

CELEBRATING ADVENT AT WESTMONT COLLEGE

with Steve Bell

“We are Waiting”

OPENING SONG:

The Wellspring

Music and Lyrics by Steve Bell

Album: The Symphony Sessions (Steve Bell)

The Father gives away
His word and His breath
And all things are called into being
This mystery of love and of life is a gift
And its glory beyond human reason

And Holy, Holy, Holy is
The God of power and might
In all of heaven and earth
His glory lives
Hosanna in the highest
Hosanna in the highest

Whatever He speaks
Is worthy to be
Pure and blameless and holy
Whatever he breathes is lovely indeed
Forever reflecting His glory

And Holy, Holy, Holy is
The God of power and might
In all of heaven and earth
His glory lives
Hosanna in the highest
Hosanna in the highest

Welcome to Advent!

Advent is the beginning of the Church year, observed as a four-week season of preparation for Christmas where we contemplate the three-fold coming of Christ:

*He came with love to Bethlehem
He comes with grace into our souls
He will come again with justice at the end of the age*

And so, Advent is equally a time of recollection, reception and anticipation.

The central figure of the season is Mary, the mother of Jesus. She has been rightly called the *Ark of the New Covenant* for she is the first to receive the seed (promise) of God into her womb and to bear it forth for the sake of the world.

Eastern Christian tradition venerates Mary as the *Theotokos* —the God bearer. Catholic tradition venerates her as the *Daughter of the Father, the Mother of the Incarnate Word, and the Spouse of the Holy Spirit.*

The Church remembers Mary as the proto-typical Christian, meaning that what was true for her—that she was created to “house” heaven—is equally true for us.

And so, Advent is a time to contemplate the mystery of human dignity. For the creational dignity of every human being is to co-operate with God in the salvation of the world as maternal spouse; literal bearers of the astonishing news that God not only comes to us, but through us. Anything less is beneath our dignity.

And so, during Advent we join in the song of Mary (Luke 1:46-55):

SECOND SONG:

The Magnificat

*Music and lyrics by John Michael Talbot
Album: The Feast of Seasons (Steve Bell)*

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord
And my spirit exalts in God my Saviour
For He has looked with mercy on my lowliness
And my name will be forever exalted
For the mighty God has done great things for me
And His mercy will reach from age to age.

And Holy, Holy, Holy is His name
And Holy, Holy, Holy is His name

Hurry up and Wait!

If Mary is the central figure of Advent, then waiting is the central posture of Advent.

When a young couple first discover they are expecting a child, after the startling shock of wonderment and joy, they must settle into a season of waiting. And it can be an agonizing wait, for there is not a single thing they can do to speed up the process.

However, Christian spiritual tradition doesn't allow us the luxury of being mere passive victims of time. In other words, we're not to simply endure its passage. Advent waiting considers the many and various inordinate attachments we have made that might hinder our ability to receive the Christ child and offers us time to *make room*. Any expectant couple knows that space has to be cleared for a new child. That second bedroom, with all the junk that has accumulated there, must be cleared out, the contents discerned as to their value, and things deemed superfluous either thrown out, given away or taken to the garage.

Advent is a time to shed the lesser things in order to more fully receive the greater thing. It was traditionally observed as a season of fasting (not feasting) in order to ready the soul for Christ. And so, Advent waiting is active preparation.

Advent waiting is also contemplative waiting. It is tragic that Advent has become a season of relentless bustle and social activity. What expectant mother doesn't relish those quiet moments in the early morning, or fading light, to quietly ponder the mystery growing inside her? Our frenetic society does not offer many moments like these. Perhaps one of the unanticipated benefits of the otherwise dreadful pandemic we are in right now, is that we will have the time and space to recover the gift of this profound season.

THIRD SONG:

Wait Alone in Stillness (Psalm 62)

Music and lyrics by Steve Bell

Album: Where the Good Way Lies (Steve Bell)

On God alone my soul in stillness waits
The glory and the joy of my salvation
The rock on which all form of fury breaks
My stronghold so that I may not be shaken

(cont.)

Wait alone in stillness oh my soul
Wait alone in stillness, wait alone oh my soul
The steadfast love of God be all my strength
My refuge, my rock and my elation

The enemies of love in vain rehearse
A plot to undermine the hope of nations
With tongues they bless, but with their hearts they curse
And lie in wait to bait love's termination

Wait alone in stillness...

We children of the earth are but a breath
On the scales we are lighter than a feather
I believe and I have heard it said
All power belongs to God altogether

Wait alone in stillness...

For more about Steve Bell and his music, please visit www.stevebell.com

CELEBRATING
advent