

Light of the World

A Daily Advent Devotional



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This devotional is dedicated to my family.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Isaiah 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. KJV

REFLECTION

The light seems so far away.
When will it be here?
It's like a tunnel, with no end, and no light.
When will it be here?
Patience, we have none.
When will it be here?
We pace, we cry out.
"Oh, when will it be here?"
Candles help us to wait,
 wait for the light to come.
When will it be here?
It's here already, yet, we don't know it.

PRAYER

Magnificent and loving God,
We wait for your light to shine upon us.
We wait for the fire to burn in us.
We wait and wait and wait.
Help us see that the light we wait for
 with so much anticipation
 is much closer than we think. Amen

FIRST MONDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Isaiah 7:14 Therefore Yahweh will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. NRSV

REFLECTION

Gestation. A word for growing within.
Mary spent nine months gestating Jesus.
Did she have morning sickness at the beginning?
Did her back hurt, and feet ache?
Did she crave some foods and hate others?
As her stomach grew, did she start to feel unbalanced?
At the end, did her steps slow to a waddle?
The new life growing within Mary is the same miracle
that comes to pass for each of us.

PRAYER

Gracious and loving God,
Who moves within and through us
Who made all of us in her and his image
Who looks just like me and everyone I meet
Who is with all those gestating lives
Open my heart to every one of Your gifts. Amen

FIRST TUESDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Luke 1:31 And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son and shalt call his name Jesus. KJV

REFLECTION

“Och! My back!” Mary mutters to herself. The large brown haired dog lying nearby looks up at the sound of her voice. Mary sat down on a low stool, put her head in her hands and sighed. A wet nose touched her hand. Mary took her hands off her face and patted the top of the dog’s head absentmindedly and scratched behind his ears. Satisfied, the canine softly padded over to a spot in the sun. The days were getting cooler, and he wasn’t as young as his mistress.

Mary went inside the small house, got water and put some in a bowl. She found on a shelf beside the door a scrap of old bread for leaven. She put it in the bowl of water, then went to fetch more water at the well.

PRAYER

Beloved of Heaven,
Hear the prayers in my heart
I cannot put them into words
They are dry in my mouth
You alone know what dwells deep within me
All I can say is, “Thank you”. Amen

FIRST WEDNESDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Malachi 3:1 "I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly Jehovah who you are seeking will come to the temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says God Almighty. TNIV

REFLECTION

Something is coming.
Something is coming to us—all of us.
We wait with patience, with apprehension, with excitement.
Our days of darkness are almost over;
our wait for the Light is nearly done.
When it comes, will we be ready?
Can we hold it in our hands, in our hearts?
Something is coming and we must be ready
to enfold it within ourselves, inside our mere bodies.
It will come and be what we need, when we need it.
We will welcome this Light, with joy, with laughter, with singing.
Something is coming and soon we will see it
but our eyes must be open.
Our hearts must be unfastened as never before,
so we can see and feel and hear this Wondrous, Great Light.
Something is coming.

PRAYER

O God of our longing
Help us to see the Coming
The dark is so deep
We can only see a little way
The light is faint
We wait breathlessly
O God, we are so blind
We seek patience and end up with ignorance
Help us now to see the Coming. Amen

FIRST THURSDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Psalm 121

I will lift up my eyes to the hills—
From whence comes my help?
My help *comes* from God,
Who made heaven and earth.

God will not allow your foot to be moved;
Yahweh who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, Jehovah who keeps Israel
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.

God is your keeper;
Yahweh *is* your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
Nor the moon by night.

God shall preserve you from all evil;
Jehovah shall preserve your soul.
Our God shall preserve your going out and your coming in
From this time forth, and even forevermore. NKJV

REFLECTION

The darkness encloses us sometimes in a never-ending cloud.
Our world shrinks to its smallest sphere.
A cape of under-worldly blackness causes us to fear, to cry, to withdraw.
The rest of the world anticipates A Great Light.
We only see how dim the light really is, to us.
“O God”, we cry out.
The answer is muffled or indistinct.
Sometimes we can't hear an answer.
Where is that splendid beam for us?
Everyone else seems in joy.
We can barely smile.
Our tears go unnoticed.
Our crying isn't only to God.
We turn on lights only to turn them off.
We light candles, but the darkness lingers.
When will this twilight of ours be over?
Is the Divine Hand here on our shoulder?
Are we alone after all?
When does Jesus come for us?
We want to crawl into bed and stay there.
Sometimes we do.
This Season of Joy is unhinging us.

