

***God's Desire for Us Enkindles within Our Hearts Our
Desire for God***

**Advent Reflections
“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.”**



Artist: Gerard van Hornhorst

***“Upon those who dwell in darkness and gloom a Light has shown!
A Child is born to us; a Son is given to us!”***

Isaiah 9:1,5

***“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us and
sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.”***

I John 4:10

God's Desire for Us Comes First.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Chapter One: Man's Capacity for God

Emphasis of bold type has been added.

I The Desire for God

CCC §27: "The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for: **The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God.** This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. **For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence.** He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator." (Vatican II, *Gaudium et Spes*, #19)

CCC §30: "Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice." Although man can forget God or reject him, **God never ceases to call every man to seek him**, so as to find life and happiness. Man's search for God demands every effort of intellect, a sound will, "an upright heart," as well as the witness of others to teach him to seek God.

"You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. and man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, **for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.**" (Confessions of St. Augustine, 1:1)

Catechism of the Catholic Church: Chapter Two: God Comes To Meet Man

CCC §50: "By natural reason man can know God with certainty, on the basis of his works. But there is another order of knowledge, which man cannot possibly arrive at by his own powers: Divine Revelation. **Through an utterly free decision, God has revealed himself and given himself to man.** This he does by revealing the mystery, his plan of loving goodness, formed from all eternity in Christ, for the benefit of all men. **God has fully revealed this plan by sending us his beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.**"

Catechism of the Catholic Church: SECTION TWO: The Profession of Faith

After Adam and Eve's First Sin, God Did Not Abandon Us

CCC §410: “After his fall, man was not abandoned by God. On the contrary, God calls him and in a mysterious way heralds the coming victory over evil and his restoration from his fall. This passage in **Genesis 3:15** is called the *Protoevangelium* (“First Gospel”): **the first announcement of the Messiah and Redeemer, of a battle between the serpent and the Woman, and of the final victory of a *Descendant of the Woman*.**”

God's loving desire for us, his People, is expressed countless times in the Old Testament.

A few passages are quoted here to illustrate God's generous and tender care for his people Israel and for us in the face of how Israel and how we still reject him.

“Israel decked herself with rings and jewelry and went after her lovers, but she forgot me, declares the Lord. Therefore, I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her.... There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of slavery in Egypt” (Hosea 2:14-15).

“When Israel was a child, I loved him, out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the farther they went from me, sacrificing to Baals and burning incense to idols. Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I who took them in my arms; I drew them with human cords, with bands of love; I fostered them like one who raises an infant to his cheeks; Yet, though I stooped to feed my child, they did not know that I was their healer” (Hosea 11:1-4).

“For I know the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe! Plans to give you a future full of hope. When you call to me, when you go to pray to me, I will listen to you. When you seek me with all your heart, you will find me with you, says the Lord” (Jeremiah 29:11-14).

“I will give you a new heart. Place a new spirit within you, taking from your bodies your stony hearts and giving you natural hearts. I will put my spirit within you and make you live by my statutes, careful to observe my decrees. You shall live in the land I gave your fathers. You will be my people, and I will be your God” (Ez 36:26).

“The Lord is my Shepherd, there is nothing I shall want. Fresh and green pastures are his pastures where he gives me repose. Near restful waters he leads me to revive my drooping spirit.... You are with me with your crook and your staff ; with these you give me comfort. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life”
(Psalm 23).

“Listen, O House of David! ... must you also weary my God? The Lord God will give you this sign: the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and shall name him Emmanuel” (Isaiah 7:15).

CCC §712: The characteristics of the awaited Messiah begin to appear in the prophets and clearly in Isaiah.

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, (father of King David) and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (Isaiah 11:1, 2).

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. ... For a Child is born to us, a son is given to us, upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful. From David’s throne , and over his Kingdom which he confirms and sustains” (Isaiah 9:1, 2, 5-6).

CCC §713: “The Messiah’s characteristics are revealed above all in the “Servant songs.” These songs **proclaim the meaning of Jesus’ Passion and show how he will pour out the Holy Spirit to give life to the many: not as an outsider, but by embracing our “form as slave.”** Taking our death upon himself, he can communicate to us his own Spirit of life.”

(Isaiah’s Servant Psalms and other psalms like Ps 22 that prophesy Christ’s death and resurrection are in the Holy Week Liturgy. The people of Israel did not see these scripture passages as prophesying the Messiah. They expected a triumphant King who would restore the Kingdom of David. Jesus teaches they refer to him after his resurrection.)

