

*Festival of
Lessons and Carols*

The Choir of Communion and Liberation
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One aspect of Advent is waiting, a waiting that is full of hope. In this, Advent enables us to understand the content and meaning of Christian time and of history.

Man is always waiting in his life...

Mankind has never been able to cease hoping for better times. Christians have always hoped that the Lord will always be present in history and that he will gather up all our tears and all our troubles so that everything will be explained and fulfilled in his kingdom.

When time is not filled with a present that is meaningful, waiting becomes unbearable. If we have to look forward to something that is not there now – if, in other words, we have nothing here and now and the present is completely empty, every second of our life seems too long. Waiting itself becomes too heavy a burden to bear, when we cannot be sure whether we really have anything at all to wait for.

When, on the other hand, time itself is meaningful and every moment contains something especially valuable, our joyful anticipation of the greater experience that is still to come makes what we have in the present even more precious and we are carried by an invisible power beyond the present moment. Advent helps us to wait with precisely this kind of waiting. It is the essentially Christian form of waiting and hoping. -- Pope Benedict XVI

Choir: Up good Christen folk and listen (Piae Cantiones, harm Woodward)

The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking about in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and they hid from him among the trees. The Lord God called to the man “Where are you?” He replied, ‘I heard the sound of you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.’ God said, ‘Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I forbade you to eat from?’ The man replied, ‘It was the woman you gave to be with me who gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’ The Lord God said to the woman, ‘What have you done?’ The woman answered, ‘It was the serpent who deceived me into eating it.’ To the woman he said: ‘I shall give you great labor in childbearing; with labor you will bear children. You will desire your husband, but he will be your master.’ And to the man he said: ‘Because you have listened to your wife and eaten from the tree which I forbade you, on your account the earth will be cursed. You will get your food from it only by labor all the days of your life; it will yield thorns and thistles for you. You will eat of the produce of the field, and only by the sweat of your brow will you win your bread until you return to the earth; for from it you were taken. Dust you are, and to dust you will return.’ – Genesis 3:8-19

Choir: Adam Lay Ybounden (Ord)

What good would life have been to us, had Christ not come as our Redeemer? Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love! To ransom a slave you gave away your Son. O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer! – from the *Exultet* in the liturgy of the Easter vigil

Choir: Jesus Christ the Apple Tree (Elizabeth Poston)

In order to affirm God, a people is chosen: the people that is born of Abraham, in which the person is created for the salvation of the world with a task that can be identified with that of the people itself.

This people to which God gives body in history in order to spread the knowledge of his Mystery throughout the world and in all times finds his word involved in the vision of the end of history when the promises the Jewish people expected will be fulfilled. It is the expectation of something that can save man and mankind.

The subject of that "great day" so eagerly awaited came to be identified with the term "Messiah". The knowledgeable awareness of a Christian, imbued with tradition, cannot fail to identify his own existence in this history. What difference can there be? That for us the Mystery has wished to intervene in the tragedy of man, within the cosmos, by becoming man. Jesus of Nazareth for us is the fulfillment of the expectation in which the whole people of Israel lived, unique in the history of the world. – Msgr. Luigi Giussani, *We Are Jews*

Choir: Matin Responsory (Palestrina)

God called Abraham out of the heathen world and made him the father of all believers. God walked with him on journeys, protected him in foreign lands, enriched him with earthly possessions, and honored him with victories. He made a covenant with him, saved him from harm, and astonished him by giving him the offspring he had

despaired of. Favored with so many graces and drawn by such great sweetness of divine love, Abraham was to learn to love God rather than fear him.

God comforted Jacob by a dream during the flight, roused him to combat upon his return, and encircled him with a wrestler's embrace to teach him not to be afraid of the author of the conflict, but to love him. God called Moses as a father would, and with fatherly affection invited him to become the liberator of his people.

In all these events, the flame of divine love enkindled human hearts. Wounded by love, they longed to look upon God with their bodily eyes. Yet how could our narrow human vision apprehend God? But the law of love is not concerned with what will be, what ought to be, what can be. It is intolerable for love not to see the object of its longing. A love that desires to see God may not have reasonableness on its side, but it is the evidence of filial love. It inspired the psalmist to make the prayer: *Show me your face.*

–Peter Chrysologus: *Sermon*

O Wisdom, you came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and reached from end to end, and disposed of all things sweetly and mightily: come and teach us the way of prudence. (trad. "O" Antipon)

Choir: O Weisheit (Arvo Pärt)

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. In those days, in that time, I

will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land. In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure; this is what they shall call her: "The Lord our justice."

Choir: Lo How a Rose (Trad. German, 16th cent.)

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations, the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious. He shall raise a signal to the nations and gather the outcasts of Israel; the dispersed of Judah he shall assemble from the four corners of the earth.

