

2012 Advent

Advent Wreath Meditations, Year C: First Sunday of Advent

December 2, 2012

by F. Richard Garland

Scripture -- **Jeremiah 33:14-16** (NRSV)

"The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

"In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

"In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety.

"And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'"

Reflection

The Season of Advent is an invitation to meditate on the promises of God. Here is what the prophet Jeremiah sees:

- . . . a righteous leader will spring up
- . . . one who will carry out justice and righteousness
- . . . one who brings salvation and safety for the people

How then do we live as those who believe that the promises of God will be fulfilled?

- . . . as those who lift up their souls to God?
- . . . as those who walk a path of love and faithfulness?
- . . . as those who work for justice and righteousness?
- . . . as those who live in the light of hope?

If we are alert to the promise of the Lord and live in the light of hope, we will be truly blessed as Christ comes again into our lives.

Candle Lighting Liturgy

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promises I have made.

To you, O Lord, we lift up our souls: In you, O God, we trust.

The one who is coming will show us the path of steadfast love and faithfulness.

Teach us your ways, O God of our salvation. We light this candle in the sure hope that God's promises endure.

[Here light the first Advent candle]

We will live in the light of hope as we await the coming of the Lord.

Advent Wreath Meditations, Year C: Second Sunday of Advent

December 9, 2012

by F. Richard Garland

Scripture -- - Malachi 3:1-4 (NRSV)

"See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. "The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight -- indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.

"But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? "For he is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness.

"Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years."

Reflection

Christmas is intended to be a transforming event, not a lovely interlude in business as usual. What we do in Advent in preparation for Christmas will be our means of getting ready for a new way of looking at life -- a new way of living.

The Prophet Malachi speaks of a messenger:

- . . one who will prepare the way of the Lord
- . . . one who reminds us of the covenant of God
- one who refines and purifies us in faithfulness

How then do we prepare to be transformed by the coming of the Lord?

- . . by allowing the light of hope to awaken our spirits?
- . . . by making room for the Lord to write the covenant on our hearts?
- by living in gratitude for what we receive in the Lord?

If we prepare ourselves by renewing our covenant with God, then we will be truly transformed as Christ comes again into our lives.

Candle Lighting Liturgy

See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, says the Lord of hosts.

[Here relight the first Advent candle.]

The light of hope has awakened our spirits.

A voice cries out in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

Renew in us your covenant, O God, that we may be ready for the dawn of your salvation.

We light a second candle to bring light to every darkness, and to guide us in the way of peace.

[Here light the second Advent candle.]

With gratitude for your light, O God, we will prepare to welcome a new birth of your love.

Advent Wreath Meditations, Year C: Third Sunday of Advent

December 16, 2012
by F. Richard Garland

Scripture -- Philippians 4:4-7 (NRSV)

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.

"Let your gentleness be known to everyone.

"The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God.

"And the Peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Reflection

Joy is at the heart of the journey through Advent to Christmas: Joy in the knowledge of what God has done throughout the ages, joy in the realization that God is able and that God does change things for the better, joy in the assurance that God can enter into our lives no matter what our situation may be. The Apostle Paul calls us a life of rejoicing:

- . . to live a life full of rejoicing and gentleness
- . . . to put aside worry in the confidence that the Lord is near
- to lift our requests in prayer, with thanksgiving
- to trust that the Peace of God will guard our hearts and minds.

Let us then consider the condition of joy in our lives.

- . . Do worries sometimes seem larger than our confidence that God is near?
- . . . Does the busy-ness of our lives sometime interfere in our life of prayer?
- Does anxiety over the big things of the world ruin the little joys of life?

Advent is a time when we can clean out the inner stables of our lives so that new life can be born, our spirits may be refreshed, and our lives may be renewed in the joy of salvation.

Candle Lighting Liturgy

The Lord your God is in your midst, rejoicing over you with gladness, renewing you in love. I will bring you home and restore your fortunes, says the Lord.

[Here relight the first two Advent candles.]

In this new light, we give thanks to the Lord.

With joy you will draw waters from the wells of salvation.

We will rejoice in the Lord always.

We light a third candle to reveal the pathway to faithfulness.

[Here light the third candle.]

As a covenant people we will seek to live in the joy of the Lord.

