



ADVENT

*Blessings*

by Edward Hays

## Introduction

Advent is one of the most grace-filled seasons of the year. It is a sacred time that encourages prayer and intensifies our longing for the coming of Christ at Christmas. These prayer-reflections can be used at meals and for lighting the candles of an Advent wreath. But they can also be used any time, and without a wreath, because every Advent prayer is an opportunity to light our awareness to the grace and expectant hope of this season.

Similarly, these meditations are written in the plural with family or group use in mind, but they are also for personal prayer. For we never really pray alone; we are in communion with all who lift up their hearts to God. These reflections are intended to remind you that everything, from Christmas decorations to the declarations of prophets, possesses the power to awaken us to the true work of this sacred season of reforming our hearts.

If you use these meditations as a family, one person may read aloud the Scripture passage and another the reflection. You may also want to plan for a brief period of silence after the reflection and before the concluding prayer.

May these *Advent Blessings* help the light of Christ to shine brightly in you now and throughout the year.



## *Hope and Patience* **First Sunday in Advent**

Read Psalm 31:20-24

In the darkness we light a flame of hope. May it dance not only upon our Advent candle but within each of our hearts as well. **Hope is the flower that blooms from the ground of faith.** And so, with joy we keep the tradition of ages past as we encircle our Advent wreath with prayerful expectation. This dancing flame sings out that the reign of God, that pure light, is slowly dawning in our world. May this Advent season that is beginning bring us a new birth of hope in the ancient promise of our God.

*O come, O come, Promised One of the ages. Come into our home;  
sit at our table; dwell with joy in each of our hearts.*

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, and set our hearts on fire.*

## First Monday in Advent



Read Daniel 12:12-13

As the single candle on our Advent wreath comes alive with light, the child within our hearts cries out, "Light all the candles; let Christmas come tonight!" We are impatient, full of longing for the appearance of Emmanuel in our world that seems so empty of God's presence. Come, Emmanuel, God-among-us, and **teach us holy patience as we witness the fullness of Christ unfolding in our troubled times.** Instruct us in the wisdom of God's design of an age of peace and justice which emerges slowly as the heart of each person is set aflame with love.

*O come, Emmanuel, fill our hearts with prayerful patience as we cling with great hope to God's promise. Teach us both patience and eager anticipation as we wait for you.*



## First Tuesday in Advent

Read Luke 21:10-19

As we, like watchful guards, await the dawn of Christmas and the advent of the Kingdom, we do so with confident hope. We recall the words of Jesus, that his followers would be misunderstood and mistreated but **by their patient endurance would enter God's reign**. May we be granted the Advent wisdom that by refusing to return injury for injury and by being patient in our peacemaking, the Kingdom comes among us. As we avoid answering anger with anger or evil with evil and wait in patience, we become midwives for Emmanuel, God-among-us.

*O come, O come, Prince of Peace, flood our hearts with light as we strive to remove all darkness. By patient endurance may we become your Advent agents for the salvation of the world.*

## First Wednesday in Advent



Read Romans 5:1-5

As small children long for Christmas and its gifts, we Advent pilgrims long for the fullness of the Coming of Christ and its gifts of peace, joy and justice. We embrace the afflictions of our lives, confident that they make for endurance, and endurance for tested virtue. We rejoice in our daily Advent afflictions that give rise to the virtues which are the mother of hope. **As Christ was the Word-made-flesh, so hope is faith-made-flesh.** May we, during these days of preparation, embrace our afflictions with faith that they give birth to a hope that will not disappoint us.

*O come, Emmanuel, and enable us to make our sufferings the seeds of salvation's hope in our home and in our world. May our afflictions become the royal road of your Advent arrival.*





## First Thursday in Advent

Read Hebrews 6:11-16

O Glorious Maker of time, clocks and calendars, help us who are so short of time. So quickly we have come to the last page of this year's calendar! Gift us in these Advent days with the patience of the ancient ones who waited for Emmanuel's first coming. Teach us the secret that true patience is productive waiting so that we might be fruitful in prayer, word and deed. **Guide us in how to use wisely every occasion in which we are called to wait.** Then we can transform the tardiness of others, the long lines at stores and the delays of our lives into times of Advent prayer.

