

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Recapping the Meaning of Each Advent Sunday, A Reflection by Paul Mariani

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Four weeks of Advent leading up to Christ Incarnate's entry into the world. Four weeks, each symbolized with a lighted candle, purple, purple, rose pink, purple. A time of waiting, a time of preparation for the Messiah, promised for centuries, and arriving—surprise!—in a stable in Bethlehem, the City of David.

Four weeks, the first centered on hope, the second on peace, the third on joy, and the final one, on love.

Hope, centered on the one who will free us from our self-centeredness, envy, gluttony, lust, wrath, and our prideful selves. Christ the Light, a single candle lit in the wintry empurpled darkness. A beginning again, as we journey forward.

Then Peace. Yes, Augustus's period of peace. But something more, something deeper, the coming of the Prince of Peace in the form of a baby, held by our beautiful Mother, and watched over by the one chosen to protect her, a carpenter from Nazareth, a silent man, a dreamer like that other Joseph in the Book of Genesis.

Then the third week: Joy! Gaudete Sunday. Yes, let us rejoice! Rejoice in the coming of Our Savior, an event promised for centuries, though how it will all unfold a mystery to ponder. A king who will rule over all the nations, and what will that rule look like? A king, it turns out, who will give everything he has, who will empty Himself on a cross, and rise again, overcoming even death.

And, finally, the fourth week, with just days until Christmas, signaling love. Love, oh caring love. The good Lord showing his love for us each day, in so many ways, if we but took the time to stop and look and listen. And how will we return this love. You know how it is, when someone who loves us shows that love with a smile, a hug, a meal, by listening, by reaching out. And how do we return that love, how do we reach out to the Christ we find in our family, our friends, our neighbors, even those who would do us harm with their speech or actions? Think of Mary in that stable, with no room in the inn, having traveled all those miles on the back of a donkey, to give us this incredible gift. Please, take a moment, and ponder this, as the fourth candle is lit, and we await that splendid light entering the world once more.

by Paul Mariani, Boston College English Professor Emeritus