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The Joy of Advent

Family Celebrations for Advent & the Twelve Days of Christmas

Rebecca Grabill, Stephen Grabill, Clare Therese Gray

Summary

From Advent through Epiphany, daily Bible readings, reflections, songs, prayers, and activities for all ages provide a guided celebration that will infuse depth and delight throughout the Advent and Christmastide season. *The Joy of Advent* gives families the opportunity to come together and focus their hearts on the scarlet thread of Christmas-Christ's love and sacrifice-woven through the tapestry of Scripture, and utilizing the Jesse Tree, to create poignant memories and beloved traditions.

Readers will...

- Create meaningful traditions and activities that family members will enjoy year after year.
- Experience companionship through accessible readings and thoughtful reflections.
- Appreciate the amazing story of God's redemptive work in the world.
- Have every day moments transformed into lasting memories of rich spiritual significance.
- Extend the celebration of Christmas through the full Twelve Days of Christmas.

Features of *The Joy of Advent*:

- **PERFECT GIFT** for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany celebrations
- **TIMELESSLY CLASSIC PACKAGING**: With a beautifully ageless, full-color, holiday design, this family activity book is perfect for decorating a coffee table or bookshelf, and the sturdy hardcover package ensures durability.
- **DESIGNED FOR FAMILIES WITH KIDS**: This book includes family devotions and reflection questions for different age levels, and activities the whole family can enjoy together.

Contributor Bio

Rebecca Grabill is mother of six and award-winning author of children's books *Halloween Good Night* (Atheneum Books for Young Readers), *Violet and the Woof* (Katherine Tegan Books/HarperCollins), and *A Year With Mama Earth* (Eerdman's Books for Young Readers), as well as the poetry collection, *Sweetened Condensed* (Flying Ketchup Press), and essays on global platforms such as *ScaryMommy.com*. She holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from Hamline University and a B.A. in Religion and Philosophy from Calvin University. She is also an awardee of the Sustainable Arts Foundation. She lives in rural Michigan with her husband and children, and balances homeschooling with writing and commercial photography.

Stephen J. Grabill, Ph.D., theological consultant on this project (and conveniently Rebecca's husband), is general editor of the NIV Stewardship Study Bible (Zondervan, 2009) and co-author and executive producer of the film series *For the Life of the World*, which has sold more than 250,000 copies and reached 1.5 million viewers. He also has numerous academic titles to his name, teaches social ethics at Grand Rapids Theological Seminary, and has 20 years experience as a senior research theologian, author, and speaker. Currently he is Director of Moja University and co-founder of the IT startup, Moja Market LLC, which will bring e-commerce and education to Sub-Saharan Africa.

Clare Gray is the author, illustrator and pattern designer behind popular Instagram account @claretheresegray. She creates artworks for textiles, paper craft and fabric collections, packaging and homewares. Inspired by the natural environment of her rural Hampshire surroundings, she lives and works on a farm with her husband and young family. After studying Painting at Art School in Norwich she went on to the Drawing Year at the Royal Drawing School where she focused on imaginative and

observational drawing & printmaking before launching a freelance design career.

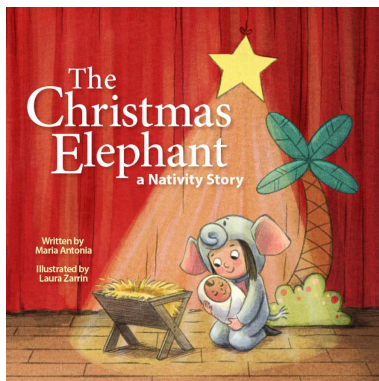
Aside from bespoke artworks, she takes on project-based collaborations with like-minded companies. Clare's design experience spans a range of clients and sectors from textiles to craft collections, homewares to book illustration. She is the author of two books, 'Woodland Watercolor: A Colouring Workbook' and 'Painting Nature with Clare: Create Beautiful Gouache Motifs of the Garden, Countryside, Sea, River and Forest' published with Page Street Publishing. She has illustrated the children's picture books, 'The Agnes Series' published with DK. Her patterns can be found around the world on children's and women's apparel, luxury toiletries, stationery, ceramics and decorative objects.