Choir: A Tender Shoot (Goldschmidt)

How did this fact happen? With the collaboration of a young girl who said "yes" to God's proposal.

"What God carries out is not in contradiction to what we do, but He is able to change what we do and make it proportionate to His plan. He changes us; the miracle occurs. For this reason, it's amazing to think of Mary. In front of the enormity of what was happening to her, what ability did she have? The ability to recognize, and to abandon herself - as a baby does. -- Luigi Giussani, *Comments on the Angelus*

Choir: Alma Redemptoris Mater (Gregorian chant)

(Sweet Mother of the Redeemer, Thou that abidest Heaven's open gate, and the Star of the Sea, help Thy fallen people who are trying to

rise. Thou, who while nature marveled did remain a virgin both before and after, receiving from Gabriel's lips that Ave, have mercy on us sinners).

Choir: I Saw a Maiden (Trad. Basque noel)

The moment Mary said “yes”, the world changed, because it established both the meaning of everyone’s life and the meaning of history.

If we would live her simplicity day by day, if we would live that “yes” when we get up, when we eat breakfast, when we go to work, in every moment of our family relationships, social relationships, in front of the circumstances God makes us pass through, every moment would be an open gate to heaven. – Luigi Giussani, *Comments on the Angelus*

Choir: Blessed Be that Maid Mary (trad. British carol)

Choir: Ave Regina Caelorum (Gregorian chant)

(Hail Queen of Heaven, beyond compare, to whom the angels pay homage. Hail, Root of Jesse, fate of light that opened for the world's new Day. Rejoice, O Virgin unsurpassed, in whom our ransom was begun. For all your loving children pray to Christ our Savior and Son).

Now cast your gaze throughout this grand creation and also on the roof of the sky, widely scan in every corner how the King of heaven seeks you everywhere and, oh, comes himself and finds a dwelling in

you just as in former days wise prophets said in words, proclaimed Christ's birth, spoke comfort to you, choicest of cities. – *Anglo Saxon Spirituality*

Choir: O Bethlehem (Basque carol, arr. Poston)

In those days a decree was issued by the emperor Augustus for a census to be taken throughout the Roman world. Everyone made his way to his own town to be registered. Joseph went up to Judea from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to register in the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house of David by descent; and with him went Mary, his betrothed, who was expecting her child. While they were there the time came for her to have her baby, and she gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them at the inn. - *Luke 2: 1-7*

Choir: Bethlehem

Choir: Chanticleer Carol (Andrew Carter)

“Now in this same district there were shepherds out in the fields, keeping watch through the night over their flock. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were very much afraid. The angel said: ‘Do not be afraid; I bring you good news, news of great joy for the whole nation. Today there has been born to you in the city of David a savior - the

Messiah, the Lord. This will be the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger.’ All at once there was with the angel a great company of the heavenly host, singing praise to God: ‘Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth.’ After the angels had left them and returned to heaven the shepherds said to one another, ‘Come, let us go straight to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.’– *Luke 2:8-15*

Choir: Sant Josep i La Mare de Deu (trad. Catalan carol)

Choir: A Naí Naoimh’ (trad. Irish carol)

Awake, mankind! For your sake, God has become man. You would have suffered everlasting unhappiness, had it not been for this mercy. You would have been lost if he had not hastened to your aid. Let us then joyfully celebrate the coming of our salvation and redemption. Let us celebrate the festive day on which he who is the great and eternal day came from the great and endless day of eternity into our own short day of time. -St. Augustine, *sermon*.

Choir: Nowell, Nowell, Nowell (Elizabeth Maconchy)

Consciousness of Jesus’ presence is greater than anything we can do for others. We have been called to be conscious of this. Therefore, besides the desire for daily affection for Him, we must desire with all our hearts that our lives may give testimony of this to the world, that

through us the world may become aware – in other words, that our lives may truly participate in the life of the people of God, of His people who belongs to Him, filled to overflowing with good works.

– Msgr. Luigi Giussani, *Reflections on the Rosary*

Choir: Verbum Caro Factum Est (anonymous)

An adult is one who lives life stretched between two poles of experience: on one hand, the certainty that is the joy of victory; on the other hand, the expectation that this victory be completely made manifest, the expectation of His second coming. Two poles: certainty and expectation. It is the humble certainty of the present – humble because of the waiting for that perfection that still doesn't exist – it exists, but is not here yet. It is the prototype of a secure and humble man full of expectation. It is the man possessed by Christ, the man who belongs to that Presence, and for him, time is the patient transfiguration of things, the patient development of the complete manifestation; it is the man who hopes against hope. – Fr. Julián Carrón

Choir: E'en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come (Paul Manz)

