

# ADVENT

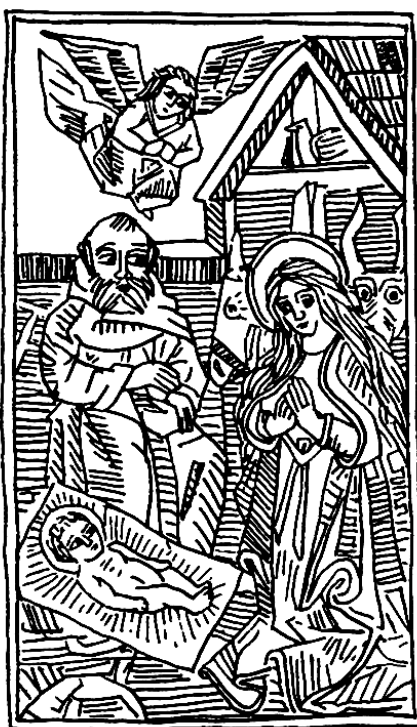
## by Catherine Doherty

**A**dvent — a word meaning “coming” — indicates that something or someone is arriving soon. We become expectant and interiorly alert. The Advent of Christmas is a beautiful season, a time of renewal. The new Church year begins with the first Sunday of Advent, and every time it comes around, my heart thrills anew.

Advent lasts about four weeks and is the Church’s preparatory time for Christmas, for the coming of Our Lord as a Child on earth, for his incarnation in time. It is the time of expectation. True, Christ has already come upon earth. He has been crucified, and has risen. He is with us now, in his Church. And yet, as the season for commemorating his birth approaches, something stirs in us, something deep and profound, as if we are expecting a great miracle.

As Christmas approaches, everyone feels a certain something that cannot be put into words, for there are no words that fit. We begin to realize that we are expecting Someone and we become aware of an interior “burning” in our heart. If we allow the expectation that is within us to come forth, we will be filled with joy.

Advent is meant to be a time of faith. Do you have faith that Our Lady is coming? Do you hear the don-



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key’s bells as she nears Bethlehem? Do you have faith in her pregnancy? Do you have faith that the Child who will come from her womb is God?

Here is another mystery wrapped up in Advent: the call to give of oneself as Our Lady did. Oh, we’re willing to give of ourselves for a little while, doing good works or helping our neighbour, but not at a very big cost to ourselves. However, that doesn’t work before the Child in the manger, before the utter gift of Jesus Christ to us, as a Child. This giving of self is like a restlessness within the heart, like waves beating on the shore. The person who says, “I cannot rest

unless I really surrender myself to God” eventually does just that. What we have to do is surrender to him.

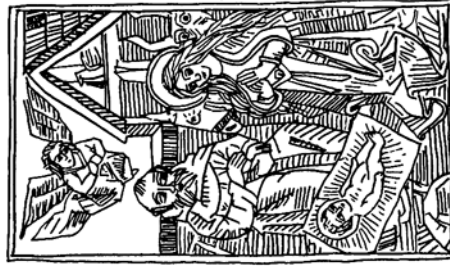
Do you act towards your neighbour as if he or she were Christ? Christ said, “Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do to Me” (Matthew 25:40). Let every day be the day of beginning again, of loving Christ a little more, of hungering for him a little more, of turning our face to him. To do this, all we need to do is to look at the person next to us. We must never forget that we shall be judged on love alone.

Even while Christ is yet coming, he is already with us in many ways, for incredible Love that he is, he could

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Pass It On! #34



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not separate himself from us. He is with us in the tabernacle. He walks among us in all his priests. Through them, he multiplies himself in the Hosts so that they can feed us with the Bread of Life: himself.

If we remember that a woman held in her arms a Child, and that that Child was God, then we will be givers of peace.

Advent is especially a time for forgiveness because God brings his forgiveness to us in the shape of his

Son. Let this Christmas be for us a turning point. Let us kill selfishness. Let us become childlike enough to kneel at the crib. “For unless you become as a little child, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Adapted from *Donkey Bells: Advent and Christmas* by Catherine Doherty. Available through Madonna House Publications.

Artwork by Helen Hodson