PRAYER

O God of light
Hearken to our call
We need your life form by us to feed our hungry souls
Let us find peace in this bright season. Amen

FIRST FRIDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Luke 4:4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That we shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. KJV

REFLECTION

Mary put the jar of water down in the house and went to find flour to add to the beginning bread mixture. She added some olive oil before she had to start kneading it, stirred the flour, oil & water along with the softened scrap of bread, then let it sit for awhile. Mary went out to stoke the fire in the community bread oven and found other women there tending to their baking bread. They asked her how she felt and she began to tell them about how much her back hurt. The older women looked at each other and nodded their heads knowingly. Once Mary was satisfied that the oven would be hot enough when her bread was ready to bake, she returned to her small house and found that the flour mixture was beginning to rise. She added more flour and began to manipulate it, making the concoction into bread. As she folded and turned and kneaded, she began to pray. It came so easily for her to commune with God as she made the staff of life.

PRAYER

Ah, loving and wondrous God, you have shown us that you are the Staff of Life. We eat of your abundance and drink of your plenty. How full we are! You have taught us to share with others in this abundance and plenty. We are heartily grateful. Amen

FIRST SATURDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Matthew 19: 21 Jesus said unto him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come and follow Me." 21st Century KJV

REFLECTION

So, you think your legacy will be that you are a Good Person? What have you done for the Least to make their lives better? Have you looked around? Do you see poverty, hate, nakedness, hunger? What did Jesus tell you to do? Well, then, go out there, and do what Jesus has told you to do. Even a small donation, a little of your time, something of yours that you give to another will go far to help someone else see God in your eyes.

PRAYER

O God, you are our Wonderworker, giving us many blessings. Keep us in your loving hands as we go about our ordinary lives Remind us that what may seem mundane, can be full of wonder. Fill our lives with your wonderment and help us to give to others a glimpse of that paradise as we support those in need. In whatever way you have guided us unveil our eyes so that we see you in them and in our work. Help us to become wonderworkers for others in your light. Amen

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE 1 Samuel 25:6 and thus you shall say, 'Have a long life, peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have.' NAS

REFLECTION

Peace in our world.

Peace just for us.

O, how we long for a day of peace.

Let us pray for a peace beyond understanding.

Let us pray for peace in our world.

Let us pray for peace in our life.

Look at how we long for peace, but keep starting wars.

Some of us start wars we don't know how to end.

Some of our wars are small and avoidable.

Some are tremendous and

Impassable.

No, we need to start with ourselves and solve our own wars first.

Look around and see who is in the middle of our own.

We blame others, but it's really us creating that torment.

Only when we have solved what we've started, can we can start looking at those other wars.

Did we look the other way and let it happen?

Or did we work earnestly to keep the peace?

Sometimes, a war starts even when we are trying so hard for peace.

If we have diligently sought peace, but others are determined to cause war,

then we have done our work and can only pray.

Pray for the peace beyond understanding.

PRAYER

Sometimes, God, I don't think you hear me.

I want peace, but all I see is war.

War in our world, war in the lives around us,

War in my life.

Oh, God, dear God, please bring peace,

To me, to those dear to me, to our world. Amen

SECOND MONDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Isaiah 46:3 Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: KJV

REFLECTION

Okay, so we know that Jesus' mom got pregnant the old fashioned way. None of this virgin stuff. Joe was her legal husband and they started a family just before they got married – like a lot of people do. And yeah, she probably had the usual ailments of pregnancy – sore back, sore feet, muscles stretched in weird ways, can't eat this, want heaps of that, etc. So, Jesus wasn't really such a miracle after all. He was produced in the usual way. It wasn't until he was an adult that it was discovered that God had specially blessed him. Up to that time he lived a normal life. They made him into this God-like entity. But doesn't that take away from the miracles that are birthed everyday? Doesn't that take away from the special people in our lives who also seem to be blessed by God? Jesus was a human being who had been specially blessed by God, just like we are.

