

# Advent 2017



The advent season is one filled with hope, waiting, and expectation. Through the readings we are asked to have our eyes and ears attuned to discover all the ways that Emmanuel, God-with-us, is present.

For the Women of Providence in Collaboration, our Sisters and Associates, Advent is a call to discover the Providence moments in our ordinary daily living. It is to witness the compassion of a Provident God in a myriad of ways that surround us each day.

This Advent we are going to do something new. Last year we published two new publications. The first was a book titled: "Providence and Compassion." This book, authored by Sisters and Associates of Providence communities, explored the topic of compassion through the lens of the multiple disciplines of their ministry and community life. The second publication was a beautiful resource book of prayers, poetry, rituals, music, photos, reflections and artwork by various Sisters and Associates in our Providence congregations. It is titled: "The Art of Providence."

This Advent the WPC office is supplying you with two prayer services you can use during the Advent season. There is a service for Advent weeks one and two, and another for Advent weeks three and four. Both services use quotes from the Compassion book and use prayers from the resource book. So this Advent you can choose to use these prayer services in your local convents or with your small faith sharing groups or simply for your own spiritual reflection. The WPC Executive Committee and I thought this might be a way to use these two new publications and provide you with an Advent tool for prayer and reflection.

It is our hope that as you reflect on these quotes and prayers from the two publications that your Advent season will be enriched and you will see Providence surround you in new ways. Here is a quote from Diarmuid O'Murchu: "God acts as a compassionate partner, as lure toward the future and as co-creator. Indeed, God labors on humans' behalf."

Advent Blessings!

*Barbara McMullen, CDP*

WPC Executive Director

# WPC Advent Prayer and Reflection

## Weeks One and Two



**Leader:** O God, you call us this Advent season to enter more deeply into the great Mystery of your Providence as we ponder the the “providence and compassion” themes.

**All:** Open our hearts to be creative, compassionate bearers of hope and healing in a world so filled with division, unrest, and turmoil. We ask and pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Readings: from *Providence and Compassion: A collection of personal reflections from multiple disciplines***

“The call to compassion, the sympathetic consciousness of others’ suffering, together with a desire to take action to alleviate it, is constitutive of the mission of Jesus. Jesus not only felt concern and empathy for those who were suffering, but also alleviated the pain and suffering of the most vulnerable. Jesus offered new life and freedom to those bound by oppression. He restored to wholeness those whose lives had been broken.”

--J. Hagelskamp, SP

“Providence people acknowledge that we are not “our enough” and are in need of our God and others. Providence people ask how we can be the hands and heart of Providence in a world that is so radically different from that which God intended. Providence people recognize our interconnectedness and interrelatedness and make a deliberate choice to live in community.”

--J. Hagelskamp, SP

“The Hebrew word for compassion, *rachamim*, has its roots in *rechem*, meaning “womb.” Compassion is the act of cradling another in love and tenderness as a mother cradles the infant from her womb. Compassion is at the very heart of God.”

--M. Pastro, SP

“...the healthcare setting reveals compassion as a sacrament of God’s providence. ...we are called, as women and men of Providence, to stand with and be present to those who suffer.”

--M. Pastro, SP

### **Quiet Reflection and Sharing**

- *In my advent journey how will I bring the face of Providence to my corner of the world?*
- *How have you witnessed compassion in another’s life and or actions?*

**Closing Prayer: adapted from “The Art of Providence”, Prayer of the Season**

--Mary Montgomery, SP

O Emmanuel, God with us, we open ourselves to this Holy Advent Season, a time of waiting, of expectation, of hope and possibility. We desire to recognize your presence all around us, within us, and especially in those who suffer. We desire your light to pierce the shadows and darkness of our world. May our lives be evidence of Your Word made flesh, rooted and dwelling in us. *Amen.*

# WPC Advent Prayer and Reflection

## Weeks Three and Four

**Leader:** God of Providence, as we continue together in this special season of advent waiting and expectation, bless us with particular graces of listening, dialogue and discernment.

**All:** May your Spirit guide us in our search to be your loving presence watching over the created universe. We entrust ourselves to your transformative Love. Amen.



**Readings: adapted from *Providence and Compassion*:  
A collection of personal reflections from multiple disciplines**

“Compassion is often defined as kindness, mercy, or sympathy. But when coupled with God’s providence, it deepens and brings a sense of joy in being present with patients on their journeys to healing. Henri Nouwen says: ‘being with a person in pain, offering simple presence to someone in despair, sharing with a friend in times of confusion and uncertainty...such experiences can bring us deep joy. Not happiness, not excitement, not great satisfaction, but the quiet joy of being there for someone else and living in deep solidarity with our brothers and sisters in this human family.’”  
--Sylvia Resha, CDP Associate

“When humility and gratefulness for others in our lives are fully accepted and attributed to God whose providence places these relationships in our paths, we may recognize that we have come into communion with one another.”  
--Mary Louise Barba, MCDP +

“I see the hand of Providence guiding and directing me, both in times I knew and in times in which I was clueless. I learned that God works through ordinary people and circumstances and that I must trust that all my actions are within God’s providential care. ...I feel that compassion is the true test of spirituality, which brings us into relationship with the Transcendent One we call God. Matthew 6:25-34 tells us not to be anxious nor to take thought for the morrow. In other words, be open to the inspiration of the moment, trust in the availability of wisdom and the promise that Jesus will be with us all the way.”  
--Joan Mullen, SP +

“I love the Gospel where the Good Samaritan, out of his compassion for the suffering person he met on his journey, brought him to an inn for comfort and care. These two themes of being a pilgrim and an innkeeper sum up my experience of living Providence as a compassionate presence especially in my ministries in retreat and spiritual direction work. ...in the Celtic tradition, a person with a compassionate presence is called an *anam cara*, a soul friend. Being an elder, an innkeeper, an *anam cara* for others is now my deepest joy.”  
--Ruth McGoldrick, SP

**Continued on the next page.**

## ***Quiet Reflection and Sharing***

- *Where have I found quiet joy?*
- *How have I experienced being in communion with another?*
- *In this advent journey where have I met compassionate presence?*
- *One of the best gifts we can give and receive is the gift of listening.  
How have I given and received this precious gift in the last two weeks of Advent waiting?*

### **Closing Prayer: adapted from “The Art of Providence” prayer by Dorothy Lentz, SP +**

Provident God,  
you have given us a mission to plumb  
the depths of the mysteries of  
compassionate love.  
You have chosen us to be prophets,  
to proclaim loudly and visibly God’s loving concern  
for those who suffer. We are asking your Spirit  
to show us a way to be sacraments—visible signs—  
that will say to a troubled world today,  
“here we are, women and men of Providence  
who want to bring you Jesus’ message  
of hope and concerned love.  
We want you to help us know your needs  
and the best way to serve you.  
Lord Jesus, make us humble, simple, and loving  
in our search to know your will.  
May our Advent be truly enriched  
by our reflections on compassion  
and may we be that compassion  
to all those we meet. *Amen.*