*O come, O come, Divine Child, and fill our hungry hearts  
with a luminous zeal to transform each time of waiting  
into an Advent playground for patience.*

## First Friday in Advent



Read Romans 4:18-21

O Eternal Keeper of the Promises, we enter this sacred season like the evergreen tree. Just as it is ever green, we are ever hopeful that the Kingdom of peace and justice which you promised will come to our weary, worried world. As the darkness of winter surrounds us, so the darkness of doubt and despair seems to encompass our earth. **Make each one of us green signs of Advent hope, living Christmas trees, in the gray gloom of our age's forest of fear.** As the hope of Abraham and Sarah gave birth to a son, may our hope give birth to Christ among us.

*O come, O come, Hope of the Ages. Come through us to all who hunger for hope against great odds. May our hope be a flame dancing in the darkness.*





## First Saturday in Advent

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

O Gracious Creator of the seasons, how quickly have we come to the end of the first week of Advent. Precious and graced are these days of road-work by which we make our lives into pathways for the Prince of Peace. Hollow out our hearts—empty them of desires for more material gifts—to make room for the real gifts of Christmas. **Grant us a true hunger for a love which is patient, never rude or prone to anger and never broods over injuries.** As we prepare to illuminate another week of Advent, may we realize that love's forbearance is limitless in its trust and hope.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel, come forth like the dawn from within us. Then our lives, like Advent candle flames, will blaze out into the world with love-filled deeds and hope-filled desire.*

## *Days of Enlightenment* Second Sunday in Advent



Read Genesis 1:3-4

With joyful hearts filled with hope, we delight as the circle of light grows wider in the darkness of winter and of our age. In this season when we decorate our towns and our homes with lights and colorful symbols, may we also be busy decorating our hearts.

**Let us deck the halls of our hearts with deeds of compassion for the poor,** with acts of love and service to one another and with kindness to all. May the preparation and decoration of our hearts rival the joyous beauty in our homes and cities.

*Be consoled, O People of God, our savior is near! May each deed of loving kindness hurry the coming of Emmanuel, the Light of God, into each of our lives and into the world.*



## Second Monday in Advent

Read Isaiah 40:3-4

We rejoice in the presence of Advent wreaths and Christmas ornaments that not only delight our eyes but also awaken our spirits to the grace of this sacred season. With lighted candles, evergreens, holly and mistletoe we decorate our homes in anticipation of the arrival of the Light of the Word. As we once again view these ancient symbols of the sun's rebirth, may each of our hearts experience a rebirth of God's Son. In these days prior to the great feast, **let us call forth in our lives a rebirth of prayer, holiness and justice so that we may truly prepare the Way.**

*Take comfort and be glad, all the earth, for once again the  
Long-awaited One stands at our door! Let us prepare  
our hearts and homes to greet Emmanuel.*

## Second Tuesday in Advent



Read Mark 13:33-37

In this season when we are called to be awake, let us open our eyes to see symbolism in the Advent wreath and in the wreaths on our doors and homes. Never-ending circle of green, sign of the eternal fire of the sun and the mystery of God, **remind us that, regardless of the troubles of our times, the love of God is endless.** Awaken us, circled wreaths that guard our front doors, to the coming of Christ in every corner of our lives. May we strive in these Advent days to make our hearts one in unbroken unity with God and with all that God has created.

*Take heart, Advent pilgrims, for if you seek to live in that circle of God's evergreen love, by God's grace you will yourselves be a light in the darkness and a sign of Emmanuel.*



## Second Wednesday in Advent

Read Isaiah 11:6-9

Ancient mistletoe, in whose presence we taste romance and love, remind us that **romance is also an essential part of these days of preparation.** Sacred plant in whose proximity, long ago, enemies were required to lay down their arms and embrace each other in peace, be for us a sign of peace and love. May our Advent prayers be set afire, as are vigil candles, with a fire of devotion and great love. May we seek to live in true harmony with family members, neighbors and strangers as we prepare for the birth of Jesus Christ.

