



Painting: The Book of Isaiah, Igor Ulanovsky, 1997

Loreto Prayer for Advent Week 1

In our Advent series, we invite the reader and viewer into personal and communal contemplation of images that evoke an element of this liturgical season.

I hate my birth date!

As a kid, it was always in the last week of school filled with noisy assemblies, crass Christmas songs and rather inane gift giving.

As a teacher, I was always juggling report edits, farewelling colleagues and attending innumerable end-of year functions.

Now, I always enter the first week of Advent and celebrate my birthday with this image as my icon and inspiration.

Ulanovsky's painting invites me into a summery lightness of hope and promise. I am bathed in these colours: the clear summer sky, the tight wrap of agapanthus flowers just waiting to burst forth, fragile jacaranda flowers dusting our driveway. Covid-19 cannot touch these colours, this feeling. The frustrations of the year are tossed aside by the north wind. The paradox of starting a new liturgical year as our school and work year ends is never lost on me. Leavings dance with longings, farewells fuse with faith, the pre-Christmas crush is challenged by choices. We are given long evenings to relish the day; beers, beaches and BBQs cement our communion. In this image, God is found in swirls and swelling, gentled hues and gracious invitation.

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And yet, why and how did Ulanovsky connect his work with the herald and prophet, Isaiah?

The artist references the Advent justice text: ‘... they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.’ (Is.2 :4)

I am writing in the wake of the murder of Celeste Manno, feeling sick about the murder of innocent Afghani civilians by our troops and anticipating the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. World AIDS Day, International Day of Disabled Persons and the 40th anniversary of the murder of the North American churchwomen crowd the upcoming week. There is no place for war, violence, hatred or division in Ulanovsky’s image. It invites me to access the most gentle, beautiful, peace-loving, pastel-vibrant parts of myself; to gather them in a mixing bowl to produce something light and nourishing.

At the beginning of our Advent journey, this image also reminds me of Biden’s reference to Michael Joncas’ version of Psalm 91 in his recent acceptance speech:

... bear you on the breath of dawn ...

This image is a God-blessed breath; may our world inhale deeply in the weeks ahead. May our good God, who breathes life into each beginning, bless you and those you love at the start of this summery season.

Anne Muirhead
Loreto Director of Mission
November 2020



SCAFFOLD FOR REFLECTION

How do you react to Ulanovsky's painting: where is your eye drawn...?

How does it connect with your desire(s) for Advent...?

How does our physical landscape invite you into Advent contemplation...?

Our tradition is so word-heavy.

Do you have a favourite Advent colour, texture, feeling, song or image...?

PRAYERS

There is a Longing - Anne Quigley

Refrain: There is a longing in our hearts, O Lord, For you to reveal yourself to us.

There is a longing in our hearts for love we only find in you, our God.

For justice, for freedom, for mercy: hear our prayer.

In sorrow, in grief: be near, hear our prayer, O God. Refrain

For wisdom, for courage, for comfort: hear our prayer.

In weakness, in fear: be near, hear our prayer, O God. Refrain

Other prayers may be offered here ...



BLESSING

*Words of Sister Ita Ford M.M., raped and murdered by US-trained
Salvadoran troops, 2 December 1980*

I hope you come to find that which gives life a deeper meaning for you.

Something worth living for – maybe even worth dying for.

Something that energizes you, enthuses you, and enables you to keep moving ahead.

I can't tell you what that might be – that's for you to find, to choose, to love.

I can just encourage you to start looking and support you in the search.

May our Advent God:
bless us in our search
and bear us on the breath of dawn!

Maranatha!

Amen!

AWARENESS & ACTION PRAYER & REFLECTION

Advent Week 1

1 Dec: World AIDS Day

First Day of summer

2 Dec: International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

40 year commemoration of the rape and murder of Jean Donovan,
Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel and Maura Clarke in El Salvador

3 Dec: International Day of Disabled Persons

Memorial of St Frances Xavier



ONLINE RETREATS

Advent Retreat

Retreat with Sr Gemma Simmonds CJ

Ignatian Retreats

Online retreats with an Ignatian flavour

Monasteries of the Heart Retreat

Online retreat with a Benedictine flavour

ANAWIM Arts

Visit IBVM co-sponsored arts collective, Anawim Arts, for poetry and images related to the theme - TILT

