

ADVENT MEDITATIONS WEEK THREE



This week's Henri Nouwen Advent Meditations are excerpts from: "Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004.

Day 15: "The Coming of the Lord"

"Be alert, be alert, so that you will be able to recognize your Lord in your husband, your wife, your parents, your children, our friends, your teachers, but also in all that you read in the daily papers. The Lord is coming, always coming. Be alert to his coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognize him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent; life is recognizing the coming of the Lord."

"Keep Awake and Watch": Mark 13:32-36

Prayer:

"Lord Emmanuel, Prince of Peace, let us be especially alert to your coming during this Advent. As a parent listens for the cry of an infant, as a sailor watches for land, as an astronomer scans the skies, as a doctor watches for signs of returning health, let us be attentive to your arrival. Let not our pride and arrogance blind us and put us to sleep. Give us the endurance to be true watchers of the night as we journey through this Advent. "AMEN."

Advent Action:

"We are in a state of readiness when we wait in wisdom like the wise virgins of the parable. Get up fifteen minutes early or retire fifteen minutes later in order to devote time to watchful waiting and prayer".

"Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen", Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p30-31).

Day 16: "Divine Heart of Love"

"The Father's love was so unlimited that he wanted us to know that love and to find in it the fulfillment of our deepest desires. So, he sent us you, dear lord Jesus, with all human anguish. Your heart is not a heart of stone but a heart of flesh; your heart of flesh is not narrowed by human sin and unfaithfulness, but is as wide and deep as divine love itself. ..."

"The Sacred Heart of Jesus" Meditation: Matthew 11:28-30

Prayer:

"Lord, let us place wreaths on the doors of our own hearts, so that the Holy Spirit may find these doors, enter in, and take up his lodging there, and by his presence, make us holy. We ask that the entrance of the Holy Spirit create an island of calm and gentleness within us. AMEN"

Advent Action

"Place a laurel wreath on a door or in a window in order to symbolize the victory over sin achieved by Christ's entry into our world."

"Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen", Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 32-33).

Day 17: "Do You Love Me?"

"At issue here is the question: "To whom do I belong? To God or to the world?"... As long as I keep running about asking "Do you love me? Do you really love me?" I give all power to the voices of the world and put myself in bondage because the world is filled with "ifs." The world says: "Yes, I love you *if* you are good-looking, intelligent, and wealthy. I love you *if* you have.....I love you *if* you produce...." There are endless "ifs" hidden in the world's love. These "ifs" enslave me, since it is impossible to respond adequately to all of them. The world's love is and always will be conditional. As long as I keep looking for my true self in the world of conditional love, I will remain "hooked" to the world – trying, failing, and trying again."

"Only Choose" Meditation: Deuteronomy 30:15-18

Prayer:

"Lord, let the doubts hidden behind the question "Do you love me?" disappear as we advance through this Advent. Strengthen us to observe lovingly your commandments and precepts. Let openness to your love be the watchword of our hearts. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Spend the day in a conscious effort to comprehend the fact that you are God's beloved. Banish the "ifs," the conditions that bar our confidence in God's love."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 34-35).

Day 18: "Temptation to Power"

"One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly gave into the temptation of power – political power, military power, economic power, or moral and spiritual power – even though they continued to speak in the name of Jesus, who did not cling to his divine power but emptied himself and became as we are....What makes the temptation of power so seemingly irresistible? Maybe it is that the power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. . It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life."

"Imitate Christ's Humility" Meditation: Philippians 2:4-8

Prayer:

"Lord, instruct us in the ways of humility so that we may banish our unwarranted pride that keeps us from finding you on this Advent journey. Help us to place our enslaving need for control and power into your loving hands where we will find our true freedom. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Today give up on the need to control others, whether it be scheduling a meeting, expecting others to drive as you wish, or making your preferences a priority over those of others."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 36-37).

Day 19: "Prepare the Way of the Lord"

"...the days before Christmas must be days of deep prayer to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. We must be really ready to receive him. Christ wants to be born in us, but we must be open, willing, receptive, and truly welcoming. To become that way we have Advent and especially the last days before Christmas... This morning I thought the day was completely free and open for prayer. Now it is evening, and I don't know where the time went. Somehow the externals of Christmas- presents, decorations, short visits - took over the day and drained away like after thought a poorly built dike. How hard it is to remember...the difference between the urgent and the important things!

"Born Again" Meditation: 1 Peter 1:22-23

Prayer:

"Lord, lead us out of the prison of our sin into the freedom of your saving love; lead us out of darkness into the light of your grace; lead us out of the shadow of death into the promise of eternal life. AMEN"

Advent Action

"Salt is a sign of purification in the New Testament. Give up salting your food today as acknowledgment of your new birth in Christ brought about by his coming."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 38-39).

Day 20: "True Identity"

"Jesus' whole message is to say that you are God's beloved child...When you can hear in your heart, not in your head, that you are truly God's beloved daughter that you are truly God's beloved son, everything turns around. The mystery of this spiritual truth is that you were loved before you were born, and you will be loved after you die...Your dwelling in God's heart is a dwelling from eternity to eternity..."

"Our Mission" Meditation: Isaiah 49:1-2 and Jeremiah 1:4-5

Prayer:

"Lord, you who knew us before we were ever born, you who consecrated us into your care, hold us in the shadow of your hand and watch over us this Advent. Make its observance a shining path to our home and banquet with you in heaven. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Holly is strongly associated with the season of Advent and Christmas. Its bright red berries have been seen as symbolizing the joy of the Virgin at bearing the Christ Child, and also as a symbol of the drops of blood from the body of Jesus at Calvary. Wear a sprig of holly as a sign of our goal to do good and as a symbol of eternal life in times of trouble"

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 40-41).

Day 21: "Belovedness Belongs to All"

"Quite often out of an intimate encounter with God encounters with other human beings become possible...If you are the beloved of God, if you start thinking about other people's lives, you start realizing that they are as beloved as you are. One of the profound experiences of the spiritual life is that when you discover yourself as being the beloved son or daughter of God, you suddenly have new eyes to see the belovedness of other people..."

"Who is the Greatest?" Meditation: Mark 9:33-35

Prayer:

"Lord, take away our desires to be the best, the greatest, the first, the most famous, the most popular, the wealthiest, the most powerful. Instead, grant us a true spirit of repentance and a willingness to be the last, the least, the lowliest, the poorest, the smallest, the least important. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Make a list of the blessings and benefits that have been given to you by God, your Savior. Take a few minutes today to give thanks for one of these undeserved blessings. If possible, pass this blessing on to others."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 42-43).