*Peace upon Jerusalem, peace on the earth and peace in our homes is our wish. May we decorate our homes with peacefulness so that all who live here or visit may experience the Peace of God.*



## Second Thursday in Advent



Read Isaiah 9:1-6

As we decorate our homes and trees with strings of tiny lights, may we rejoice in their hidden wisdom. May we find hope in these tiny but enchanting lights that transform the common and ordinary into the magical. We often feel so small in the face of the world, for alone we are but one small light. Yet, when we are united in the sacred string of the community of Christ, **we become shining and significant signs of the presence of God.** Let us, this Advent, join our prayers and good works with all those who yearn for the coming of Christ. By such a linking of hearts and minds we make our world more sacred and splendorous.

*Be consoled, servants of the Lord of Light, in your unity is your strength. Come, Lord Jesus, make us lights of the world.*





## Second Friday in Advent

Read 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Advent is the festive season of candles flickering in the darkness. As a lighted candle in the window is an age-old sign that a traveler is welcome to stop and rest, may the candles we light open the doors of our hearts to the stranger and to any who are in need. **May our Advent devotions set aflame in our hearts a candle of compassion for those who seek comfort and consolation.** Grant us the grace, O God, to put flesh on our prayers as we share with the poor and needy, part of the good gifts of our lives.

*Be compassionate, O people of God, and you will become like  
God who is merciful and compassionate.*

## Second Saturday in Advent



Read Romans 13:11-14

O You who call us to repentance, reveal to us the real work of Advent. As we busy ourselves with cleaning our homes, may we also be reminded of the need to prepare for the Feast of Christmas by sweeping clean our hearts. With the broom and dust pan of prayer may we vigorously remove all sins of neglect and injury to others. With Advent zeal let us remove the spite, anger and resentment that separate us from others. **Let our heart-cleaning reach back into hidden corners to remove all that would make us an unfit dwelling place for the Word-made-flesh.**

*Be consoled and take heart, you who long for Emmanuel, and know that as you cleanse your hearts you also cleanse the world for the coming of the fullness of Christ.*



## *Preparing Our Gifts* **Third Sunday in Advent**

Read John 3:16-19

Leap with love, flames of Advent light, as we begin another week of preparation for the birth of Jesus Christ. As candle flames give a blessed brilliance to this wintertide night, may our gift-giving be part of our preparation for God's greatest gift, Emmanuel. May each present we prepare to give be a sign of God's gifts of Life, Joy and Peace to our world. **May we wrap every Christmas gift with love**, so that these gifts become Advent prayers awakening our hearts to the true mystery of Christmas.

*O You who so loved the world that you sent your son to be your  
love in human flesh, help us be your living gifts of love  
to family, friends and strangers.*

## Third Monday in Advent



Read Philippians 4:4-7

Like eager children we await the coming of the great feast of Christmas. Let us illuminate the darkness of winter with bright lights and blazing hearts. As the world once again awaits the birth of the Son of God, may we not waste a single day of this holy season. By the gifts of prayer and generous compassion, mutual forgiveness and love, may we grace many people. **May we fill every wish of this season to the brim with peace and sincerity.** And may our gifts to others be patience, kindness and humor. By such gifts, God's Gift of Love again comes to earth.

*Rejoice and be glad, for Emmanuel comes into the world through the doorways of our hearts. Let those doors swing wide then in joyous generosity and love.*



## Third Tuesday in Advent

Read Matthew 3:1-6

O Giver of all gifts, we rejoice in the gift of Advent's call to reform our hearts. We who are usually too busy to recollect our hectic lives are grateful for this season that calls us to pause and examine our behavior and renew our prayer. **Even in this season of prayerful preparation we find little time for recollection, but Advent calls to us to take the time.** As food nourishes our bodies, so continuous reform feeds our spirit's longing for transformation and holiness. May we respond with zeal to John the Baptist's evergreen call to re-form and re-shape our hearts.

*Rejoice and be glad, for with each personal act of reform, we know that all the human family and our whole society move closer to creating the royal road for the coming of Emmanuel.*



## Third Wednesday in Advent



Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

O You who know our hearts, give each of us the Advent gift of a generous heart. **Inspire us to see beyond the closed circle of our family and friends to that wider sphere of the true family to which we belong—all the peoples of this earth.** Stir up our slumbering compassion so that we can richly serve the poor, the hungry and the homeless. Teach us, we pray, the wisdom of the ages, that in such generous giving to those who are in need, it is we who are the more richly blessed.

