

S[c]ENT//ADVENT 2011

Scent |sent| *noun*: a distinctive smell, esp. one that is pleasant. From Old French *sentir*, meaning to 'perceive or smell.'

Sent |sent| *verb*: cause to go or be taken to a particular destination; affect with powerful emotion; put into ecstasy.

What if the Church throughout the world pressed 'restart' each year in an effort to awake once again to the fragrance of Christ within us, and throughout every corner of the world? What if a season in the life of the Church preceded the arrival of a fresh calendar year as a means by which to prepare for the arrival of Christ into our world at the end of days? What if we grew in everyday awareness of God's fragrance in the world, and began to see anew our calling as sent ones carrying the sweet aroma of Christ to all whom we meet?

This is the season of Advent, a season which anticipates Christ's final arrival through the lens of celebrating the birth of Jesus as God's entrance into our world. Welcoming the scent of Christ through the sending of Christ. A pleasing fragrance wafting through our world. Welcome, 3rd Place, to **S[c]ENT**, the season of Advent.

"In the Messiah, in Christ, God leads us from place to place in one perpetual victory parade. Through us, He brings knowledge of Christ. Everywhere we go, people breathe in the exquisite fragrance. Because of Christ, we give off a sweet scent rising to God, which is recognized by those on the way of salvation--an aroma redolent with life."
(2 Corinthians 2:14-16, The Message)

THE PRACTICE OF LECTIO DIVINA ("SACRED READING")

Lectio (*Read*): Read one of the weekly Advent texts slowly & prayerfully 2-3 times. Pause when a word or phrase catches your attention, allowing God's living word to read you.

Meditatio (*Ponder*): Reflectively chew on the word or phrase the Holy Spirit highlighted in your soul.

Oratio (*Respond In Prayer*): Express your response to God. Be open & truthful; share your feelings with Him.

Contemplatio (*Rest*): Rest in the Spirit's presence, letting Jesus sink deep into your soul; yielding to His work in you. Purpose to revisit God's living word in you throughout your day.

WHAT IS THE SEASON OF ADVENT?

"Christmas is about the coming in the present of the Lord who came long ago in the past. Jesus comes again each Christmas. This is the central purpose of the season of the church year known as Advent, the four Sundays + four weeks before Christmas. Each Advent, Christians relive ancient Israel's yearning + hope, and each Christmas Christians celebrate the fulfillment of the yearning: *'Joy to the world, the Lord is come.'*

The purpose of Advent + Christmas is to bring the past into the present."

"The Latin root of Advent is a word that means 'coming' or 'arrival.' Advent thus means, 'toward the coming.' Advent is preparation for the coming of Jesus to the world-then, in the past; now, in the present, and as we will see later, in the future. Advent + Christmas bring the coming of Jesus, the birth of Jesus with all of its associations, into the present. Past, present, and future are brought together in Advent. It is a season of expectant anticipation, of anticipatory joy. It is also a season of repentant preparation for a future that is yet to come.

On the personal level, Christmas is about light coming into the darkness of our individual lives, about our return from exile, about inner peace. Indeed, it is about the birth of Christ within us"

(Excerpted from Marcus Borg + John Dominic Crossan, *The First Christmas*).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE SEASON OF ADVENT

At the beginning of each week in Advent, light an incense stick as a welcome reminder that the exquisite fragrance of God's Spirit dwells as a sweet aroma within us and throughout every corner of our world. Ask the Spirit to open your spirit to the presence of God in your life & during these moments of meditation. Select one of the weekly Advent texts & practice the discipline of *Lectio Divina* as a means of opening up to God's active word. Once finished, return to the Advent themed meditation for the week. Again, let the words read you. What is God saying? Engage in action that responds to God's living word in you.



Hope

ADVENT WEEK 1 {27.11-03.12}: THE S[c]ENT OF HOPE

Hope |hōp| *noun*: expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.

Texts: Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

Meditation: The scent of hope: a cool shower, a fresh bar of soap, the cleansing rinse of shampoo running down the drain. Toweling off, naked with the possibility of a brand new start. The metaphor writes itself, does it not? It recalls to mind the fact that God's heart beats perpetually in desire for His creation to return to Himself, finding life where life was first imagined. As sent ones, carrying the fragrance of Christ into our world begs the question, how are you inviting others to imagine a fresh start filled with newfound expectation?

Response: Invite a friend to recover something they have lost hope in: A sense of future possibilities, a fresh start, a different path than they are currently walking. How can your presence inspire new life?

Hope



Peace

ADVENT WEEK 2 {04.12-10.12}: THE S[c]ENT OF PEACE

Peace |pēs| *noun*: freedom from disturbance; mental calm; serenity.

