattro)**

Sung Antiphonal Opening:

Stu: You are Wisdom, from the Mouth of God.

Linda: Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Stu: You are Wisdom, playing before God.

Linda: Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Stu: You are Wisdom, wondrous word of God.

Linda: Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

Stu: You are Wisdom, loving friend to God.

Linda: Come, O Come, Emmanuel.

*Suzie and Nora light the first Advent Wreath candle and say*

**Suzie and Nora:** Please join Nora and me in lighting your first Advent candle. We pray – God of light, let your reign begin in each of us.  Give us light for our next step

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

**GATHERING PRAYER (Grace Hartzog)**

We gather because God comes to us, not only in a singular Christmas event, but also in each person, and in each generation’s lifetime. The scriptures tell us a long-treasured story of salvation for a people beloved of God. We are called today to tell this story in a fresh, compelling way with our lives. We ask to make the pathway straight for the coming of God.

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 (Betty Thompson)**

During Advent we invite you to take a fresh look at the familiar stories that lead us toward Bethlehem. And to ask yourself what you will do with this time.

In our readings, Jesus asks us to pay attention to natural signs, and today those signs tell us that the human situation has become desperate. The sun is more harmful, the stars are less visible, the waters of the Earth have wreaked destruction, fires rage out of control. And a pandemic continues. Yet Jesus promises us that the time of our **tribulation** can also be the time of our saving **liberation**. How can this be?

We start with the readings from Jeremiah and Paul which are very much about both/and – they are about holding more than one truth **at the same time**. Amid terrifying events, we are told to be vigilant and look for signs of God’s emerging reign. Amid sin and sorrow, we are told to hold joy and abound in love. We are told to repent, knowing we already have God’s promise of justice and forgiveness. God remains faithful to **all**. And God’s people must do the same.

“The time of your **ransom** has come,” says Jeremiah. Ransom! We are freed! But only when all are free. Advent calls us to make the story of our life one that celebrates the dignity of each person and that lives in solidarity with Earth. Then we make the pathway straight and the highway smooth for the coming of God in our day. Then we can name our city for the Holy One of justice and peace.

*[Slight pause]*

Tim and Mia Brown will read from both Jeremiah and St. Paul. Then George Fulk will offer questions for our reflection. You can stay with whatever question calls you.

*(Slight pause)*

**READING 1** Jer 33:15-16 and 1 Thess 3:11-12  **(Tim and Mia Brown)**

**Reader 1:** The days are coming, says our God,

when I will raise up a righteous branch from the line of David,

who will bring justice and integrity to the land.

Then Judah will be safe and Jerusalem will be made new.

She will be called, “The Holy One is our justice.”

*[Pause.]*

**Reader 2:** And now, Sisters and Brothers,

may Christ increase to overflowing your love for one another and for all…

to strengthen your hearts, making them blameless and holy before our Abba God

at the coming of Christ with all the holy ones. Amen.

**QUESTIONS 1** *(Pause after each question.)* **(George Fulk)**

What is it like for you to hear a promise of safety while you feel danger very near?

How would you change if you lived in a city that claimed the name “The Holy One is our justice”?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**Betty:** Now Nancy Sushinsky will read from the gospel of Luke.

**READING 2** **Luke 21:25-26, 28, 34-36 (Nancy Sushinsky)** .

Jesus said to the disciples:

“Signs will appear in the sun, the moon, and the stars.  On the earth, nations will be in anguish, distraught at the roaring of the sea and the waves.  People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon Earth.  The powers in the heavens will be shaken.  When these things begin to happen, stand up straight and raise your heads, because your ransom is near at hand.”

“Be on guard lest your spirits wane due to worldly pursuits or the anxieties of daily life. That day will catch you by surprise, so be vigilant at all times.

“Pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Holy One.”

**QUESTIONS 2** *(Pause after each question.)* **(George Fulk)**

What signs have you seen that signal the coming of the reign of God?

When is it hard for you to stay vigilant? How do you manage that?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**Betty:**  Now Full Name will introduce a reflection.

**READING 3 / CONTEMPLATIVE REFLECTION (Rose Marie Smith & Betty-youtube)**

We have heard apocalyptic readings for several weeks.  Despair might paralyze us as we wonder who, if anyone, can affect meaningful change.  Yet one Sunday, Sr. Imelda reminded us, “The time is now.  We are the ones.  We are enough.”  Do you feel that urgent call to transformation of ourselves and through us the world?

And on another Sunday, Sr. Vera reminded us that transformation comes out of silence.  Now let us personally and communally spend time in patient silence aware of this urgent call.

As you sit in silence with this music, what happens in you?

**Patience, People**

[**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQVE-5yfq4s**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VQVE-5yfq4s)

Patience, people, till the Lord is come.

See the farmer await the yield of the soil.
He watches it in winter and in spring rain.

Patience, people, for the Lord is coming.

Patience, people, till the Lord is come.
You have seen the purpose of the Lord.
You know of His compassion and His mercy.
Patience, people, for the Lord is coming.

Patience, people, till the Lord is come.
Steady your hearts for the Lord is close at hand.
And do not grumble, one against the other.
Patience, people, for the Lord is coming.

**QUESTIONS 3** *(Pause after each question.)* **(George Fulk)**

How do you remain patient, and trust that transformation is occurring in the midst of calamitous times?

What is your great hope for the coming of God in our day?