PRAYER

Almighty and Everlasting God

We thank you for our life

We thank you for our families

We thank you for this special time

as we prepare ourselves for Christmas

Amid all the busyness and celebration we need to take time to think about why we observe the birth day of this Child.

It is to remind us that all births are miracles and God is always with us.

We seek your wisdom and your love.

Help us to remember not only that this particular Child was special, but that every one of your children are also. Amen

SECOND TUESDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Psalm 148:1-2 Praise ye our God. Praise ye God from the heavens; praise God in the heights.

Praise ye God all the angels; praise ye God all ye hosts. KJV adapted

REFLECTION

Where are those angels?
Aren't they supposed be starting to fly around now?
We could really use some angels!
How about some that are singing, "Gloria"?
Or maybe, "Alleluia"!
Well, I don't see any right now.
Where are those angels when you need 'em?
We could really use some right now.
I hope they show up soon,
'Cause they're a big part of the story.
We really need those angels.
The story isn't right without those angels.
Where are those angels?

PRAYER

Praise be to God, who sent angels, instead of mere mortals.
Praise be to God, who sends us angels when we least expect it.
Praise be to God, whose messengers are here with us today.
Praise be to God. Amen

SECOND WEDNESDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Luke 14:15 One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, "Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" NRSV

REFLECTION

Mary made three large loaves and brought them on a board to the ovens so they could bake. Her mother was also there, putting her own loaves in the oven to bake. She and Mary embraced, and chatted for awhile. Upon parting, Mary's mother reminded her to take time to rest. Mary nodded and slowly walked back to her small house. A gray and white cat sat by the door, fat with her own babies. Mary said to her, "Isn't it about your time? You look like a large loaf of bread ready to burst!" Heeding her mother's advice Mary ate a piece of cheese and some figs, and lay down on her bed to rest.

Prayer

Our Mother, Our Father,
May we have joy in this season of celebration
Give us eyes that can see You in everything
Help us to enjoy the many blessings we already have
Open our hearts to all that it can hold
May we cherish time with our families and friends. Amen

SECOND THURSDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Exodus 16:31 The people of Israel called the bread manna. It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey. NIV

REFLECTION

Mmmmm, Christmas cookies!
Have you ever had anything so good?
This is the season when all of the best cookies are made.
I remember the cookies Mom made,
Mexican wedding cakes, ginger cookies, rosettes.
Oh, it was heaven on earth eating them.
But my sugar cookies are fabulous!
They start with strong smelling buttermilk and end with almond flavored
frosting smoothed over their tops.
My thumb-print raspberry jam cookies melt in your mouth!Mmmmm, let's see, ginger, peppermint,
Spritz, chocolate chip with Christmas M & M's, coconut – I make them all!

PRAYER

Magnificent Creator,
You fed the people of Israel on manna long ago.
You feed us on bread and fruit of the vine.
We eat and drink with much hunger.
Anxiously, happily, excitedly we wait for your Great Light
to come among us.
So we feast on the season's bounty and light our candles.
We long for the quiet night of Christmas Eve to begin fully eating. Amen

SECOND FRIDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE John 7:31 Many among the crowds at the Temple believed in him. "After all," they said, "would you expect the Messiah to do more miraculous signs than this man has done?" NLT

REFLECTION

How?
How does a miracle happen?
Why does a miracle happen?
How is a miracle made?
When can we expect a miracle?
What kind of miracle are we looking for?
How can we find one?
Do miracles still happen?
Are we open to miracles?
Does everyday life produce miracles?
Or do we have to be somebody special?
Is it just special people that God uses for miracles?
Can anybody be a miracle?