Texts: Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8

Meditation: The scent of peace: Knuckles calmly kneading dough into formation, spreading yeast throughout a fresh loaf of bread. The smell of rising dough baking in the oven, wafting throughout the house, filling one's home (and one's soul) with a calmness sorely needed. The pace of bread-making demands a rhythm through which peace can only descend: Collecting ingredients, measuring correct amounts, stirring, kneading, softening, adding a spicy surprise. Again, are we speaking of baking bread or a sense of calm that we all wish would descend upon our lives? As sent ones, do we carry the aroma of peace--the weight of peace--into the lives of our family and friends, or does chaos and discord reign?

Response: Take a gracious, yet honest look at your relationships this week. Are you a person of peace to those around you, or do you wear down those whom you are in relationship with? Invite the Spirit to calm your spirit, and breathe a fresh scent into you soul.

Peace



Joy

ADVENT WEEK 3 {11.12-17.12}: THE S[c]ENT OF JOY

Joy |joi| *noun*: great pleasure and happiness.

Texts: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; Luke 1:47-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Meditation: The scent of joy: A soft, salty breeze drifts over your body as you lay upon your towel at the beach, mingling with your fifth layer of coconut sunscreen applied today. The sound of children splashing in the water, running away from a year of struggle, hard growth, and transformation, leaving behind all that weighs us down. The sight of bright swimsuits clashing gloriously with beach umbrellas, rugby balls, and a new summer book. Doesn't joy smell like the simple pleasures of a holiday on the coast? As sent ones, do we invite others into this experience of the profound pleasures of life, or do we linger in the disappointments of what should have been? Isn't it time for letting go?

Response: Joy is best expressed at a loud volume. Invite a friend to laugh, sing, or talk LOUDLY, enjoying the simple pleasures that life can bring. You'll be amazed at how quickly joy will join the conversation.

Joy



Love

ADVENT WEEK 4 {18.12-24.12}: THE S[c]ENT OF LOVE

Love |ləv| *noun*: deep affection or attachment to someone.

Texts: 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27;
Luke 1:26-38

Meditation: The scent of love: The blending of dirty diapers and baby powder, selflessly applied to a newborn infant. The warm embrace of mother and child, lingering under a shady tree, enjoying a few stolen moments of rest, experiencing an intimacy that the Father longs for us to know through Christ. As Jesus says, "*Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.*" As sent ones, what is more selfless than forsaking one's life as a mother to allow the growth and flourishing of a child?

Response: Deliberately serve family and friends in areas that you know they will experience the scent of love the greatest, regardless of what you receive through this act of service.

Love

Christmas



CHRISTMAS DAY {25.12}: THE S[c]ENT OF CHRISTMAS

Texts: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 98; Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-20; John 1:1-14

Mediation: The scent of Christmas: Spicy cinnamon cider, mingling with the promise of a new morning through that first glorious cup of coffee. The smells of Christmas lunch invading the entire house, promising a meal worthy of a King. Again, a metaphor much deeper than simple food and drink: Instead, an invitation to welcome the (gentle) invasion of Jesus into our world, a promise through an infant that reaches far greater than we can imagine or conceive. For it is *"in Advent that we celebrate the beginning and ending of Christ's victory over the powers of evil, and we call upon God to accomplish that victory in our own lives, to break in on us, to be born in our hearts, and to create us anew. This is the message of Isaiah to us: a Savior is coming not only to Israel but to the whole world"* (Robert Webber). As sent ones, how do we extend this welcome of Christ to our neighbors that God has placed in our world?

Response: Join the world in a chorus that Charles Wesley first penned in 1745:

<i>Come, Thou long expected Jesus</i>	<i>Born Thy people to deliver,</i>
<i>Born to set Thy people free;</i>	<i>Born a child and yet a King,</i>
<i>From our fears and sins release us,</i>	<i>Born to reign in us forever,</i>
<i>Let us find our rest in Thee.</i>	<i>Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.</i>
<i>Israel's Strength and Consolation</i>	<i>By Thine own eternal Spirit</i>
<i>Hope of all the earth Thou art;</i>	<i>Rule in all our hearts alone;</i>
<i>Dear Desire of every nation,</i>	<i>By Thine all sufficient merit,</i>
<i>Joy of every longing heart.</i>	<i>Raise us to Thy glorious throne.</i>

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us as captives in Christ's triumphal procession and uses us to spread the aroma of the knowledge of Him everywhere. For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are...an aroma that brings life"

(2 Corinthians 2:14-16, NIV)