She has a passion for lino printing on paper and fabric, and loves spending time in galleries drawing ceramics and paintings. Otherwise she can often be found enjoying the English countryside with her family, growing and collecting flowers to dry and, of course, drawing and painting every single day.

Quotes

"*The Joy of Advent* is a beautiful and rich resource. I celebrate that families will be able to create Christmas traditions that join their worship with that of the saints of old. Even though I struggle to remember the church calendar, I long for rhythms and traditions that will place me inside God's redemptive story. I'm delighted that this volume will lead families in lifelong faith formation together." —**Geoffrey Hsu**, Executive Director, Shepherd Flourish San Diego

Illustrations



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The Christmas Elephant

a Nativity Story

Maria Antonia, Laura Zarrin

Summary

Ellie thinks outside the box. She stands her ground and remains in her elephant costume even when her older sister-and director of this year's Christmas play-demands she change into a sheep costume. The theme of standing up for your own uniqueness sends a subtle message to children that they can fit in anywhere if they persevere and don't give in to peer pressure. Ellie's approach to standing her ground is entertaining and empowering. There is also a teaching moment for the bossy sister who comes to see that everything doesn't have to work out the way she planned in order to be wonderful. *The Christmas Elephant* is an ideal addition for family, preschool, elementary school, and community library Christmas picture book collections.

This unique holiday book is perfect for:

- Children ages 3-8
- Sharing the story of Christmas through a memorable narrative text and engaging, whimsical illustrations
- Christmas gifts, including stocking stuffers and church ministry outreach
- Inspiring discussion and dialogue with parents, grandparents, friends, and teachers Christmas celebrations, church ministry outreach, and Advent discussions
- Sparking age-appropriate conversations about Christmas, self-esteem, Jesus' birth, and helping others.

Contributor Bio

Maria Antonia has plenty of experience with the Annual Sunday School Christmas Play-sometimes performing, sometimes writing, sometimes directing. Although, not one of those plays has featured a Christmas Elephant! (At least not yet.) She is currently the Sunday School Superintendent at her church and has formerly taught at a Christian school in New York City. When not writing, she's busy taking photos of God's wonderful creation. She has lived in Sunny Spain, Busy New York City, and currently resides in the Great White North of Canada.

Laura Zarrin planned on becoming an archeologist, but realized she was much happier staying home drawing and watching TV. Luckily that worked out pretty well. Laura is the illustrator of the Wallace and Grace series by Heather Alexander and the Katie Woo's Neighborhood series by Fran Manushkin. Laura has illustrated over 30 books for children including board books, picture books, and chapter books, Highlights Hidden Pictures, and various educational projects. She's happiest writing and illustrating characters with subtle and not so subtle humor.

Quotes

In Maria Antonia's heartfelt Christmas story, Ellie just wants to be part of the Nativity play, but of course as an elephant, so what could go wrong? The perfect warm holiday tale in times of chaos and pressure to be perfect. Ellie's story of determination is a gentle reminder for us all to slow down and remember that in the eyes of Christ, we all belong. This tale could lead to a new generation of Nativity plays with all of God's creatures to remind us of Jesus' universal love. —**Donna Barba Higuera**, Newbery Medal and Pura Belpré Author Award Winner

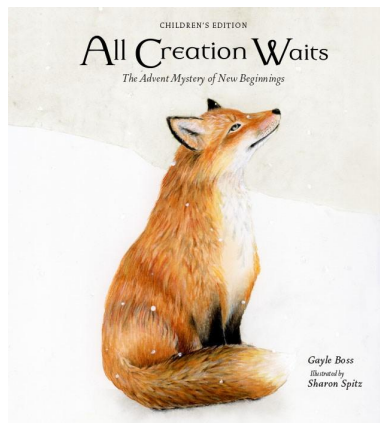
The Christmas Elephant is a sweet story to remind us that God's love is big enough to love all of us, even the ones who feel like an elephant in the room. —**Emily Morrow**, creator of Really Very Crunchy

