Advent 2020

Concept: In advent, we become quiet, reflect and wait, and examine our hearts.

“A waiting person is a patient person. The word patience means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us.” – Henri J.M. Nouwen, Eternal Seasons, 2007

As part of this practice, we ponder all of the archetypal foundations inherent in the incarnation of Christ. For instance, it surprised the world because his arrival occurred amidst dusty poverty. It turned the concepts of hierarchy upside down, the holy child who was born into danger and scarcity, social unrest, poverty and mystery. There are innumerable archetypes ensconced in the story of divine arrival and they are ours to consider during advent!

Many of the patterns found in the Christmas story and through the whole of scripture can be seen as something of a silhouette that great storytellers of every consecutive age have chosen to examine and write about. It becomes a lovely practice to see these transcendent truths reflected throughout a wide span of literature. This Advent, we offer a practice of wonder. We think about the canonical story of divine presence as well as similar stories repeated by authors of every age. How it all brings forth the recurring motifs that are embedded in human existence.

These quotes have been prayerfully selected to facilitate a journey of discovery. A discovery of the wisdom to be found within our Advent Scriptures of 2020. Take a moment to consider how each scripture informs the corresponding quote (and perhaps what you may know of the source of the quote!). Then, consider the inverse: how the quote informs the scripture.

“Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.” – Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 2013

“Into this world, this demented inn in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ comes uninvited.”
Thomas Merton, 1966
First Week of Advent
Reflection 1

Isaiah 2:1-5

1 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: 2 In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. 3 Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. 4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. 5 Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

David Foster Wallace

“The truth will set you free. But not until it is finished with you.”
-Infinite Jest, 1996

NOTES
First Week of Advent
Reflection 2

Psalm 122

1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." 2 Our feet are standing in your gates, Jerusalem. 3 Jerusalem is built like a city that is closely compacted together. 4 That is where the tribes go up—the tribes of the Lord—to praise the name of the Lord according to the statute given to Israel. 5 There stand the thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure. 7 May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels." 8 For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you." 9 For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.

E.M. Forster

"We cast a shadow on something wherever we stand, and it is no good moving from place to place to save things; because the shadow always follows. Choose a place where you won't do harm - yes, choose a place where you won't do very much harm, and stand in it for all you are worth, facing the sunshine."
- A Room with a View, 1908

NOTES
First Week of Advent
Reflection 3

Romans 13: 11-14

1 And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. 14 Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

J.R.R. Tolkein

“All we have to decide is what to do with the time that has been given to us.”
- The Fellowship of the Rings, 1954

Harper Lee

“Real courage is when you know you’re licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what.”
- To Kill a Mockingbird, 1960

NOTES
First Week of Advent
Reflection 4

Matthew 24:36-44

36 “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son,[a] but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

42 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Mary Oliver

“To pay attention. This is our endless and proper work.”
- Yes! No!, 2003
Second Week of Advent

Reflection 1

Isaiah 11:1-10

1A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
   from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—
   the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
   the Spirit of counsel and of might,
   the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord—
3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.
   He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
   or decide by what he hears with his ears;
4 but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
   with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.
   He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
   with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
5 Righteousness will be his belt
   and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
6 The wolf will live with the lamb,

Reflection 1 continued on next page
Second Week of Advent
Reflection 1 (cont)

the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling[a] together;
and a little child will lead them.
7 The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.
8 The infant will play near the cobra’s den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper’s nest.
9 They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord
as the waters cover the sea.
10 In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his resting place will be glorious.

J.K. Rowling
“It matters not what someone is born, but what they grow to be.”
- Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, 2000,
Second Week of Advent
Reflection 2

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

1 Endow the king with your justice, O God, the royal son with your righteousness.
2 May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.
3 May the mountains bring prosperity to the people, the hills the fruit of righteousness.
4 May he defend the afflicted among the people and save the children of the needy;
   may he crush the oppressor.
5 May he endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon, through all generations.
6 May he be like rain falling on a mown field, like showers watering the earth.
7 In his days may the righteous flourish and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.
18 Praise be to the Lord God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvelous deeds.
19 Praise be to his glorious name forever; may the whole earth be filled with his glory.
Amen and Amen.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.”

