

Preparing for Advent: Receiving an Invitation to the New

(Opening to God. By Carolyn Stahl.)

For your Meditation: Whoever you are, you can experience “birth” in many ways: the birth of a project in your life; the birth of a gift to offer your family, your community, the world; the birth of an idea; the birth of a child. Allow yourself in this meditation to be open to the many meanings of birth.

Reading: The angel comes in and says, “Rejoice, beloved one, for the Lord is with you and you are anointed with great favor.” But you are deeply troubled by what he says and bewildered over what this greeting might mean for you. But the angel reassures you, saying, “Do not yield to your fear, beloved one, for the Lord has found delight in you and has chosen to surprise you with a wonderful gift. You will conceive and give birth and name this Gift.” (Based on Luke 1:28-31, The Passion Translation.)

Meditation: Sit quietly and relax, taking a few deep breaths...Allow yourself to let go of any thoughts, tensions, or ideas...Simply let go...Now imagine a wise person appearing before you. This may be a person you know or an imaginary wise person. It might be a flower or other symbol of wisdom for you. This wise person speaks to you...saying, “Do not yield to your fear, beloved one, for the Lord has found delight in you and has chosen to surprise you with a wonderful gift. You will conceive and give birth and name this Gift...” Feel free to communicate with the symbol of wisdom...You may want to understand more completely what this birth is...If so, allow yourself to focus on this birth as long as it feels right for you...If you are not clear about what is being announced, simply let yourself sense the feeling of expectancy...When you feel ready, say good-bye to the wise person...Reflect on your feelings and thoughts about the expected birth...When you feel ready, give thanks for the potential within you and open your eyes.

Reflecting upon the Meditation

What is my deepest dream?

What do I enjoy doing for its own sake?

What would my life look like if it turned out well?

What are my questions, doubts, confusions?

Which life decisions have me wondering what God's will is for me?

In what area(s) of my life do I sense God calling me to grow or to let go of something?

Give attention to the guidance received for action and take the next step...

A Final Prayer of Compassion (Joyce Rupp)

We walk with others who hurt and ache. As we do so, keep us closely united with you, Healing Presence, so that our hearts will always be warm with compassion.

We walk with ourselves in our own joys and sorrows. May we look upon our own selves with love, with a belief that we, too, need tending and care.

We walk with our families, communities, loved ones and friends. Our hearts can be closely connected in good times and in bad. May we draw strength from You and be open to the ways in which You call us to be there for them.

We walk with our world, a world that is filled with pain and grief, with beauty and grandeur. Remind us that who we are and what we do affects our brothers and sisters, the earth, and all creatures in any form.

We walk with wounds yet to be healed. Do not let us run from what we need to face. Grant us courage to let go of whatever keeps us from being healed. Help us to trust you with our lives, O Lord.

We walk with scars that tell of the tough times we have had. God of Wisdom, draw us to quiet time of reflection so that we can see and accept the truths that our wounded times have offered to us.

We walk in Your Presence, O God. May our inner vision keep us closely bonded with You. Assure us often that we are all a part of the Body of Christ. When we meet another, we meet You. May the treasure of our union with You energize us and renew us as we reach out to others.

Amen.

Spiritual Formation Resources

Pray As You Go

<https://pray-as-you-go.org/>

Lectio 365

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/dailydevotional>

[Honest Advent: Awakening to the Wonder of God-with-Us Then, Here, and Now.](#) By Scott Erickson. 2020.

[Practicing Your Path: A Book of Retreats for an Intentional Life.](#) By Holly W. Whitcomb. Innisfree Press, Inc. 2006.

[50 Ways to Pray.](#) Teresa A. Blythe. Abingdon Press. 2006.

[The Critical Journey. Stages in the Life of Faith.](#) Janet O. Hagberg & Robert A. Guelich. Sheffield Publishing. 2005.

[The Cup of our Life.](#) Joyce Rupp. Ave Maria Press. 1997.

[Falling Upward. A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life.](#) Fr. Richard Rohr. Jossey-Bass. 2011.

[Let Your Life Speak.](#) Parker J. Palmer. Jossey-Bass. 2000.

[Mansions of the Heart: Exploring the Seven Stages of Spiritual Growth.](#) R. Thomas Ashbrook. Jossey-Bass. 2009.

[Opening to God.](#) Carolyn Stahl. The Upper Room. 1977.