Just like an elephant, you won't soon forget this adorable Mary and Martha retelling with a Christmas twist! —**Amanada Rawson Hill**, author of *The Hope of Elephants*

This creative story about a determined girl wearing an elephant disguise at a Christmas play is not only sweet and funny but also a reminder that Christmas is all about Jesus. And Jesus loves everybody, even elephants. And, for sure, everybody will love this story. Get ready for giggles and AWWWS and many "Read it again!" —**Ana Siqueira**, author of *Abuela's Super Capa*

Illustrations





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All Creation Waits — Children's Edition

The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings for Children

Gayle Boss, Sharon Spitz

Summary

"Beautiful, beckoning, and brimming with hope and promise, wonder and love!" —**Sy Montgomery**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *How to Be a Good Creature*

From bestselling author Gayle Boss, a stunningly illustrated picture book edition of her beloved Advent book, *All Creation Waits*. Now young readers too will be caught up in the wonder of 24 woodland animals adapting to the season of dark and cold.

Each day of Advent a different animal shows children its own amazing way to meet the dark and cold. Wood Frog freezes into a frog-shaped cube of ice! For six months Painted Turtle doesn't breathe! Woodchuck can't be wakened, even if shaken! With each creature, children hear the refrain: *The dark is not an end. It's a door. It's the way a new beginning comes.*

Here is the ancient truth of Advent enacted in the lives of 24 common woodland animals and culminating in the birth of the Human One who perfectly lived that truth.

Children open the book's double-page spreads as they would the doors on an Advent calendar—one, and only one, each day. "Animal wonderment" reflection questions at the back of the book help children stay with just one animal, one page spread, each day. In an often chaotic "holiday season," children learn to slow down and wait with all creation.

Written in lilting poetic lines, children ages 5 to 10 will delight in the sounds of the words as well as the vivid descriptions of animals' winter lives. They'll learn the elegant intricacies of creatures as small as honeybees, as large as black bears.

Original watercolor paintings by award-winning artist Sharon Spitz convey the radiance of each creature.

With this beautiful picture book, adults and families who have loved the original edition of *All Creation Waits* can now welcome younger children into the practice of reflective waiting-with-creation through Advent. Perfect for grounding young ones in the wonder of wild things.

An ECPA 2023 Christmas Bestseller!

Learn more about *All Creation Waits—Children's Edition* and find free resources at AllCreationWaits.com

Contributor Bio

Gayle Boss writes from West Michigan, where she was born and raised. Her lifelong love of animals and her immersion in spiritual texts and practices have melded in poems and essays that explore how relationships with animals specifically, and an attentive presence in the natural world generally, restore us to our deepest selves. Also the author of *Wild Hope: Stories for Lent from the Vanishing*, Gayle lives with her husband and Welsh corgi rescue.

Sharon Spitz is an award-winning illustrator and graphic designer currently based between Berlin and Haifa.

Quotes

"In this unique blend of Advent musings on the nature of waiting, fascinating facts about animals and birds, and magnificent artwork depicting creatures in their winter habitats, author Gayle Boss and illustrator Sharon Spitz join forces to develop one theme pointing ahead to the birth of Jesus: 'The dark is not an end. It's a door. It's the

way a new beginning comes." —**The Banner**

"Saying I loved *All Creation Waits* is an understatement. It moved me and inspired me. My family will be using it to welcome in Christmas, not just once, but for years to come. As a parent, I love the space the book leaves for my own kids' responses and the prompts that are truly at a child's level. It's a delight and my new go-to recommendation for families." —**Meredith Miller**, pastor and author of *Woven: Nurturing a Faith Your Kids Don't Have to Heal From*