NOTES
Second Week of Advent
Reflection 3

Romans 15:4-13

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through
the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might
have hope. 5 May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same
attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, 6 so that with one mind and
one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. 7 Accept one
another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. 8 For I tell you
that Christ has become a servant of the Jews[a] on behalf of God's truth, so that the
promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed 9 and, moreover, that the Gentiles
might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written:"Therefore I will praise you among the
Gentiles; I will sing the praises of your name." 10 Again, it says,"Rejoice, you Gentiles, with
his people." 11 And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles; let all the peoples extol him." 12 And again, Isaiah says,"The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over
the nations; in him the Gentiles will hope." 13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and
peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy
Spirit.

Oscar Wilde
"Who, being loved, is poor?" -A woman of No Importance, Act 1, 1893

Toni Morrison
"Love is or it ain't. Thin love ain't love at all."-- Beloved, 1987

NOTES
Second Week of Advent

Reflection 4

Matthew 3:1-12

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’” 4 John’s clothes were made of camel’s hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. 9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. 10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 “I baptize you with[b] water for repentance. But after me comes one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with[c] the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

Aleksandre Solzhenitsyn

“In our village, folks say God crumbles up the old moon into stars.
— One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich, 1962

NOTES
Third Week of Advent
Reflection 1

Isaiah 35:1-10

1 The desert and the dry ground will be glad. The dry places will be full of joy. Flowers will grow there. Like the first crocus in the spring, 2 the desert will bloom with flowers. It will be very glad and shout for joy. The glorious beauty of Lebanon will be given to it. It will be as beautiful as the rich lands of Carmel and Sharon. Everyone will see the glory of the Lord. They will see the beauty of our God. 3 Strengthen the hands of those who are weak. Help those whose knees give way. 4 Say to those whose hearts are afraid, “Be strong and do not fear. Your God will come. He will pay your enemies back. He will come to save you.” 5 Then the eyes of those who are blind will be opened. The ears of those who can’t hear will be unplugged. 6 Those who can’t walk will leap like a deer. And those who can’t speak will shout for joy. Water will pour out in dry places. Streams will flow in the desert. 7 The burning sand will become a pool of water. The thirsty ground will become bubbling springs. In the places where wild dogs once lay down, tall grass and papyrus will grow. 8 A wide road will go through the land. It will be called the Way of Holiness. Only those who lead a holy life can use it. “Unclean” and foolish people can’t walk on it. 9 No lions will use it. No hungry wild animals will be on it. None of them will be there. Only people who have been set free will walk on it. 10 Those the Lord has saved will return to their land. They will sing as they enter the city of Zion. Joy that lasts forever will be like beautiful crowns on their heads. They will be filled with gladness and joy. Sorrow and sighing will be gone.

Victor Hugo
“...mothers are often fondest of the child which has caused them the greatest pain.”
- The Hunchback of Notre Dame, 1831

Margery Williams
“Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”
— The Velveteen Rabbit, 1922
Third Week of Advent
Reflection 1

NOTES
Third Week of Advent
Reflection 2

Psalm 146:5-10

5 Blessed are those who depend on the God of Jacob for help. Blessed are those who put their hope in the Lord their God. 6 He is the Maker of heaven and earth and the ocean. He made everything in them. He remains faithful forever. 7 He stands up for those who are treated badly. He gives food to hungry people. The Lord sets prisoners free. 8 The Lord gives sight to those who are blind. The Lord lifts up those who feel helpless. The Lord loves those who do what is right. 9 The Lord watches over the outsiders who live in our land. He takes good care of children whose fathers have died. He also takes good care of widows. But he causes evil people to fail in everything they do. 10 The Lord rules forever. The God of Zion will rule for all time to come.
Praise the Lord.

