

CONFESSING CHRIST – DAILY LECTIONARY AND PRAYERS

Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2010-2011

Frederick R. Trost and Colleen Darling, Editors

“A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.”

(Isaiah 11:1)

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First Sunday in Advent 11/28	Isaiah 2:1-5	Matthew T. Scholar Manassas, VA
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“Where the understanding is outraged, where human nature rebels, where our piety keeps a nervous distance: there, precisely there, God loves to be; he baffles the wisdom of the wise; there he vexes our nature, our religious instincts... Only the humble believe him and rejoice...”

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 1906-1945)

Monday, 11/29	Romans 13:11-14 *1925 Frederick Herzog	Gerald Schrankler Fond du Lac, WI
Tuesday, 11/30	Matthew 24:36-44	Lothar Schreiner Wuppertal, Germany
Wednesday, 12/01	Psalm 122	Daniel Ray Schroeder North Granby, CT
Thursday, 12/02	Isaiah 11:1-3 +1980 Maura Clarke +1980 Jean Donovan +1980 Ita Ford +1980 Dorothy Kazel	Carl F. Schultz, Jr. Glastonbury, CT
Friday, 12/03	Isaiah 11:4-5	Ralph Schultz Waukesha, WI
Saturday, 12/04	Isaiah 11:6-10 +306 St. Barbara	Marie Shetler Quarryville, PA

Second Sunday in Advent 12/05	Matthew 3:1-12 1955 Montgomery bus boycott +1791 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart	John Silliman Shamokin, PA
Monday, 12/06	Romans 15:1-6 +343 St. Nicholas	James Silver Middletown, CT
Tuesday, 12/07	Romans 15:7-13 1965 Gaudium et Spes	Harold P. Simonson Tacoma, WA
Wednesday, 12/08	Psalm 72:1-7 +1691 Richard Baxter +1977 Sr. Alice Domon (Disappeared Argentina, Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo)	Betsy Skinner Newberry, FL
Thursday, 12/09	Psalm 72:8-14	David & Connie Slater Dover, NH
Friday, 12/10	Psalm 72:15-17 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights +1968 Karl Barth +1968 Thomas Merton +1977 Sr. Léonie Duquet (Disappeared Argentina, Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo)	Samuel Slie West Haven, CT
Saturday, 12/11	Psalm 72:18-19	Norman R. Small Gilmanton, NH
Third Sunday in Advent 12/12	Luke 1:47-55	Stephen A. Small West Boylston, MA
Monday, 12/13	Isaiah 35:1-7 *1910 Louis Gunnemann	David C. Smith Allentown, PA
Tuesday, 12/14	Isaiah 35:8-10	Sally S. Smith Sonora, CA
Wednesday, 12/15	Matthew 2:1-11 1791, Bill of Rights	Toni T. Smith Chester, CT
Thursday, 12/16	James 5:7-11	Jeannette Solimine Colfax, WA

Friday, 12/17	Psalm 146:1-7	Scott Spencer Rehoboth, MA
Saturday, 12/18	Psalm 146:8-10 1865 Abolition of Slavery (U.S.) *1946 Steve Biko	Mr. & Mrs. Elroy Stauss Manitowoc, WI
Fourth Sunday in Advent 12/19	Matthew 1:18-25 +220, Clement of Alexandria	Gary Stillwell Janesville, WI
Monday, 12/20	Isaiah 7:10-16	Grace Taskinsoy Fountain Hills, AZ
Tuesday, 12/21	Psalm 80:1-7	James Tilbe Raynham, MA
Wednesday, 12/22	Psalm 80:17-19	Gary Titusdahl Cannon Falls, MN
Thursday, 12/23	Romans 1:1-7	Harley C.W. & Shirley Tretow Berlin, WI
Friday, Christmas Eve, 12/24	Isaiah 9:1-6	Frederick & Louise Trost Elkhart Lake, WI
Saturday, Christmas Day, 12/25	Luke 2:1-20	Jean Trost Canadaigua, NY

“Jesus Christ is the love of God become human for all men and women, and hence he is not a preacher of abstract ethical ideologies, but the concrete executor of the love of God.”
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

First Sunday after Christmas 12/26	Psalm 148 Day of St. Stephen, Martyr	Jonathan H. Trost Rochester, NY
Monday, 12/27	Isaiah 60:1-6 Day of St. John, the Evangelist	Marianne Trost Fountain Hills, AZ
Tuesday, 12/28	Psalm 71:1-3 Day of Holy Innocents, Martyrs	Robert & Ann Trost Grand Rapids, MI

