

Waiting in Joyful Hope

*Daily Reflections for
Advent and Christmas
2025–2026*

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LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota

litpress.org

Nihil Obstat: Rev. Robert C. Harren, J.C.L., *Censor Librorum*
Imprimatur: ✠ Most Rev. Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C., Bishop of
St. Cloud, February 7, 2025

Cover design by Monica Bokinskie.
Cover art courtesy of Getty Images.

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ISSN: 1550-803X

ISBN: 978-0-8146-6872-6 978-0-8146-6874-0 (ebook)

Introduction

“Standing on tiptoe” is how author Macrina Wiederkehr, OSB, describes our Advent time of waiting in her beautiful book *Seasons of Your Heart*. I’ve always loved that image. Can’t you just imagine yourself peering over the edge of time into God’s vastness? “In spite of all the brokenness of our lives, we are still standing on tiptoe,” Sr. Macrina writes, “waiting for the glorious freedom promised us as children of God. This confident waiting is called hope, and our lives are empty without it.”

Sr. Macrina’s words fit this season like a warm winter glove. While the rest of the world rushes to-and-fro, busy with the demands of the secular holiday season, the Scripture readings we will hear in the coming weeks call us to be steadfast, to seek out stillness, to wait, to hope. We are reminded again and again that this world is fleeting and that time is passing, even as we pretend it is not.

No matter how many years we’ve been marking this season over the course of our lives, Advent always seems to find ways to surprise us, probably because it stands in such stark contrast to the world around us. We are likely still eating Thanksgiving leftovers as we unpack our Advent wreath this year—still buzzing from the glow of a feast even as we are plunged into the literal and figurative darkness of a season that calls us to prepare for both the birth of our Savior and the end of the world when he will come again.

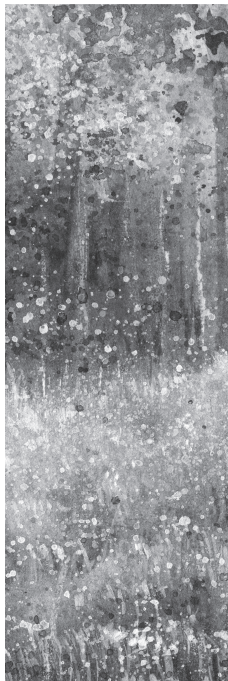
When we're young, it's easy to keep our eyes trained on the "up" side of Advent—the candles and feast day pastries, the calendars with doors that hide little surprises, the trees with twinkling lights. But as we mature in both body and spirit, we begin to develop an Advent mentality, one that recognizes the fleetingness of this world and the ways we can miss out on the main event if we don't—or won't—take time to sit in silent stillness with God.

I hope this book of reflections will offer you just that—a way to step outside the frenzy of the weeks ahead to create a little space where you and God can abide in each other's presence. And in that space and stillness, we can stand on tiptoe, peering over the edge of time, as we wait together in joyful hope.

—Mary DeTurris Poust



FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT



Memento Mori

Readings: Isa 2:1-5; Rom 13:11-14; Matt 24:37-44

Scripture:

Brothers and sisters: You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep. (Rom 13:11)

Reflection: Anyone who has ever tried to rouse a cranky teenager from bed on a cold morning knows how challenging it can be to tell someone who doesn't want to hear it that he or she needs to wake up. Turns out, it's not so different for those of us snuggled under the figurative covers of our spiritual life. There's no denying what God's asking of us, and yet, like a rebellious teen, we hit the snooze button and hope we can stay asleep and still accomplish all that's before us.

How then do we not only "awake from sleep," as St. Paul tells us, but "stay awake," as Jesus warns us? We can begin with an uncomfortable look at our own mortality. Most of us try to keep the intellectual knowledge of our limited time on earth just below the surface of everyday life. Yes, we know not the day nor the hour . . . but surely it won't be *this* day or *this* hour, right? That's the crux of this conundrum. Because it very well *could* be this day.

Two years ago, as Advent approached, I had my first serious brush with death when a crushing pain in my chest turned out to be an 80 percent blockage in my main coronary

artery. Those Advent readings hit me hard that year, but in a good way. The intellectual knowledge I'd kept under wraps suddenly emerged as an urgent message that I could not shake.

Knowing our time is limited is more freeing than frightening if we cling to God's promise and stay awake to what is before us.

Meditation: Today's readings remind us not to take the number of our days on earth for granted. *Memento mori* is the Latin saying—often accompanied by the image of a skull—that tells us: “Remember, you must die.” What does it feel like to sit with that reality? How might you wake yourself up from your spiritual slumber?

Prayer: God of all faithfulness, we thank you for challenging us to leave comfort behind in order to live more fully in you. Give us the courage to remain awake and on watch as we journey toward eternity.

Unchain Our Hearts

Readings: Isa 4:2-6; Matt 8:5-11

Scripture:

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith.” (Matt 8:10)

Reflection: Imagine how shocking today’s Gospel scene must have been to those who witnessed the actions of the centurion and heard the words of Jesus. To us it’s a story so familiar it probably doesn’t grab our attention and certainly doesn’t raise any eyebrows. But to the people of Jesus’ time and community, all of it was unheard of, outrageous, impossible—to both Romans and Jews alike.

Given the fact that the centurion’s proclamation of faith in Jesus (“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof”) has become our own proclamation before receiving Communion at every Mass, it’s likely that this part of the Gospel is most familiar to us. But what deserves some attention and reflection is Jesus’ response. We hear that Jesus was “amazed,” which may seem unlikely. Considering what Jesus could do and who he was, why would this man’s faith amaze him? And what must it have felt like to Jesus’ Jewish followers to hear that this Roman, an enemy, had more faith than any of them?

If we're honest, we may feel some of our own resentment over prayers not answered and faith not rewarded bubbling up inside of us when we see this interaction between the centurion and our Lord. How often have we stood by and watched someone we felt was less deserving than us receive the answer to prayer? "Where's my miracle?" we may ask in the silent recesses of our heart, forgetting that ours is not a faith of guarantees but of trust—even in the face of the outrageous and impossible.

Meditation: Reflect on the words spoken by the centurion and Jesus' response to them. Place yourself in this scene and feel your response to what unfolds. What does it feel like to be the centurion? What does it feel like to be told you are not as faithful as him? Where are you today—rooted in faith, or tangled in resentment?

Prayer: We come to you, Jesus, with arms outstretched and hearts unguarded, longing for assurances that we, too, are people of faith, people worthy to receive you.