Marilynne Robinson

"Love is holy because it is like grace – the worthiness of its object is never really what matters."
— Gilead, 2004
Third Week of Advent
Reflection 3

Luke 1:46b-55

46 Mary said, 'My soul gives glory to the Lord. 47 My spirit delights in God my Savior. 48 He has taken note of me even though I am not considered important. From now on all people will call me blessed. 49 The Mighty One has done great things for me. His name is holy. 50 He shows his mercy to those who have respect for him, from parent to child down through the years. 51 He has done mighty things with his powerful arm. He has scattered those who are proud in their deepest thoughts. 52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones. But he has lifted up people who are not considered important. 53 He has filled with good things those who are hungry. But he has sent away empty those who are rich. 54 He has helped the people of Israel, who serve him. He has always remembered to be kind to Abraham and his children down through the years. He has done it just as he promised to our people of long ago.'

Charlotte Bronte

"I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will."
--Jane Eyre, 1847

Sylvia Plath

"I took a deep breath and listened to the old brag of my heart; I am, I am, I am."
--The Bell Jar, 1963

NOTES
Third Week of Advent
Reflection 4

James 5:7-10

5vBrothers and sisters, be patient until the Lord comes. See how the farmer waits for the land to produce its rich crop. See how patient the farmer is for the fall and spring rains.
8 You too must be patient. You must remain strong. The Lord will soon come back. 9 Brothers and sisters, don't find fault with one another. If you do, you will be judged. And the Judge is standing at the door!

10 Brothers and sisters, think about the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. They are an example of how to be patient when you suffer.

A.A. Milne
“Rivers know this: there is no hurry. We shall get there some day.”
—Winnie the Pooh, 1926

Cassandra Clare
“Patience, grasshopper,” said Maia. “Good things come to those who wait.”
“I always thought that was ‘Good things come to those who do the wave,” said Simon. “No wonder I’ve been so confused all my life.”
— City of Glass, 2009

Markus Zusak
“He was the crazy one who had painted himself black and defeated the world. She was the book thief without the words. Trust me, though, the words were on their way, and when they arrived, Liesel would hold them in her hands like the clouds, and she would wring them out like rain.”
— The Book Thief, 2005
Third Week of Advent
Reflection 4

NOTES
Third Week of Advent
Reflection 5

Matthew 11:2-11

2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" 4 Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy[a] are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me." 7 As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces. 9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.” 11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Victor Hugo

"I wanted to see you again, touch you, know who you were, see if I would find you identical with the ideal image of you which had remained with me and perhaps shatter my dream with the aid of reality."
—The Hunchback of Notre Dame, 1831

NOTES
Fourth Week of Advent

Reflection 1

Isaiah 7:10-16

10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, 11 "Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights." 12 But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test." 13 Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin[b] will conceive and give birth to a son, and[c] will call him Immanuel. 15 He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, 16 for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

Oscar Wilde

"Behind every exquisite thing that existed, there was something tragic."
-- The Picture of Dorian Gray, 1890
Fourth Week of Advent
Reflection 2

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

1 Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth 2 before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your might; come and save us. 3 Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. 4 How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people? 5 You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have made them drink tears by the bowlful. 6 You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us. 7 Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

17 Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself. 18 Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name.
19 Restore us, Lord God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.

Haruki Murakami
"Memories warm you up from the inside. But they also tear you apart."
-- Kafka on the Shore", 2002

NOTES

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
Fourth Week of Advent

Reflection 3

Romans 1:1-7

1. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his earthly life[a] was a descendant of David, 4 and who through the Spirit of holiness was appointed the Son of God in power[b] by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. 5 Through him we received grace and apostleship to call all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from[c] faith for his name's sake. 6 And you also are among those Gentiles who are called to belong to Jesus Christ. 7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be his holy people: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

J.K. Rowling

"Every human life is worth the same, and worth saving."
-- Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, 2007

David Guterson

"None of those other things makes a difference. Love is the strongest thing in the world, you know. Nothing can touch it. Nothing comes close. If we love each other we're safe from it all. Love is the biggest thing there is."
-- Snow Falling on Cedars, 1994

NOTES

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
Fourth Week of Advent

Reflection 4

Matthew 1:18-25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about[a]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet[b] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. 20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,[c] because he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel[d] (which means "God with us"). 24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Charles Dickens

"I loved her against reason, against promise, against peace, against hope, against happiness, against all discouragement that could be."

