

ADVENT MEDITATIONS WEEK FOUR



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

Day 22: "Betrayal"

"Parker Palmer, a spiritual writer of the Quaker tradition, says community is the place where the person you least want to live with always lives. So community is not like a place where you love each other sort of freely and

warmly and affectionately. Community is in fact the place where you are purified, where your love is tested, where your childhood of God is constantly put through the mill of human relationships. That is what community is.

Community is a place where Judas always is and sometimes it is just you."

"The Twelve" Meditation: Matthew 10:1-4

Prayer:

"Lord, help us to see our membership in community as a necessary way to pray and to proceed on your journey. Though, as a paraphrase of Robert Frost says, "Community is often a place where they have to take you in." Let us understand our gatherings into church, family, and neighborhood as a way to find you in the midst of imperfections and humanness – especially our own. AMEN"

Advent Action

"Though we cannot often escape our compulsions to afflict the world with our own unpleasant idiosyncrasies, for today, love enough to remove one annoyance you know is a cause of irritation to another."

"Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 44-45).

Day 23: "Being Forgiven"

"In forgiving we are still in control, "I forgive you." But to be forgiven by you means first of all I have to say, "I'm sorry. There is something that I didn't do for you." That is hard and puts me in a vulnerable position, in a dependent position. I have handed you over to suffering... Somehow I have failed you, I am sorry I failed you... Can you forgive me? It is not just asking the individual. It is having the ability to say, "God, can you forgive me?" Can I be open to forgiveness? Then your heart can move from the hardened heart to a heart of flesh."

"Forgive Us Our Sins" Meditation: Luke 17:3-4

Prayer:

"Lord of Mercy, you are in each and in all of us. Help us to understand and acknowledge that this is why we must forgive and ask for forgiveness. Let us see your face shine out of the countenances of all peoples.

AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Ask forgiveness of one person today. Let each person you meet today leave your presence a happier person."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 46-47).

Day 24: "An Invitation"

"Go came to us because he wanted to join us on the road, to listen to our story, and to help us realize that we are not walking in circles but moving towards the house of peace and joy. This is the great mystery of Christmas that continues to give us comfort and consolation: we are not alone on our journey. The God of love who gave us life sent us his only Son to be with us at all times and in all places, so that we never have to feel lost in our struggles but always can trust that he walks with us.. .

Christmas is the renewed invitation not to be afraid and let him- whose love is greater than our own hearts and minds can comprehend- be our companion."

"Worry Not" Meditation: Luke 12:32-33

Prayer:

"Lord, give us the grace to be counted among your "little flock." You often said to your disciples, "Be not afraid." May your message sink into our hearts and offer us merciful consolation and joyful assurances of your unending care and concern. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Poet Robert Herrick says this about the mistletoe plant, a symbol of the Christmas season: "Lord, I am like to mistletoe, / Which has no root and cannot grow / Or prosper, but by that same tree / It clings about: so I by thee." Note that mistletoe is a parasite that often grows under the bark of apple trees. Include a sprig of mistletoe in your Christmas greens to signify undying love for our Lord and our anallayed dependence on him. By the way, an old legend says that Christ's cross was med of the wood from mistletoe..."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 48-49).

Day 25: "Christmas Touches the Whole of Creation"

"Somehow I realized that the songs, music, good feelings, beautiful liturgies, nice presents, big dinners, and many sweet words do not make Christmas. Christmas is saying "yes" to something, beyond all emotions and feelings. Christmas is saying "yes" to a hope based on God's initiative, which has nothing to do with what I think or feel. Christmas is believing that the salvation of the world is God's work and not mine. Things will never look just right or feel just right. If they did, someone would be lying...But it is into this broken world that a child is born who is called Son of the Most High, Prince of Peace, Savior."

"The Birth of Jesus" Meditation: Luke 2:1-7

Prayer:

"Lord, let us pray with Henri Nouwen, saying: "Thank you, Lord, that you came independently of my feelings and thoughts. Your heart is greater than mine." We welcome you. AMEN"

Advent Action

"Give at least one spiritual gift this season: a novena for a loved one, a spiritual book, a Mass."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 50-51).

Day 26: "From Morals to Mysticism"

"Mysticism is for all, not just for a few special people. Based on our baptism, all are called to a mystical life, to communion with God. We need to claim that, to taste it, and feel it, to trust that the deeper we live this communion, the more our behavior will witness to the truth.

For many, religion has to do with what we are allowed to do and not allowed to do. In that end, that doesn't bear much fruit. The great challenge is to discover that we are truly invited to participate in the divine life of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit"

"We Are Called" Meditation: 2 Peter 1:3-4

Prayer:

"Lord, draw yourself down into our hearts and let us grow in likeness to you until we find eternal love and salvation in your presence, here and hereafter. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Set up a personal reminder of the coming of our Lord. This might be a framed Scripture passage, a work of art, and an artifact from nature. Incorporate this symbol into your daily meditation environment."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 52-53).

Day 27: "A Sacred Center"

"I know that I am called to live at the place of innocence: the place where Jesus chose to live. There he made his home and asks me to make mine. In that place I am loved and well held. There I do not have to be afraid... Can I choose to make my innocence my home, think from there, speak from there, act from there? ..."

"Father, Protect Them in Your Name" Meditation: John 17:15-17

Prayer:

"Lord, affix us in a firm and sure spot where we are safe from the Herods of this world. During these days of rejoicing, keep us wrapped in the "swaddling clothes" of your embrace and safely in your lap of love.

AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Take a 5 minute break to notice a single object in your environment and trace its origins. For example, a book may be made of paper imported from another country, with text on it edited by an employee of a company a thousand miles away, formatted by a graphic designer, its cover created by an artist and its content created by an author, and so on. Trace these components back to the ultimate Creator God and say a word of thanksgiving for his generosity."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 54-55).

Day 28: "Feliz Navidad!"

"The joyful celebration {of Midnight Mass} unfolded with mystery and a few surprises, the first of which announced itself as a mechanical bird hidden in the Christmas tree! A large silver ball produced loud bird calls at regular intervals and the layman who acted as deacon during the liturgy was so enchanted with this gadget that he turned it on at the most unusual moments.

While celebrating the Eucharist, Peter and I were surrounded by baby dolls, small and large, naked and elaborately dressed...I never saw so many Jesus-babies together in my life. I soon found out that it belongs to the folk tradition that the baby Jesus has to hear Mass on Christmas day. Therefore families take the Christmas child out of his stable and bring him to church."

"Innocence of Infants" Meditation 1 Peter 2:2-3

Prayer:

"Lord, give us your spiritual milk, your bread and wine, your body and blood, that we may be sated and satisfied with the taste of salvation. Refurbish us as new Adams and new Eves. AMEN"

Advent Action:

"Resolve to wait in patience today to see the Lord's hand in the celebration of his coming. Listen twice as much as you speak. Listen especially to the members of your family whose voices may have become all too familiar and therefore ignored."

Advent and Christmas Wisdom from Henri J.M. Nouwen," Ligouri Publications, 2004, (p 56-57).