PRAYER

O Great Wonderment!
We are so in need of a miracle.
When is your miracle going to arrive?
Will we know it when we see it?
We are so in need of a miracle.
O Great God,
we need your miracle. Amen

SECOND SATURDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE 2 Samuel 22:29 For Thou art my lamp, O Jehovah, And Jehovah doth lighten my darkness. *Young's Literal Translation*

REFLECTION

Today is Sancta Lucia Day in Sweden. It celebrates the martyrdom of a Sicilian young woman who refused to renounce her faith. "Lucia" means light in Latin. In Sweden, the oldest daughter in a family arises at dawn, dons a white gown with a red sash and a crown of candles. Her little brothers attend her in white conical hats and hold candles to light her way. They wake up their parents with steaming cups of coffee and Lussekatter (St. Lucia cats) buns sweetened with saffron.

PRAYER

O Great Jehovah,
We seek your Light as we go through our days
We look to the ancient followers of Jesus
 to lead us on your path
The darkness creeps ever closer
We light more and more candles as we try to chase the darkness away
O Great Jehovah be our lamp unto your Light. Amen

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Genesis 16:11 The angel added, "You are now pregnant, and you will have a son."
NCV

REFLECTION

Mary awoke to quiet footsteps bringing in the bread, now baked and fragrant. Mary's mother put the bread up on the shelf by the door. Mary started to get up slowly and stiffly, but her mother said, "Oh, I didn't mean to wake you! You need to rest now." Mary shook her head and replied, "I want to get up anyway. Joseph will soon be home from his job in Capernaum, and he'll be looking for supper." Her mother put down a cloth bag in front of her. "Here's some fresh cheese. I want to give you some grapes and olives back at the house. I'll run back and get them." Mary looked at her mother gratefully as she unhurriedly got out of bed.

PRAYER

Oh, yes, God

We can understand how Mary felt

Great with child, yet having to do everyday responsibilities
with great love and care.

It is just like every mother-to-be, going about doing what needs to be done
And yet knowing that this wondrous miracle is growing inside. Amen

THIRD MONDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Exodus 34:2 Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. TNIV

REFLECTION

Reach, reach, reach

Up, up, up

Reach, reach, reach

Up, up, up

When Jesus went up the mountain for forty days, maybe he went so high to be closer to God. Or, maybe, he just wanted to be alone. We sometimes need to reach toward the heavens to exercise our bodies so our minds follow along. It feels so good to stretch our arms as high as they will go, so that we can feel as if we touch God. Sometimes we feel the need to knock on God's door, just to make sure that our prayers are being heard. Our bodies need to feel that they are stretched out, so that our minds can be clear and we can hear what God is saying to us.

PRAYER

O Saving God, how we strain to be as close to you as possible. We feel your love and know that you are near as we go about our daily lives. Our hearts are full of your divine blessings. Keep us in your loving hands and guide us as we do Your work. Amen

THIRD TUESDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Psalm 103:20 All of you mighty angels, who obey God's commands, come and praise your God! CEV

REFLECTION

When the angels gathered above the shepherds
Were they noisy or silent?
Did they laugh and giggle or were their mouths hushed?
Do you think the shepherds heard rustling above them
Looked up and saw row upon row of angels?
Then one stepped forward and said to the cowering shepherds, their hearts beating rapidly, their breath coming fast,
“Do not be afraid.”
What would that have been like?
Would you have fallen on your knees?
Clasped your hands together in awe?
Jaws unfastened in wonder?
How would, could, you describe it later?
Would any words suffice?

PRAYER

Almighty God, who sent angels to announce the birth of that Special Child, hear us today as we pray. We need your angels again. We are an anxious people. So many things are not right in our world. Send your angels into our hearts and still the nervousness we feel. Once again let us hear that multitude of heavenly bodies as they assemble around us. Help us to hear the rustle of many wings so we know that we, too, are your Special Children. Amen

THIRD WEDNESDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE 1 Samuel 2:8 God raises up the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. NRSV

REFLECTION

When I was a little girl, Christmas Eve was a very special day. As the sun went down, we lit candles all over the house. When my father got home from work, he started a big fire in the fireplace. Christmas was here! After a special “white” dinner that was a tradition in Swedish households for Christmas Eve, we would sit around the dinner table just talking together as a family.