"This book is at once gorgeous and glorious, quiet as falling snow, and still as a hibernating animal. It captures the magic and promise of Advent in words and pictures—reminding us, gently but powerfully, of God's love for all His creatures—including us." —**Sy Montgomery**, National Book Award Finalist and *New York Times* bestselling author of *How to Be a Good Creature*

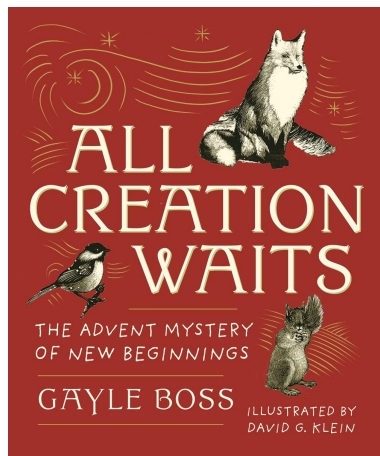
"A gorgeous exploration in words and pictures of animals in winter, life in darkness, beauty in nature, the wonder of the world..." —**Deborah Heiligman**, author of *Charles and Emma: The Darwins' Leap of Faith*, a National Book Award Finalist

"*All Creation Waits* is an Advent book as exquisite as it is unusual. In a season which often centers on human stories and celebrates the triumph of light, this enthralling book directs our gaze elsewhere: to our animal kin and what they can teach us about stillness, waiting, and the generative power of darkness. Poetic, wise, stunningly illustrated, and rich in mystery, *All Creation Waits* is an ideal Advent companion for curious children (and grownups too). I can hardly wait to share it with my own family." —**Laura Alary**, author of *Look! A Child's Guide to Advent and Christmas* and many other books

"*All Creation Waits* is a kind of bestiary set to an Advent tune. Each day, the life of some creature unfurls before our eyes, with an accompanying prose poem that describes the animal's hibernal activity. Lushly illustrated, each page opens to dream-like portraits of animals in their habitats." —**The Living Church**

Illustrations





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All Creation Waits — Gift Edition *(New edition, Special edition, Enlarged)* **The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings (An illustrated Advent devotional with 25 woodcut animal portraits)**

Gayle Boss, David G. Klein

Summary

A special gift edition of the bestselling book for Advent that reveals the wisdom and wonder of animals in the natural world

In twenty-five portraits depicting how wild animals of the northern hemisphere ingeniously adapt when darkness and cold descend, we see and hear as if for the first time the ancient wisdom of Advent: The dark is not an end but the way a new beginning comes.

Short, daily reflections capture in vivid detail the intricate and astonishing ways that familiar animals, from the honeybee to the porcupine, prepare for winter. Each day's reading is paired with a charming original woodcut illustration. Anyone who feels tired of the consumer hype of "the holiday season" will be refreshed and awakened to the eternal truth the natural world reveals.

This special gift edition:

- Includes a new introduction, with suggestions for how the book can be used during Advent
- Features inspirational thoughts from men and women through the ages – scientists, poets, and philosophers – who have found God through the beauty of creation
- Includes an Afterword, bringing readers up to date on what has happened since *All Creation Waits* was first published
- Invites quiet reflection during an often-chaotic holiday season
- Prompts meaningful conversations between children and adults, church groups, book clubs, creation care classes, and much more
- Is an ECPA 2023 Christmas Bestseller

Written with quiet passion and backed by extensive research, *All Creation Waits* has captured the minds and hearts of thousands of readers of all ages, from children to adults. Gayle Boss invites us to realize that God can be known in all creatures, and that paying attention to these creatures makes us more fully human, more fully ourselves.