Wednesday, 12/29	Isaiah 62:11-12	Sarah E. Trost Milwaukee, WI
Thursday, 12/30	Titus 3:4-7 +1968 Hans Asmussen	United Church of Christ Sulphur Springs, IN
Friday, New Year's Eve, 12/31	Psalm 121 1915 Fellowship of Reconciliation	John Van Epps Guilford, CT
Saturday, New Year's Day, 1/01/2011	Psalm 93 *1484 Huldreich Zwingli 1863 Emancipation Proclamation Day of Prayer for Peace	Edward A. Walker Dennis, MA

“By gracious powers so wonderfully sheltered, and confidently waiting come what may, we know that God is with us night and morning, and never fails to greet us each new day.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Second Sunday after Christmas 1/02	John 1:1-9 *1918 Willi Graf, White Rose Society	Rev. & Mrs. John R. Weiler Bethlehem, PA
Monday, 1/03	John 1:10-17	Timothy Wepner Newton, NC
Tuesday, 1/04	Jeremiah 31:7-9	John A. Werley Malone, NY
Wednesday, 1/05	Jeremiah 31:10-14	Glenn W. Wernecke Buckeye, AZ
Thursday, Epiphany, 1/06	Matthew 2:1-12	Fritz West Marine on St. Croix, MN

“God's paths are the paths that he himself has taken and that we now are to take with him.”
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Friday, 1/07	Matthew 2:13-18	Rudolf Weth Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany
Saturday, 1/08	Matthew 2:19-23 *1894 Maximilian Kolbe +1996 Sadao Watanabe	Jean T. Whitcomb Paxton, MA

First Sunday after Epiphany 1/09	Isaiah 42:1-9	Cody Williams New York, New York
Monday, 1/10	Isaiah 42:10-12	David Yochum Whitewater, WI
Tuesday, 1/11	1 John 1:5-13 *1907 Abraham Joshua Heschel	Nathaniel Yordon Norwalk, CT
Wednesday, 1/12	Matthew 3:13-17 1957 Southern Christian Leadership Conference	Elga Zachau Bochum, Germany

“God doesn’t want dead Christians, but Christians who live unto their Lord.
Unless we hear this word, Christmas will have passed us by.”
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Thursday, 1/13	Ephesians 3:3-14 +1691 George Fox *1931 Maura Clarke	Leonard Zecchini Lyndeborough, NH
Friday, 1/14	Psalm 29:1-4 +368 Hilary of Poitiers *1875 Albert Schweitzer	Walter Ziegenhals Burlington, NC
Saturday, 1/15	Psalm 29:5-11 *1929 Martin Luther King, Jr.	Reynold Ziegler Camp Hill, PA
Second Sunday after Epiphany 1/16	Isaiah 49:1-7 1992 El Salvador Peace Accords	Lowell Zuck St. Louis, MO
Monday, 1/17	Isaiah 49:8-13 Martin Luther King Jr. Day	Hans-Juergen Abromeit Greifswald, Germany
Tuesday, 1/18 (Week of Prayer for Christian Unity)	Psalm 18:1-6	Clifford B. Anderson Cranbury, NJ
Wednesday, 1/19	Psalm 18:16-19 1563 Heidelberg Catechism	F. Christopher Anderson York, PA

Thursday, 1/20	Mark 11:20-25 1529 Luther's "Small Catechism" 1993 Guatemalan refugees return from southern Mexico *1825 Ernesto Cardenal	Franklin Anderson E. Waterboro, ME
Friday, 1/21	John 14:8-14	Ralph Anderson West Seneca, NY
Saturday, 1/22	John 14:15-17	Rupert E. Annis Topsfield, MA
Third Sunday after Epiphany 1/23	Isaiah 9:1-4	Otto Artopoeus Bellevue, KY
Monday, 1/24	Matthew 4:12-23	Sally S. Bailey Raleigh, NC
Tuesday, 1/25	Psalm 15 +1586 Lucas Cranach the Younger	William Baran Kittery Point, ME
Wednesday, 1/26	Psalm 27:1, 4-9 +155 Polycarp 1945 Liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau	William Barker S. Wellfleet, MA
Thursday, 1/27	Matthew 6:1-4 1967 Outer Space Weapon Treaty	Linda Barnes Colchester, CT
Friday, 1/28	Matthew 6:5-15 +1972 Mahalia Jackson	Martha Ann Baumer Belleville, IL
Saturday, 1/29,	Psalm 126; 1-9	Thomas Bentz Milwaukee, WI
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany 1/30	Matthew 5:1-12 +1948 Mahatma Gandhi +1987 Gerhard W.Grauer	Hans Berthold Schwerte, Germany
Monday, 1/31	Micah 6:1-8 *1915 Thomas Merton +1955 John R. Mott	Gerald & Cynthia Bertsch Sheboygan, WI