Then Daddy would put on the old 33 rpm records of Charles Dickens’ *The Christmas Carol*. He would have to get up every few minutes to change the record (I think there were six), but oh, what a wondrous retelling of that wonderful tale! English actor Basil Rathbone was Scrooge and he was a crotchety old wreck! “Are there no prisons?” brays Scrooge as two gentlemen come into his office collecting money to give a little cheer to the destitute. They reassure him that the workhouses are still in operation also to Scrooge’s further inquiry. Rich old Scrooge thinks that they provide for the needs of those not as well off as him.

Jesus said that the poor will always be with us, and indeed they still are. Let us not forget them in this season of feasting and plenty. That is part of the Work that God asks us to do.

PRAYER

Blessed God, who lives and moves within our being, help us to remember those who won’t have feasting and plenty this holiday season. Let us recall the barren words that Mr. Scrooge spoke and facilitate the kindling of the fire of justice within us. Amen

THIRD THURSDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Job 12:22 God reveals the deep things of darkness and brings utter darkness into the light. TNIV

REFLECTION

Ah, Light!
Where have you gone?
Candles, candles, more candles
Turn on every lamp in the house
Energy, burn thy flame
More light, more light
Start the fire
Stack the cords up high.
Now, let there be light!

PRAYER

O Most High!
Lead us into thy light and banish the darkness.
We cower in our dark houses and find little light.
Give us the tools to light the way to You! Amen

THIRD FRIDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Daniel 2:22 God makes known secrets that are deep and hidden; Jehovah knows what is hidden in darkness, and light is all around. NCV adapted

REFLECTION

Heaviness.

The weight of thoughts out of context.

Context of only what is known.

Knowledge of darkness and heaviness.

Light the medicine of darkness and heaviness.

Scarcity of light.

The cure not in sight.

Sight finding only darkness and heaviness.

Light one candle to begin to scare away darkness and heaviness.

Two candles, three candles, many candles.

Heaviness and darkness flee to the edge.

Prayer

God of Lightness,

Hear the prayer of our hearts.

Shape our minds to do your loving work.

Strengthen us to accept what we must

And face what we must overcome

Feed our hungry psyche so that Your Light

Is once again inside us. Amen

THIRD SATURDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE: Revelation 7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; KJV

REFLECTION

Mary laid out the meager dinner of fresh cheese and bread, olives, figs, dates and olive oil just as Joseph walked in the door. They embraced and he inquired about her condition. "It'll be soon, Joseph.", she replied hastily as she poured him some watered-down wine. Mary was starving hungry, but could only eat a little. Joseph noticed that she didn't eat much. "Mary, you must eat. You will soon need all your strength." Mary shook her head and just looked at him. She got up and looked back at Joseph eating heartily. She shook her head, rolled her eyes and began to clean up.

PRAYER

God of our fathers and mothers,
Quench the hunger and thirst we have for your presence.
We wait for the Great Light to dawn and bathe us
with everlasting fire.
Keep us in your loving arms and bless us as we bless you. Amen

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Job 5:14 They meet with darkness in the daytime, And grope at noontime as in the night. KJV

REFLECTION

The sun peeps over the eastern rim of the sky,
It is after seven a.m.
Where has it been?
It is the day of the Winter Solstice.
The sun has slept in.
Its weak light washes the day in dimness
By mid-afternoon the sun tires of its brilliance
And begins to prepare for an early bedtime
To practice for a year of earlier dawns.

Light every candle
And burn them to nubs.
Discover lanterns of fire
Stoke them with vigor,
Let the flames of the placefire
Burn high and bright.
Add more wood to make a bonfire of daylight.

Toast the end of darkness
Uncover your eyes
Soak up the light
Soon, very soon, the Light comes
Then the darkness is forever thrown off.