Advent Wreath Meditations, Year C: Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 23, 2012

F. Richard Garland

Scripture -- Luke 1:47-55 (NRSV)

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.

"Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the mighty one has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

"His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.

"He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

"He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

"He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his his descendants forever."

Reflection

One cannot escape the prophetic vision in the season of Advent. We see it in the selections from the Old Testament, and we encounter it in Mary's Song of Rejoicing. In this birth, God is intent on changing the priorities of the world:

. . God looks with favor upon the lowly

. . . God scatters the proud in the imaginations of their hearts

. . . . God brings the powerful down from their thrones

. God sends the rich away empty.

Where do our lives encounter this prophetic vision?

. . Are we lowly servants upon whom God looks with favor?

. . . Does our pride sometimes interfere with what God seeks to accomplish through us?

. . . . Do we sometimes let our need for power and control interfere with God's work?

. Are we sometimes rich in things and poor in soul?

As the time of the Lord's coming draws near, let us test and examine our ways and return to the Lord, so that Love may have a place to dwell.

Candle Lighting Liturgy

The Mighty One has done great things! Holy is God's Name! The Light of the World is coming.

With Mary, our spirits rejoice in God our Savior.

[Here relight the first three candles]

God's mercy endures from generation to generation for those who are in awe of God.

The proud, the rich, the mighty no longer have power over us.

The lowly are lifted up, and the hungry are satisfied.

We see the light of God shining over the land.

We light a fourth candle in anticipation of the wondrous birth.

[Here light the fourth candle.]

We will open our hearts that Love may have a place to dwell.

Advent Wreath Meditations, Year C: Christmas Eve

December 24, 2012

by F. Richard Garland

Scripture -- Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 2:7, 9-14 (NRSV)

"For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,

"His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.

"He will establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."

"Then an angel of the Lord stood before the shepherds, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.

"But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see -- I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.'

"This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.'

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.'"

Reflection

On this night of nights the Promised One appears, full of grace and truth.

For those who trust the power of God, a new way of living is made possible.

Isaiah foretells it. Luke tells what happened.

We are offered an opportunity to join the celebration.

. . . to join ourselves to the zeal of the Lord of hosts

. . . . to go with the shepherds to the place where Love is born

. to join the heralds of redemption in praise of God for this holy birth.

On Christmas Eve we are offered a sacred treasure.

. . . Let us come to the Light of lights.

. . . . Let us be upheld in hope, peace, joy, and love.

. Let us bow before the manger.

. Let us prepare to become good news in a weary world.

May Christ be born in us this night, and forevermore.

Candle Lighting Liturgy

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given!

[Here relight the four Advent candles]

God has brought light into every darkness.

The promises of God are fulfilled! Wonderful Counselor! Mighty God!

Everlasting Father! Prince of Peace!

We hear, even today, a chorus of angels bringing good news of great joy to all the people.

We light the Candle of Christ -- witness to the Savior who is Christ the Lord.

[Here light the Christ Candle.]

Glory to God in the highest Heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors.

Chrismons are Christmas decorations with Christian symbols on them. They help Christians to remember that Christmas is the celebration of Jesus's birthday. They are often used on [Christmas Trees](#) in Churches and Christians homes.

They were first made by Frances Kipps Spencer at the Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia, [U.S.A.](#). She also thought of the word, Chrismon, which is a combination of Christ and monogram (meaning symbol). The idea quickly spread to other churches. It is traditional that Christian groups can make their own Chrismons with their favourite symbols on.

Chrismons are traditionally coloured white and gold. White is the liturgical (or Church) colour for Christmas and symbolises that Jesus was pure and perfect. Gold symbolises His Majesty and Glory. Chrismons can be made from nearly anything, but paper and embroidered ones are the most widely used.

Below are some symbols that are common Chrismons and what they represent to Christians.

Click on a Chrismon to open a larger version which you can use as a patten to make Chrismons.



The Cross symbolises that Christians believe Jesus Christ died for everyone on a Cross.



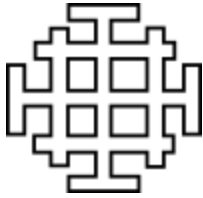
The Latin Cross, also sometimes called the Roman Cross. The base of the Cross has three steps that symbolise faith, hope, and love.