Tuesday, 2/01	Psalm 15 +110 Ignatius of Antioch	David Biebighauser Ipswich, SD
Wednesday, 2/02	1 Corinthians 1:4-9 +1945 Alfred Delp	Eugene Birmingham Bensenville, IL
Thursday, 2/03	1 Corinthians 1:10-18 *1909 Simone Weil	Cathie Fisher Braman Fredericksburg, VA
Friday, 2/04	Philemon 1-17 *1906 Dietrich Bonhoeffer *1913 Rosa Parks	Charles Brizius Elkhorn, WI
Saturday, 2/05	Philemon 18-25	Robert F. Broeder Le Sueur, MN
Fifth Sunday after Epiphany 2/06	Matthew 5:13-20	Abigail M. Brown Fairfax Station, VA
Monday, 2/07	Isaiah 58:1-5 *1909 Dom Hélder Camara	Calvin Brown Ontario, Canada
Tuesday, 2/08	Isaiah 58:6-7 *1878 Martin Buber	Richard S. Brueseke Owensville, MO
Wednesday, 2/09	Isaiah 58:8-10	John Burgess Pittsburgh, PA
Thursday, 2/10	Isaiah 58:11-12	Christine Busch Dusseldorf, Germany
Friday, 2/11	Isaiah 58:13-14 1531 Reformation in England 1889 Freedom of Religion in Japan 1990 Nelson Mandela freed	Michael Caldwell Wolcott, VT
Saturday, 2/12	1 Corinthians 2:1-12 *1809 Abraham Lincoln *1817 Frederick Douglass 1909 NAACP founded	John Cedarleaf Fairport, NY
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany 2/13	Psalm 119:1-8 +1984 Roland H. Bainton	Richard Christensen Sheboygan, WI

Monday, 2/14	Psalm 119:9-16 1967 Latin America Nuclear Free Zone Treaty	Vernon Clausing West Bend, WI
Tuesday, 2/15	1 Corinthians 3:1-9 *1564 Galileo *1820 Susan B. Anthony	Richard & Ruthie Coleman Pembroke, MA
Wednesday, 2/16	Deuteronomy 30:15-20 +1977 Janani Luwum, Uganda	Herbert & Lillian Davis Dedham, MA
Thursday, 2/17	Proverbs 21:2-3	James G. Deitz Amherst, OH
Friday, 2/18	Romans 15:1-6 +1546 Martin Luther	Uwe Dittmer Potsdam, Germany
Saturday, 2/19	Romans 15:13 1942 Japanese-American relocation camps established in the United States	Vernon Dolde Wausau, WI
Septuagesima Sunday, 2/20	Psalm 119:33-40 *1909 Franz Hildebrandt	Wayne Drucek Schofield, WI
Monday, 2/21	Psalm 119:41-42 +1965 Malcolm X	Chet Dziczek Clinton, MA
Tuesday, 2/22	1 Corinthians 3:10-11 +1943 Sophie Scholl, Hans Scholl, Christoph Probst White Rose Society	Roger Easland Pierre, SD
Wednesday, 2/23	1 Corinthians 3:18-23 *1868 W.E.B. DuBois	Willis Elliott Kearney, NE
Thursday, 2/24	Leviticus 19:1-2	Marion Ellis Newmarket, NH
Friday, 2/25	Psalm 8	John Esbenshade Lancaster, PA
Saturday, 2/26	Psalm 67:1-3 1529 Diet of Speyer +1969 Karl Jaspers	Gabriel & Dorothy Fackre West Hyannisport, MA