-- Great Expectations, 1860

Khaled Hosseini

"I wondered if that was how forgiveness budded; not with the fanfare of epiphany, but with pain gathering its things, packing up, and slipping away unannounced in the middle of the night."

-- The Kite Runner, 2003
Christmas
Reflection 1

Isaiah 9:2-7

1 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned. 3 You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder. 4 For as in the day of Midian’s defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. 5 Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. 6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Victor Hugo

“Even the darkest night will end and the sun will rise.”

Anne Frank

“Look at how a single candle can both defy and define the darkness.”

NOTES
Christmas
Reflection 2

Psalm 96

1 Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth.
2 Sing to the Lord, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.
3 Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.
4 For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.
5 For all the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.
6 Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.
7 Ascribe to the Lord, all you families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
8 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.
9 Worship the Lord in the splendor of his[a] holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.
10 Say among the nations, "The Lord reigns." The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.
11 Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it.
12 Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.
13 Let all creation rejoice before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Martin Luther King Jr.

"Occasionally in life there are those moments of unutterable fulfillment which cannot be completely explained by those symbols called words. Their meanings can only be articulated by the inaudible language of the heart."
-- receiving Nobel Peace Prize, 1964

NOTES
Christmas
Reflection 3

Titus 2:11-14

11 For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
"Where there is much light the shade is deepest." --Gotz von Berlichingen, act 1, 1773

Miguel de Cervantes
"The knight's sole responsibility is to succour them as people in need, having eyes only for their sufferings, not for their misdeeds." -- Don Quixote, 1605

Nathaniel Hawthorne
"No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true."
--The Scarlet Letter, 1850

John Bunyan:
"At the top of the hill stood a cross, and a little below at the bottom was a stone tomb. In my dream, just as Christian came up to the cross his burden loosened from his shoulders and fell off his back. It tumbled and continued to do so down the hill until it came to the mouth of the tomb where it fell inside and was seen no more."-- Pilgrim's Progress, 1678

NOTES
In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while [a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register. 4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. 8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.’ 13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, 14 “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”
Thomas Merton

"Into this world, this demented inn
in which there is absolutely no room for him at all,
Christ comes uninvited.
But because he cannot be at home in it,
because he is out of place in it,
and yet he must be in it,
His place is with the others for whom
there is no room.
His place is with those who do not belong,
who are rejected by power, because
they are regarded as weak,
those who are discredited,
who are denied status of persons,
who are tortured, bombed and exterminated.
With those for whom there is no room,
Christ is present in this world."
– Raids on the Unspeakable, 1966

Ralph Ellison

I am an invisible man...I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids—and
I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me." --Invisible Man, 1952

NOTES
Christmas
Reflection 4 (cont.)

Ancient Celtic Rune

"I saw a stranger today. 
I put food for him 
in the eating-place
And drink
in the drinking-place
And music
in the listening-place.
In the Holy name
of the Trinity
He blessed myself
and my family.
And the lark said in her warble
Often, often, often
Goes Christ
in the stranger's guise.
O, oft and oft and oft,
Goes Christ
in the stranger's guise."

NOTES
Advent Waiting

Henri J. Nouwen

A waiting person is a patient person. The word “patience” means the willingness to stay where we are and live the situation out to the full in the belief that something hidden there will manifest itself to us. Impatient people are always expecting the real thing to happen somewhere else and therefore want to go elsewhere. The moment is empty. But patient people dare to stay where they are. Patient living means to live actively in the present and wait there. Waiting, then, is not passive. It involves nurturing the moment, as a mother nurtures the child that is growing in her womb.

- Eternal Seasons, 2007