*O Sacred Source of all gifts, grant to us this Christmas wish.*

*May no member of our family, even one whose  
name is unknown to us, be without the gift of love  
on this feast of Love-made-flesh.*





## Third Thursday in Advent

Read Isaiah 58:10-12

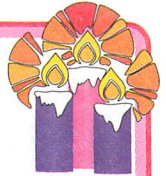
May we recognize the gift in the countless candles that illuminate the windows of homes across our land. They are cousins of our Advent candles which convey the gift of light, the hope-filled symbol of this season. In the darkness of winter's gloom, these window lights announce to all that light and love dwell within.

**May candles of Advent call us to place lighted candles in the windows of our hearts to welcome the homeless, the hungry and those in need.** May every candle of this season beckon us to become like Emmanuel—the presence of God in our world.

*Rejoice and be glad, for great is our dignity as priestly servants of light.*

*Rejoice, for our savior lives in us, serves through us and loves the world through each of our deeds of compassion.*

## Third Friday in Advent



Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

We lift up our hearts in gratitude, O Gracious God, for the rich gift of tradition. We rejoice that we have been handed down such ageless signs as the Christmas tree and wreath, the sending of greeting cards and the singing of carols. **By these traditions we are blessed with abundant hope** since they are the bridge that links us with the grace alive in previous ages and times. Each age in history has its crisis when promise and hope are eclipsed by gloom. But each year the traditions of Christmas fill us with the trust that we too will know the saving power of God.

*Be glad and rejoice, people of God, as your ancient symbols sing to you the glad tidings of hope, the promise that you, like the ancient ones, will not be forgotten by your God.*



## Third Saturday in Advent

Read Isaiah 60:1-6

We scan the night skies crowded with stars as we prepare our gifts for the feast of Christmas. Like the Magi of old, let us be busy selecting the gifts we wish to offer the Child of Glory. The desires of God are simple: **God desires only our hearts.** As we invest time and thought to our Christmas gifts, may we invest our hearts with great love for God, self, neighbor and nature. Let us use these last Advent days to make our prayers overflow with devotion, each gesture to those in need clothed in compassion, and every Christmas greeting of peace rich with true meaning.

*Sing to the stars, O Children of God, for Christmas is near.  
Make of each prayer and good deed a radiant gift of adoration  
to the stable-born Prince of Heaven and Earth.*

## Fourth Sunday in Advent



Read Micah 5:1-4

Amidst the sounds of Christmas—the ringing of bells and the singing of carols—we recall that Christ was born at a moment when all things were in stillness. While our hearts are full of the sounds and the excitement of Christmas, help us to create in them small silent places for Christ to be born again in us. **May we learn the secret of Bethlehem—that God chooses the small and simple, the quiet and hidden places for divine visitations.** May we create a Bethlehem of stillness in our hurried lives lest there be no room in us for God to come this Christmas—and stay.

*O Little Town of Bethlehem, remind us to be like you if we  
desire to make the miracle of Christmas appear  
in our busy and noisy world.*



## *Christmas Eve*

Read Luke 2:1-7

O Sacred night, forever alive in legend, magic and mystery, we rejoice that you have finally arrived. The single flame that began our Advent days has given birth to the countless dancing lights upon our Christmas trees and to hearts aflame with love. **We rejoice in the most magical and sacred of all feast days**, when trees adorned like the luminous night sky are guests in our homes. Mindful that on the first Christmas Joseph and Mary could find no room in which to stay, may our homes and hearts be eager this night to welcome the Cosmic Christ Child.

*O Come, all ye faithful, and by your faith see Christ in each of those you love and in the stranger. With such a faith, the Prince of Peace will be your holy guest this Christmas.*



## Christmas Day

Read Isaiah 61:1-2



Wondrous is the magic of love and light in these days of Christmas, when the darkness of night has become as bright as day with the glow of countless colored lights. Evergreen trees, clothed with star-glittering decorations, urge each one of us to robe ourselves in luminous love. **Christmas music, in its ageless beauty, calls us to become living melodies of the mystery of the Emmanuel, God-among-us.** Christmas gifts invite each of us to become like Christ, the Gift of God, to our family, friends and neighbors.