The Irish or Celtic Cross is a normal cross with a circle in the middle to symbolise eternity.



The Triumphant Cross represents the earth with the cross on top. It symbolises Jesus is triumphant over anything we can face in the world.



The Jerusalem Cross is the worn by the crusaders going to Jerusalem, in the middle ages. It can symbolise the Four Gospels in the Bible, the spread of the Gospel to the four corners of the earth or the five wounds of Jesus when he died on the cross.



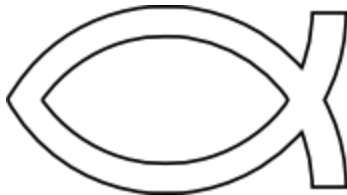
The Eastern Cross is used by many Eastern or Orthodox Churches.



The Furca or Upsilon Cross comes from the Greek letter Y. It is also called The Thieves' Cross from the two robbers who were crucified on each side of Jesus. It also symbolises the choice between good and evil.



The Anchor Cross reminds Christian's that Jesus is the anchor of their faith.



The Fish is one of the oldest Christian symbols. The letters, from the Greek word for fish (ichthus), stand for Jesus (I), Christ (X), God (Q), Son (Y), Savior (S). Some of Jesus' disciples were fishermen.



Alpha and Omega are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. Used together, they symbolise that Christians believe Jesus is the beginning and end of all things.



The Chi-Rho looks like a 'P' with an 'X' on top of it. These two letters are the first two letters of the Greek word 'Christos' which means Christ.



The Star of David, sometimes called the Star of Creation, is a symbol that Jesus was a Jew and a descendant of King David.



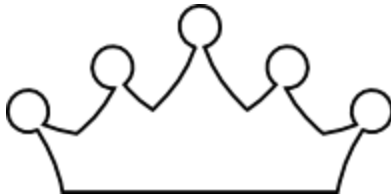
A Five Pointed Star represents the five wounds of Jesus on the cross.



The Nativity Star is the symbol of [the Star of Bethlehem](#) or Epiphany, when the [Wisemen](#) visited Jesus.



An Eight Pointed Star represents baptism and regeneration.



The Crown is the symbol that Jesus is King. It shows that Christians believe Jesus is ruler over heaven and the earth.



The Shepherd's Crook or Staff remembers that Jesus sometimes called himself a shepherd. It can also represent the shepherds who were the first people told about the birth of Jesus.



Both of these symbols represent the Christian 'Trinity' of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. **The Triquetra** is made of three loops making a triangle representing the three parts of the trinity. **The Trefoil** (at the bottom) is three equal circles intertwined to form a whole.





Hands in Prayer help Christians remember that they should pray to God.



The Scroll represents the Bible.



The Dove is the symbol of peace and the Holy Spirit. It is shown pointing down to represent the Holy Spirit that appeared as a Dove when Jesus was baptised.



The Lamp and **The Candle** both represents that Christians believe Jesus in the Light of the World.



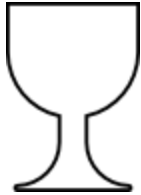
The Shell is a symbol for baptism. It reminds Christians of the water that they are baptised in. It is also a sign of Pilgrimage, as Pilgrims to the Holy Land (Israel) would use a shell as a drinking vessel.



The Keys are a symbol for the Church in all the world. Jesus told his friend Paul that "I will give you keys to heaven", so this means that Christians have to tell other people about Jesus.



The Ship is also a symbol of the Church, sailing towards heaven.



The Cup or Chalice is a symbol of the Mass, Eucharist or Communion. It also represents God's forgiveness.



The Angel reminds Christians of the angels who told the shepherds about the birth of Jesus. It can also represent the second coming of Jesus, which the bible says will start with an Angel blowing a trumpet.



The Lamb is a symbol for Jesus who is sometimes called 'The Lamb of God'.



The Butterfly is a symbol for transformation and the immortal soul.



The Heart is a symbol of love and reminds Christians that God is love.



The Lion is a symbol for Jesus who is sometimes called 'The Lion of Judah'. Jesus is also represented as Aslan the Lion in the Chronicle of Narnia books by C S Lewis.



The White Rose is a symbol for purity and can represent Mary.