"GOD’S DESIRE to save all mankind unfolds in salvation history as God forms a Family by choosing Abraham and Sarah. From them God gives birth to a lineage of descendants until finally he chooses Mary to give birth to Jesus. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 is finally fulfilled. Jesus is the “Descendant of the Woman.” And God chooses Mary to be the "Woman," the New Eve. Jesus, her Son, will crush the head of the serpent, as the serpent strikes at his heel."

- God begins to fulfill his desire to save us from the legacy of the sin of Adam and Eve with the Annunciation to Mary that she is to bear the Messiah. God chooses Mary to be the “Woman” of Genesis 3:15. Jesus’ birth at Bethlehem fulfills the long awaited “Descendant of the Woman” who will crush the head of the serpent.
- God’s desire to save us was infinitely beyond what human desires ever imagined or hoped for. Jesus is the eternal Son of God the Father born in time as one of us, a Son of Adam. **He is both God and man.**
- At the Marriage Feast at Cana Jesus calls Mary his Mother, “Woman.” The hour comes for Jesus to begin his ministry prompted by his Mother. And she says to us, “Do whatever he tells you.”
- Being human as well as divine Jesus, as a man, faced and conquered the twofold fears and enemies that stalked all men and women as a result of the first sin of humans’ rejection of God: **sin and death.**
- **Death:** Jesus is born to free all men and women by his obedience to the Father by entering into the jaws of death by laying down his life on the Cross. He defeated death by rising as the God Man in eternal glory.
- **Sin:** Jesus defeated sin by taking on the sins of all humankind. He is condemned as a sinner. He sheds his Blood for the forgiveness of our sins. Jesus’ mission is accomplished as he dies on the Cross. He addressed Mary as “Woman” and our “Mother” at the very moment as he crushed the head of the Serpent.

“An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary into your home as your wife because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give him the Name, JESUS, because he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet, ‘Behold the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, “God is with us.”’” (Matt 1: 20-21).

At the birth of John the Baptist who was chosen to be the Herald of the Messiah’s coming, Zechariah his father prophesied, *“You my child will be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us to shine on those who dwell in the darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace”* (Luke 1:76-79).

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, God with us!

An Advent Prayer

God my Father, Advent prepares me for the true meaning of Christmas. Your love for us is revealed in your Son, Jesus, born a frail helpless infant nursed lovingly in the arms of Mary his Mother. With arms outstretched the Infant Jesus pleads to be picked up and held in my arms. Father, free me of all that prevents me from holding your Son, the Infant Jesus, close to my heart.

Lord Jesus, Son of God and Son of Mary, you were born into our human family precisely to free us of all that oppresses us. So great is your love for us all and for me personally! Your great love for me is the source of my true dignity. Why then do I continue to judge my worth by the values set by others and fail to see myself as precious in your eyes? Give me the desire and strength to break my attachment of holding on to the “stuff” that hinders my freedom and that clutters my life. Your love for me is the source of my security and freedom. Jesus, may your birth, death and resurrection be healing for my wounds, freedom from my fears, forgiveness for my sins, hope in these uncertain times, strength in my weakness and joy that dispels my sadness.

Jesus, at times I let the conflicting voices of these troubled times rob me of hope. Anger, harsh words, strife, misunderstanding, and uncertainty in this troubled world are like the cold and darkness of winter that seep into my heart and into my soul. This confusion draws me into myself and from your presence. It deafens me to your word, blinds me to your beauty and diminishes my peace. Jesus, you are the Light that shines and dispels the darkness that surrounds us. You assure me that you will never leave me to face my challenges in life alone.

Holy Spirit enkindle within me the fire of your love. Advent prepares me for the birth of Jesus who was born to free me from sin. Awaken within me the desire to admit my sins, to confess them and ask the Lord’s forgiveness. Empowered by the Blood of Christ help me to forgive those who wounded me by their words, actions and attitudes. Heal me of any resentment toward them. Stir within me the desire to set time aside daily in Advent to pray and meditate on the word of God. Give me an appetite to “taste and see the goodness of the Lord.”

Mother Mary blessed are you among women. From you the eternal Son of God became flesh and was born as my Lord, my Savior and my Brother. I give thanks to you for your “Yes” to the Father to be the Mother of our Savior.

St. Joseph protect and guide me as you protected and guided your wife Mary, pregnant with Jesus.