PRAYER

O Great and Magnificent Light
Shine on us and all the world!
Shower us in the Light Divine of Your Love
Take us back to the time before the blackness descended
Recover our lightness of being
Fully open our eyes to YOU! Amen

FOURTH MONDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Job 38:28-30

"Have you ever traveled to where snow is made,
seen the vault where hail is stockpiled,
The arsenals of hail and snow that I keep in readiness
for times of trouble and battle and war?
Can you find your way to where lightning is launched,
or to the place from which the wind blows?
Who do you suppose carves canyons
for the downpours of rain, and charts
the route of thunderstorms
That bring water to unvisited fields,
deserts no one ever lays eyes on,
Drenching the useless wastelands
so they're carpeted with wildflowers and grass?
And who do you think is the father of rain and dew,
the mother of ice and frost?
You don't for a minute imagine
these marvels of weather just happen, do you? The Message

REFLECTION

What does a winter sky look like?
Is it Marian blue? Or brilliant with many stars?
Does the sun shine? Or the moon shine?
Are there fluffy white clouds? Or low-hanging dark grey?
Do the trees, now bare of leaves, sketch skeleton fingers against the sky?
Is the moon full and shining with a silver glow that touches the ground between unclothed trees?
Are the clouds snowing fat flakes of icy condensation?
Who knows what a real winter sky should look like?
God does.

PRAYER

God of Light and God of Glory
We are poised to sing "Alleluia"
Our voices are ready to proclaim your Splendor
All of our candles are brightly shining
We await your splendid feast
Come, soon, most Holy. Amen

FOURTH TUESDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Proverbs 31: 21 When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. TNIV

REFLECTION

Deck the halls with green and scarlet
Trim the doors with silver and gold.
Decorate every nook and cranny
Don't forget for whom we sing in glee!
Look what miracle is coming
For us all a gift of Love
Set the crèche where everyone can adore
Find the Baby where ever you go.

Bake in clouds of flour and glitter
Keep the ovens hot with fire
For love is coming with candlelight and awe
Our season of rejoicing is almost here!

PRAYER

Most loving God,
There is so much to do during this time of year.
Help us to see you in the many tasks we have yet to do.
We strive to remember that your Beloved Child was born for us all.
Our loved ones are some of the wonderful gifts we have been given.
Remind us of our many blessings.
Ah, now we can go about doing what needs to be done with joy and happiness. Amen

FOURTH WEDNESDAY OF ADVENT

BIBLE VERSE Luke 1:14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.
KJV

REFLECTION

The grey and white mother cat grasped a tiny white kitten gently in her mouth. She was transferring her newborns from the woodpile to a safe place in the tiny stable behind the house. The house was ablaze with activity and many people. The young woman was clearly in labor with her own mother bustling about and other women tending to a pot of lentils boiling over the fire and doing laundry in vats of scalding water.

The mother cat settled in a straw-filled corner and began to feed her four kittens, now all snuggled up to her. Her purr filled the small building.

Just as he had settled himself for the morning, the old brown dog, was startled by cries from Mary. She was trying to lift the pot of hot water off the fire to do laundry. She carefully put the very hot pot on the ground and collapsed. He rushed up to her, his wet nose sniffing her and then began to lick her face. He knew. She whimpered and he ran off to find help. She slowly got up and shuffled to her bed.

Mary had started to do laundry earlier that day, but the pains of labor had started to overwhelm her and she had to stop. She sent Joseph, just about to head to work, over to her mother's house. As soon as Joseph appeared on her doorstep, she knew that Mary was in labor and she ran to her daughter's house. Mary was sitting on her bed, trying to breathe through another wave of labor, and not doing very well. Her mother brought in the low stool from outside and put it beside Mary's bed and helped her to sit on it. As word spread that Joseph's wife was in labor, other women began to appear and set about finishing the laundry and starting a pot of lentils for food. Finally, the midwife arrived, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief. She had helped nearly all of the women attending Mary to deliver their children. Shortly after she arrived, something *very* strange happened.

PRAYER

Oh, God, Mother and Father of us all
Just at the moment of Jesus' birth
You sent your holy messengers
And your exquisite light
To let all of us know
That you were indeed among us.
Now that the Light has come
We can sit down to Your feast. Amen