**COMMUNAL SILENCE** **(Betty:** Share slide 3, time 2:00, chime, stop slide.**)**

**Betty:** Now Charlotte Cook will lead our sharing.

**SHARING (Charlotte Cook)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you listened and as you reflected on these readings. 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. And let’s leave a bridge of silence between speakers.

We begin in silence as we gather our reflections. *[Long pause.]*

Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute again afterwards. Who would like to begin?

(Sharing)

*[Let sharing continue for about 20 minutes.]*

Thank you.  We have to stop now, and we can continue after the final song, as we often do. Now let us pray, led by Joan Sklamm.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY (Joan Sklamm)**

Let us pause and gather the prayers that are rising in us. *[Pause.]*

Our response will be: Emmanuel, come to us.

Emmanuel, God with us, help us to be strength for the people directly affected by these calamitous times. For this we pray. Emmanuel, come to us.

Emmanuel, God with us, open us to notice where your reign is emerging, and to “stand up straight and raise our heads” as allies with young people and people of color. For this we pray. Emmanuel, come to us.

Emmanuel, God with us, while we wait for your fullness, help us every day to let your presence shine through us, in solidarity with the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and Catholic sisters. For this we pray. Emmanuel, come to us.

Emanuel, God with us, increase our capacity to hold “both urgency and patience” as we make the pathway straight for your coming. For this we pray. Emanuel, come to us.

For what else shall we pray? Please remember to unmute and mute yourself.

(People speak.) Emmanuel, come to us.

Thank you.

O God, we give you all our prayers, spoken and unspoken. We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – wh~~i~~le entrusting the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Kathleen Cross, Suzie & Nora)**

**Kathleen:** Each of us has traditional ways of Advent preparation. Today Suzie De Quattro and her granddaughter Nora will share one of theirs.

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

**Kathleen:** Thank you for sharing that. In our traditions and daily lives, we celebrate the amazing fact that the Holy One is with us and lives in us now and at every moment. We offer ourselves to God in gratitude for having been chosen, just as we are, to become the highway for God’s coming in our world. How will you do that this week? *(Pause.)*

Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION (Linda Donaldson)**

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 and among 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

and said, “… as I have done for you, you should also do.”

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

gifts of **Earth** and the 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.]*

Holy One, make us your bread of abundance.  Make us your wine of joy.

Let even our fragments be plenty to share.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER, OUR MOTHER (Paula Lake)**

Now let us join our hearts with all who seek the coming of God, using the words that Jesus gave us:

**All (muted):** Our Father, Our Mother, who are in heaven, hallowed be your 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,

and 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 (Donna Ellerman)**

“Blessing When the World is Ending” by Jan Richardson

Look, the world
is always ending
somewhere….

with the gun,
the knife,
the fist….

with the slammed door,
the shattered hope~~.~~

~~…T~~here is nothing
a blessing
is better suited for
than an ending,
nothing that cries out more
for a blessing
than when a world
is falling apart.

This blessing
will not fix you,
will not mend you,
will not give you
false comfort;
it will not talk to you
about one door opening
when another one closes.

It will simply
sit itself beside you
among the shards
and gently turn your face
toward the direction
from which the light
will come,
gathering itself
about you
as the world begins
again.

*[Pause]*

Now Reggie will lead us in our closing song.

**CLOSING SONG “Let the Valleys Be Raised” (Reggie Ott)**

Let the valleys be raised, and the mountains made low,
Every meadow and field overturn.
Make the pathway straight; and the highway run smooth,
For the coming of God in our day.

1. God has come to His people,

 As He promised of old.
 He has raised up a Savior,
 In the sight of us all. Refrain

1. You little child, go before Him,
Like the prophets of old,
Bringing news of His coming,
By the mercy of God. Refrain
2. God has come like the morning,
On the darkness of night,
As a light to the people,
Like the breaking of day. Refrain

**RESOURCES:**

USCCB: [First Sunday of Advent](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/112821.cfm)

The inclusive Bible

Sr. Mary M. McGlone, “First Sunday of Advent,” 2021 - <https://www.ncronline.org/sunday-resource/nov-28-2021-first-sunday-advent?site_redirect=1>

Sr. Carol Dempsey, “Advent 2018: Times of Peril, Promise,” in Celebrations at Global Sisters Report - <https://www.globalsistersreport.org/column/spirituality/advent-2018-times-peril-promise-55667?gsr_redirect=1>

Crista Carrick Mahoney, First Sunday of Advent 2021, Catholic Women Preach - <https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/11282021>

Maryknoll Office of Global Concerns, First Week on Advent: A Crossroads Before Us” - <https://maryknollogc.org/resources/first-week-advent-crossroads-us>

Jan Richardson, “Advent 1: Practicing the Apocalypse” (2018) - <http://adventdoor.com/2009/11/23/advent-1-practicing-the-apocalypse/>

Jan Richardson, “Blessing When the World Is Ending” - <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2016/07/18/blessing-when-the-world-is-ending/>

Image 1: **Watts Towers by Simon Rodia, Los Angeles**

<https://www.discoverlosangeles.com/things-to-do/watts-towers-the-story-of-an-la-icon>

Image 2; Various gaming wallpapers sources

Image 3: <https://www.greenhousegrower.com/production/the-top-young-plant-growers-for-2018-and-the-issues-facing-them/> yes

Song “Patience, People” – John Foley, S.J.

Song “Let the Valleys Be Raised” – Dan Schutte