Sexagesima Sunday, 2/27	Psalm 131 1973 Wounded Knee	Ralph Faisst West Bend, WI
Monday, 2/28	Psalm 133 +1551 Martin Butzer	William Falla Whitehall, PA
Tuesday, 3/01	1 Corinthians 4:1-5 1522 Luther leaves the Wartburg	J.W. & Patricia Fiegenbaum Amherst, MA
Wednesday, 3/02	Isaiah 49:13 +1791 John Wesley	David Fisher Brooklyn, NY
Thursday, 3/03	Isaiah 55:6-7	Richard & Martha Floyd Pittsfield, MA
Friday, 3/04	Isaiah 55:8-11	Jerry Folk Madison, WI
Saturday, 3/05	Philippians 2:12-23	Ron K. Freyer-Nicholas Wildwood, FL
Estomihi Sunday, 3/06	Matthew 17:1-9 +1274 Thomas Aquinas +1585 Zacharias Ursinus	Hans-Wilhelm Fricke-Hein Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany
Monday, 3/07	Psalm 2	Theodore Fritsch North Chatham, MA
Tuesday, 3/08	2 Peter 1:16-21	Michael Frost Kresgeville, PA

PRAYERS AND OTHER RESOURCES FOR ADVENT-CHRISTMAS-EPIPHANY

2010-2011

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Prayers in Advent:

O Lord, you have commanded me to ask, grant that I may receive. You have asked me to seek, let me be happy in finding. You have summoned me to knock, I ask you to be open to me. Be graciously pleased during these days of Advent to direct and govern all my thoughts and actions, that I may serve you and devote myself entirely to obeying you. Accept me and draw me to yourself that I may forever

be yours by obedience and love and remain who I already am as one you have created. To you, O Lord, I pray who lives and reigns for ever and ever. (St. Augustine, 354-430, adapt.)

Look with your favor upon me, merciful, kind and gracious Lord, and grant to me, your poor, needy creature, sometimes at least to feel, if it be but a small portion, your hearty, affectionate love during this season; that my faith may become more strong, my hope in your goodness may be increased, and that love, once kindled within me, may never fail. (Thomas a Kempis, 1380-1471, adapt.)

Speak, Lord, for your servant hears. Grant us ears to hear, eyes to see, wills to obey, hearts to love. Then, declare what you will, reveal what you will, command what you will, demand what you will.

(Christina G. Rossetti, 1830-1894)

Amid the world's darkness, O God, we seek a star which will give us hope and guide us on our way. Our days are troubled with the portents of despair, and the counsels of men (and women) have increased our anguish. Turn us from ourselves, lift our vision beyond our earthly empires, and let the dayspring from on high visit us. If the pilgrimage be long, sustain us by your strength until we are made strong in the innocence of Bethlehem's Child. (Samuel H. Miller in "Prayers for Daily Use," New York, Harper & Brothers, 1957)

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Prayers in Christmastide:

Almighty God, we give you thanks for the mighty yearning of the human heart for the coming of a Savior, and the constant promise of your word that he would come. In our own souls we repeat the humble sighs and panting aspirations of men and women of old, owning that our souls are in darkness and infirmity without faith in the One who comes to bring you to us and us to you... In us the rough places are to be made smooth, the crooked straight, the mountains of pride brought low, and the valleys of despondency lifted up. O God, prepare the way in us now that we may welcome anew your Holy Child. (Samuel Osgood, 1812-1880, adapt.)

Lord of all glory, God of Bethlehem's Child, if we be in a far country, grant us such wisdom that we may lift up our eyes to see that star which shines from the darkest skies, and send us forth on that pilgrimage of soul, that in the fullness of time we may stand where the highest peace is known in the humblest place, and your great purpose incarnate in the mystery of the helpless Child. Teach us how to make precious gifts out of whatever serves the needs of your children, and if we be wise help us to kneel humbly in wonder lest your grace come not in to bless us. In his name who was born that we might know light from darkness. (Samuel H. Miller, *ibid*)

O God of truth and love, by whom is shed the light of your incarnate Word, illumine our minds as we ponder the work of our redemption, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, and be revealed in our lives by deeds of love done in his name. (Church of Scotland)

Blessed Lord Jesus, we come to your cradle, knowing that we are unworthy to approach you. Make us pure in heart, that we may see you; cleanse and inspire our lives, that we may offer them to you without shame; give us grace to follow the example of your great humility, that we may serve you by serving our

brothers and sisters who kneel with us now in your presence and give thanks. (Church of Scotland, adapt.)

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Prayers in Epiphany:

Almighty and everlasting God, the Brightness of faithful souls, fill the world with your glory, we pray, and show yourself by the radiance of your light to all the nations of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Gregorian Sacramentary, 590)

Today the Bridegroom claims his bride, the church, since Christ has washed her sins away in Jordan's waters; the magi hasten with their gifts to the royal wedding; and the wedding guests rejoice, for Christ has changed water into wine. Alleluia. (Morning Prayer, Roman rite)

O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest your only-begotten Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may behold your glory face to face.

