

ADVENT CANDLES and the ADVENT WREATH by Maren C. Tirabassi

Meditations for each Sunday in Advent as well as Christmas Eve

From *Gifts in Open Hands – a blog for Pentecost year.*

Based on Howard Thurman's "I will light Candles this Christmas" and "This is Christmas" from the Mood of Christmas and Other Celebrations

First Sunday in Advent

I light one candle here for hope and it is like a small lamp, lighting a bedside table with open book, after a long day, the glow of heart monitor in ICU, a headlamp for a hiker on an unfamiliar trail, or a miner down a shaft, a toddler's paw-patrol nightlight, or early-morning oven in a bakery.

We light one candle so we will remember to notice this week's ordinary lights of hope.

For ordinary and available to all is the hope of Advent.

I will light Candles this Christmas, Candles of joy despite all the sadness, Candles of hope where despair keeps watch, Candles of courage for fears ever present, Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days, Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens, Candles of love to inspire all my living, Candles that will burn all year long.

(Howard Thurman)

Second Sunday in Advent

I will light two candles this week to illuminate peace.

For as God lights both gentle dawn and a splash of lightning strike, we affirm all the ways we seek peace –

Kind persuasion with eye contact, and a justice march with big signs, a silent vigil of prayer and fasting, and the gift of food, toys, or dignity for the most vulnerable, our quiet visits to therapist or recovery group, and loud demands to change gun laws.

We light two candles so we will listen to the angel mandate of 'Peace on Earth.'

For ordinary, available, gentle and brave, are the hope and peace of Advent.

I will light Candles this Christmas, Candles of joy despite all the sadness, Candles of hope where despair keeps watch, Candles of courage for fears ever present, Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days, Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens, Candles of love to inspire all my living, Candles that will burn all year long.

(Howard Thurman)

Third Sunday in Advent

I will light three candles to sparkle with joy.

For God lights constellations and the tips of angel wings light years far away, and light years as near as breath.

We light (and help to blow out) 95 candles on a birthday cake, the high circle of a Ferris wheel, the smile of a pumpkin, marshmallow of a 'smore, branches of a Christmas tree, And the luminarias that say this is a home/church that welcomes all, every age, race, education, ability, orientation, ethnic origin, gender identity, job status.

Old friend or stranger becoming new one, those who claim their history and their identity, others who close their lips to listen and feel the joy in their hearts.

We raise three candles, and know we cannot do it by ourselves for each of us have only two hands.

For ordinary, available, gentle, brave, and with wide-open doors, is the hope, peace, and joy of Advent.

I will light Candles this Christmas, Candles of joy despite all the sadness, Candles of hope where despair keeps watch, Candles of courage for fears ever present, Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days, Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens, Candles of love to inspire all my living, Candles that will burn all year long.

(Howard Thurman)

Fourth Sunday in Advent

I will light four candles and I will be willing to light every taper in my life, for love asks for all that is needed and then...for everything else, for this is how incarnation happens, how God comes.

We light four candles or a hundred or a thousand more whatever it takes to remind ourselves to live in love.

As ordinary and gentle as the holy welcome that turns the world upside down, comes hope, peace, joy, and love to illuminate our Advent.

I will light Candles this Christmas, Candles of joy despite all the sadness, Candles of hope where despair keeps watch, Candles of courage for fears ever present, Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days, Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens, Candles of love to inspire all my living, Candles that will burn all year long.

(Howard Thurman)

Christmas Eve – the Lighting of the Christ Candle

We have gathered at this wreath all this Advent season to light candles. We claim that Emmanuel, God with us is Light and Darkness in a world that must work and rest be generous and self-careful, experience tears and laughter, in order to share both the hurt and humor of others. From the deep place of knowing it.

Let us light these candles on this holy night.

I light the candle of hope, and hopelessness cannot hide.

I light the candle of peace, and expose hatred as fear turned inside out.

I light the candle of joy, and everyone is welcome with a smile, a moment of beauty or wonder.

I light the candle of love, and hands are clasped around the world.

THIS IS CHRISTMAS

The evergreen singing aloud its poem of constant renewal, The festive mood spreading lilted magic everywhere, The gifts of recollection calling to heart the graces of life, The star in the sky calling to mind the wisdom of hope, The warmth of candlelight glowing against the darkness, The birth of a child linking past to future, The symbol of love absorbing all violence.

THIS IS CHRISTMAS (Howard Thurman)

O Holy God, we light the Christ candle.

It shines on smiles and tears. It shines into the lives of everyone. It shines and we remember the story. It shines around the angels who sing for the most vulnerable, and guides the long traveling of those far away.

It shines on a manger, a child and parents, with animals gathered all around. It shines on here and now people just like Bethlehem long ago.

It can never be extinguished, because, Christ, you are tonight's candle, and we promise – to lift our wicks to tomorrow's flame. AMEN.