*Rejoice and sing, O you people of the Promise, for greater than any gift of the Magi is the gift of yourselves given to those you love and to the world.*





## The Days of Christmas

Read John 17:20-23

Wrapped in winter's darkness, the many circles of Christmas lights point the way to the birthplace of Emmanuel. Those circles of light that shine everywhere are holy symbols of unity more brilliant than any galaxy. For when we are one with each other, then Emmanuel is among us. **May we treasure beyond all gifts and all riches the sacred circle of unity that is always the mystic manger for the birth of God-among-us.** In the often much-too-busy days of Christmas, let us not break the circle of communion that was Jesus' great wish for his disciples.

*O Creator of stars and galaxies, guide us this Christmas season to a  
passion for unity, a hunger for communion with all  
the earth and all your children.*

## The Days of Christmas

Read John 4:7-14

These days and nights of Christmas are times of celebration and feasting. As we enjoy the warm circle of friends and family and reception of greetings from those at a distance, let us feast on friendship and love. Our hearts yearn for the incarnation of God's love that comes to us each time we experience kindness and hospitality. **No gift can replace the great Gift of God-made-flesh in Christ**—and in every deed of loving kindness that we show to one another in Christ's name. Like the Magi, let each of us shower gifts on the Prince of Peace by giving to all we meet a gentle kindness that abounds with love.

*Open wide your hearts, you sons and daughters of God,  
so that a hungry world can feast on the love of God.*



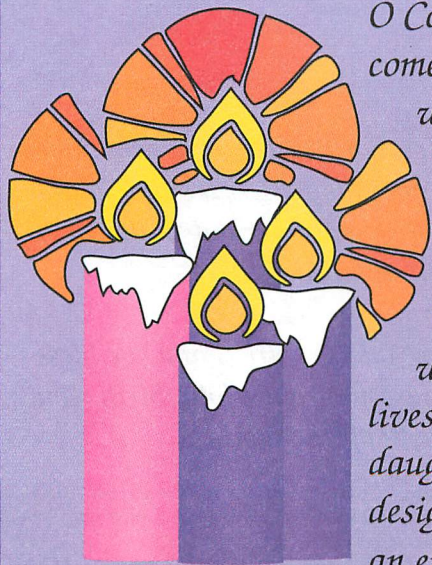


## The Days of Christmas

Read 2 Corinthians 4:6-7

By prayer and song and festivities we have celebrated this wondrous event. We have cleansed our heart and removed from our lives anything that might block the entrance of Emmanuel into our world. **Let us not forget in these busy hours of Christmas celebrating to take time to reflect upon the mystery of how each year the Love of God is once again made flesh in us.** Let us not forget that without the presence of that unconditional love in our homes and hearts Christ cannot come.

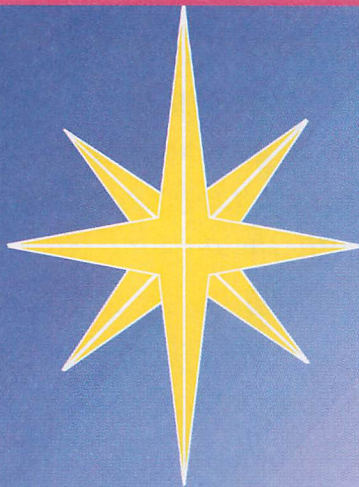
*O you people of hope, keep the Promise of God in your hearts. Fill your hearts with Christmas devotion now and always.*



*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,  
come forth from deep within me  
with Christmas luminous beauty.  
For my heart has become the  
sacred crib, the birthing place  
of God-among-us.*

*Peace on earth and justice for all  
will only become manifest in our  
lives when enough of your sons and  
daughters awaken to your divine  
design that has made each of us  
an emerging Emmanuel.*





*May the star of Bethlehem which shone brightly over the first crib stand guard over our home, filling it and all the earth with light and peace.*

*We adore You, O Christ, and we bless you because by Your Holy Birth You give hope to all the world.*

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