(Collect for Epiphany, Book of Common Prayer)

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the light of the world: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory, that he may be known, worshiped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth.

(Collect for the Second Sunday after the Epiphany,
Book of Common Prayer)

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Chrysostom on Matthew 3:1-3:

Both the prophet and the Baptist state the same idea even though with different words. The prophet said that one would come: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." And when John came he himself said, "Bear fruit worthy of repentance," a statement that corresponds to "Prepare the way of the Lord." Both by the words of the prophets and by John's own preaching, this one thing is clear: he had arrived, making a way and preparing it beforehand. John was not bestowing the gift, which was the remission of sins, but preparing beforehand the souls of those who would receive the God of all.

(The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 10:3)

Chromatius on John the Baptist:

Hence John prepared these ways of mercy and truth, faith and justice. Concerning them, Jeremiah also declared, "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it." Because the heavenly kingdom is found along these ways, not without good reason John adds, "The kingdom of heaven is near." So do you want the kingdom of heaven to also be near for you? Prepare these ways in your heart, in your senses and in your soul. Pave within you the way of chastity, the way of faith and the way of holiness. Build roads of justice. Remove every scandal of offense from

your heart. For it is written: “Remove the stones from the road.” And then, indeed, through the thoughts of your heart and the very movements of your soul, Christ the King will enter along certain paths.” (Tractate on Matthew 8:1)

Hilary on Camel’s Hair:

A garment woven with camel’s hair designates the peculiar clothing of this prophetic preacher. He is covered with the skins of an unclean animal. Whatever had been useless or shabby in us becomes sanctified by the prophet’s clothes. (On Matthew 2:2)

Maximus of Turin on Camel’s Hair:

Christ’s forerunner wore a coarse camel-hair garment, what else does it signify but that the coming Christ would be vested in the garb of a human body, thick with the coarseness of sinners, and that, girded with the skins of a most unclean animal, the Gentile people, he bore their very own deformity? (Sermons 88:3)

Peter Chrysologus on Camel’s Hair:

He could have made use of goat’s hair, but there was no need for it. Rather, he wore a garment of camel’s hair with nothing refined about it, nothing graceful, nothing comely. By nature it was intended for hard work and heavy burdens and consigned to utter subjection. The teacher of repentance ought to be vested with such a garment, so that those who had turned away from virtue in their education and given themselves shamelessly over to sin might be subdued by the great burden of penance, might be consigned to the rigors of reparation and experience the heavy sighs of contrition. Thus refashioned and reshaped into the form of a needle, they might obtain ample remission through the narrow opening of penance. And the Lord’s words would then be fulfilled concerning a camel passing through the eye of a needle. (Sermons 167:8)

The Song of Mary:

This song of Mary is the oldest Advent hymn. It is at once the most passionate, the wildest, and one might even say, the most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung. This is not the gentle, tender, dreamy Mary whom we sometimes see in paintings; this is the passionate, surrendered, proud, enthusiastic Mary who speaks out here. This song has none of the sweet, nostalgic, or even playful tones of some of our Christmas carols. It is, instead, a hard, strong, inexorable song about collapsing thrones and humbled lords of this world, about the power of God and the powerlessness of humankind. These are the tones of the women prophets of the Old Testament that now come to life in Mary’s mouth. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Ambrose on the Incarnation:

He was a baby and a child, so that you may be a perfect human. He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, so that you may be freed from the snares of death. He was in a manger, so that you may be in the altar. He was on earth that you may be in the stars. He had no other place in the inn, so that you may have many mansions in the heavens. He, being rich, became poor for your sakes, that through his poverty

you might be rich. Therefore his poverty is our inheritance, and the Lord's weakness is our virtue. He chose to lack for himself, that he may abound for all. The sobs of that appalling infancy cleanse me, those tears wash away my sins. Therefore, Lord Jesus, I owe more to your sufferings because I was redeemed than I do to works for which I was created. (Exposition on the Gospel of Luke, 2:41-42)

Bede on Swaddling Clothes:

It should be noted that the sign given of the Savior's birth is not a child enfolded in Tyrian purple, but one wrapped with rough pieces of cloth. He is not to be found in an ornate golden bed, but in a manger. The meaning of this is that he did not merely take upon himself our lowly mortality, but for our sakes took upon himself the clothing of the poor. Though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich. Though he was Lord of heaven, he became a poor man on earth, to teach those who lived on earth that by poverty of spirit they might win the kingdom of heaven. (Exposition of the Gospel of Luke I)

