



Advent 2024 Journal

ADVENT 2024

Daily Reflections, Practices & Prayers

EMERGE *into*
GREAT JOY



S. JAMES MEYER

First Sunday of Advent

December 1, 2024

Emerge into Awe

Standing upon a scenic overlook and peering into the Grand Canyon, Sally held her father's hand. The normally chatty eight-year-old was speechless. "It's so beautiful," she finally said. Her father responded, "God is a master builder for sure."

After another period of extended silence, Sally spoke again. "We should let God build everything." Her father smiled and replied, "God has created everything, Sally. If we can't see the beauty, it's because we're not looking for it. By adjusting the way we look at things, we can always see the Creator's awesome beauty."

Indeed, the price we pay for focusing so much attention on earthly structures of power and economies is that we often lose our ability to see God's power and love at work around us. To be awed by God's great love coming to life within us and around us, we might need to adjust our focus.

S. James Meyer, *Emerge into Great Joy: Daily Reflections, Practices and Prayers* (Waterford, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2024).
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Questions To Ponder:

Where is a place you experience the awe of God? What is it about that place that reveals the presence of God to you?

What needs to be adjusted in your life for the focus of God's presence to become clearer and more evident? What lens adjustment is necessary?

Lectio Divina: Luke 21:25-28

Jesus said to his disciples:

"There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright

in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.

How will this reading shape your life this week as you begin your Advent journey?

Challenge for the Week:

If you are able, go to the place that most reveals God's presence. If you are not able to physically get there, sit for a while with the picture of that place in your mind's eye. Spend some time in quiet reflection about what this place means to you and how it reveals the awe and presence of God.



Second Sunday of Advent

December 8, 2024

Emerge into Presence

As our StreetLights Outreach Block Parties grew in popularity in marginalized neighborhoods, the serving line grew longer. Much longer. One of our volunteers, who happened to be a process engineer, devised a system to move the line faster. It worked well. But people were even more agitated. So, we regrouped.

Love, we realized, feeds hearts and souls, not just stomachs. We purchased more tables and set up additional serving lines so guests wouldn't feel rushed and could take their time, sharing smiles and bright conversation with volunteers. The happiness index jumped way up.

The logistics of life are seldom easy. Even Christ's entry into this world was rocky. But moments of shared kindness go a long way toward making the pathway smooth. What a difference it makes when we create a little space in our lives to give life to others!

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Questions To Ponder:

Recall a time when you served the needs of another person. What did your presence do for this person as you were taking care of their needs? How did their presence affect you?

Whose presence do you really hunger for in your life? A parent? A son or daughter? A friend? God?

Lectio Divina: Luke 3:3-6

John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins,

as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice of one crying out in the desert:

*“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.*

Every valley shall be filled

and every mountain and hill shall be made low.

The winding roads shall be made straight,

and the rough ways made smooth,

and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

What word or phrase from this Scripture passage most resonates with you?

How will this reading shape your life this week as you continue your Advent journey?

Challenge for the Week:

Send a note or email, or better yet, phone or visit the person on the previous page whose presence you desire. Make a commitment to be Christ's presence in the world in this tangible way.



Third Sunday of Advent

December 15, 2024

Emerge into Kindness

Eli pulled his old Honda up to the pump and grabbed his phone to check his bank balance. Things were tight. He needed to pick up a few groceries and diapers, which meant he could only afford to fill his tank half full. But as he was getting out of the car, a woman approached, slipped her card into his pump, and said, "This one's on me. Fill 'er up and just pay it forward someday." Then she smiled and walked away.

"Thank you!" he called after her. He was dumbfounded and filled with hope and joy. He imagined the look on his wife's face when he arrived home with enough diapers to last two weeks instead of one. That would lower the stress in the house a few notches.

People should know we are Christians not by bumper stickers or lawn signs but by the kindness with which we treat one another, including total strangers. After all, Christ cannot come to life in an unkind heart.

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Questions To Ponder:

Recall a time when someone performed an act of kindness for you? How did that make you feel? How did you respond?

Who needs an act of kindness from you right now? How can you show love by reaching out to this person in a tangible way?

Lectio Divina: Philippians 4:4-7

Brothers and sisters:

Rejoice in the Lord always.

I shall say it again: rejoice!

Your kindness should be known to all.

The Lord is near.

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.

Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

What word or phrase from this Scripture passage most resonates with you?

How will this reading shape your life this week as you continue your Advent journey?

Challenge for the Week:

Create a Love Takes Action Plan for yourself this week. Decide who most needs a loving act of kindness. Determine how you will act, and then do it! Pay attention to the relationship of love that is formed or deepened by this act of kindness.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 22, 2024

Emerge into Awareness

Jorge's phone buzzed. After quickly glancing at the screen, he jumped up and bolted from the meeting. It was his brother, Juan, who was serving in the Peace Corps. He could catch up on project details later. It was Juan! Nothing else mattered.

No matter what is going on in life, when someone we love and haven't seen for a while shows up, all other priorities melt into the background. Our hearts leap with joy. The life that pulses within us bounces with excitement. In those moments, we fully live what we believe—that nothing is more urgent or more important than love.

Why don't we live that way all the time? What holds us back from making love of God and love of neighbor the absolute number one priority every moment of every day?

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Questions To Ponder:

Recall a time in your life when someone showed up unexpectedly? What were the details around the reunion? How did you feel as you became aware of their presence?

How do we show love to God as we love our neighbor? Just as in the story of the Good Samaritan, who is your neighbor? How do you show love to your neighbor in a tangible way?

Lectio Divina: Luke 1:41-45

*When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting,
the infant leaped in her womb,
and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit,
cried out in a loud voice and said,
"Blessed are you among women,
and blessed is the fruit of your womb.
And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?
For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears,
the infant in my womb leaped for joy.
Blessed are you who believed
that what was spoken to you by the Lord
would be fulfilled."*

What word or phrase from this Scripture passage most resonates with you?

How will this reading shape your life this week as you continue your Advent journey?

Challenge for the Week:

As you celebrate the beauty and awe of the Christmas celebrations, both at church and in your Church of the Home, take special note of the reunions that occur as you gather with loved ones. Pause to say thanks in those moments of miracles and wonders.