Cyril of Alexandria on the Manger: He found humanity reduced to the level of the beasts. Therefore he is placed like feed in a manger, that we, having left behind our carnal desires, might rise up to that degree of intelligence which befits human nature. Whereas we were brutish in soul, by now approaching the manger, yes, his table, we find no longer feed, but the bread from heaven, which is the body of life. (Commentary on Luke, Homily I)

The Birth of a Child:

We are talking about the birth of a child, not the revolutionary act of a strong man, not the breathtaking discovery of a sage, not the pious act of a saint. It really passes all understanding: The birth of a child is to bring the great turning around of all things, is to bring salvation and redemption to the whole human race. What kings and statesmen, philosophers and artists, founders of religions and moral teachers vainly strive for, now comes about through a newborn child. (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Gregory of Nazianzus on New Birth in Epiphany:

The holy day of lights, to which we have come and which, we are celebrating today, has for its origin the baptism of my Christ, the true Light that lightens everyone coming into the world, . . . It is a season of new birth: let us be born again! We duly celebrated at his birth—I, the one who presided at the feast, and you, and all that is in the world and above the world. With the star we ran, with the magi we worshiped, with the shepherds we were enlightened, with the angels we glorified him, with Simeon we took him up in our arms, and with the chaste and aged Anna we made our responsive confession. . . Now we come to another of Christ's acts and another mystery. . . The Spirit bears witness to his Godhead, for he descends upon one that is like him, as does the voice from heaven. . . Let us venerate today the baptism of Christ.

How Do We Wish To Meet This Child?"

Have our hands become too hard and proud from daily work to fold themselves in adoration at the sight of this child? Do we carry our head, which has had to think so many heavy thoughts and to solve so many problems, too high for us to bow it humbly before the wonder of this child? Can we one more

time forget entirely all our strivings, accomplishments, and importance, to join the shepherds and the sages from the East and offer childlike adoration to the divine child in the manger? To take, like old Simeon, this child in our arms and instantly acknowledge with gratitude the fulfillment of our entire life? It is truly a strange sight when a strong, proud man bends his knee before this child, when with a simple heart he finds and reveres in him his Savior. And our old, clever, experienced, self-assured world must no doubt shake its head, or perhaps even laugh with contempt, when it hears the cry of salvation from believing Christians, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.”

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Jesus and Human History:

God has come down to earth in the person of his Son. He has identified... wholly with our humanity... it is a mystery of love.... This is messenger whom the Old Testament foretold, and for whom Israel waited, and lo! He has come! He really lived, in this corner of Palestine; he used to walk by the Lake of Galilee. We must contemplate Jesus in all his movements and his gestures, in every word he spoke, in every one of his acts, in order to grasp this mystery... (Suzanne de Dietrich)

A Genuine Christmas:

No one can celebrate a genuine Christmas without being truly poor. The self-sufficient, the proud, those who, because they have everything, look down on others, those who have no need even of God—for them there will be no Christmas. Only the poor, the hungry, those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God. (Oscar Romero, Christmas Eve homily, 1978)

Midwinter:

Bundles of clothes came in the other day, including many overcoats, and they went out as fast they came in. I'd like to have everyone see the poor, worn feet, clad in shoes that are falling apart, which find their way to our (door). A man came in this rainy morning and when he took off one dilapidated rag of footwear, his sock had huge holes in the heel and was soaking wet at that. We made him put on a dry sock before trying on the pair of shoes we found for him, and he changed diffidently, there under the eye of the Blessed Virgin on the bookcase, looking down from her shrine of Christmas greens. But his poor, red feet were clean. Most of the men and women who come in from the lodging houses and from the streets manage cleanliness, with the help of the public baths. I heard of one man who washed his underwear in the public baths and sat there as long as he could in that steam-laden, enervating atmosphere until it was not quite too wet to put on again for the rest, it could dry on his skin. Not a pleasant thought in bitter weather. Many of the men do this, he said. Our prayer for the new year is that the members may be “mutually careful one for another.”

(Dorothy Day in “Selected Writings,” ed. Robert Ellsberg,
Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 5th printing 1996)

Love Alone:

The Child we seek
doesn't need our gold.
On love, on love alone
he will build his kingdom.
His pierced hand will hold no scepter,
His haloed head will wear no crown;
his might will not be built
on your toil.
Swifter than lightning
he will soon walk among us.
He will bring us new life
and receive our death,
And the keys to his city
belong to the poor.

(Gian Carlo Menotti)