"The practice of Advent has always been about helping us to grasp the mystery of a new beginning out of what looks like death. Other-than-human creatures—sprung, like us, from the Source of Life—manifest this mystery without question or doubt. The more I'm with animals and the more I learn about them, the more I know they can be more than our companions on this planet. They can be our guides. They can be to us 'a book about God...a word of God,' the God who comes, even in the darkest season, to bring us a new beginning." —from *All Creation Waits*

Learn more about *All Creation Waits* and find free resources at AllCreationWaits.com

Contributor Bio

Gayle Boss writes in Michigan, where she was born and raised. Her life-long love of animals and her immersion in spiritual texts and practices have melded in poems and essays that explore how relationships with animals specifically, and an attentive presence in the natural world generally, restore us to our deepest selves. The mother

of two grown sons, she lives in Grand Rapids with her husband.

David G. Klein is an award-winning graphic artist with illustrations for the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, Random House, Tor Books, DC Comics, and Marvel. He is a graphic novelist, printmaker, engraving artist, and co-founder of Brooklyn-based Point Made Animation.

Quotes

"This is the book I gave to my family and friends two Christmases ago in hard copy. It is one of the most beautiful books I have ever seen and so deeply moving with the story each day from December 1 to December 25 about what it takes for different animals to get through the winter cold. This book is something to share with your family or even alone to touch something that is very rare, and so real and heart-rending." —**Trina Paulus**, author of *Hope for the Flowers*

"Gayle Boss writes lovingly about animals in their habitats using rich and lyrical language. Children will learn—and be awestruck—as their parents read about creatures they know, and don't know. I'm certain families will make reading this lovely book together a yearly tradition, whether they observe Advent or not. *All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings* is a beautiful addition to any family library." —**Deborah Heiligman**, author of *Charles and Emma: The Darwins' Leap of Faith*, a National Book Award Finalist

"This book reminds me of what St. Paul tells us in Romans 8:19—All creation waits! In this invigorating view of Advent the contrasts are beautifully presented—between darkness and light, waiting and arrival, sleeping and waking, human and animal creatureliness. The stories and illustrations partake of the kind of reality Christ exemplified in his Advent...How helpful it is to join the animals during their Advent waiting." —**Luci Shaw**, Writer in Residence, Regent College, author and poet

"To be awake in the world each winter is to sense loss, to know the weight of waiting. This book's illustrations and descriptions of the winter habits of 24 animals are gentle lessons in biology—about how lactic acid pools in the bloodstream of a turtle or a porcupine's gut digests wood. But the animals are also a metaphor for faith, and the final chapter explores the meaning of a God who became incarnate 'as a child at home among animals' for the sake of a creation that still waits." —**Christian Century**

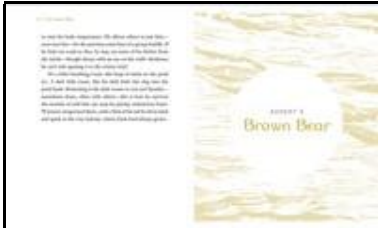
"*All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings* showcases twenty-five fresh images of the foundational truth that lies beneath and within the Christ story. In twenty-five portraits depicting how wild animals of the northern hemisphere ingeniously adapt when darkness and cold descend, we see and hear as if for the first time the ancient wisdom of Advent: The dark is not an end but the way a new beginning comes. Short, daily reflections that paint vivid, poetic images of familiar animals, paired with charming original wood-cuts, will engage both children and adults. Anyone who does not want to be caught, again, in the consumer hype of 'the holiday season' but rather to be taken up into the eternal truth the natural world reveals will benefit immensely from reading *All Creation Waits*. An informative and inspiring read from cover to cover, *All Creation Waits* is especially recommended to all members of the Christian community regardless of denominational affiliation. —**Midwest Book Review**

"Each of the beautiful creatures in this little book is a unique word of God, its own metaphor, all of them together drawing us to the One we all belong to. Adapting to the dark and cold they announce in twenty-four different ways the Good News of Advent: that through every dark door the creating Love of the universe waits." —**Richard Rohr, OFM**

"A wonderfully refreshing *sidelong* book that makes you stop and think and ponder and consider and contemplate and see not only Advent but your entire blessed life with new eyes. Which seems to me to be the whole point of any generous honest art. Which *All Creation Waits* most certainly is." —**Brian Doyle**, author of *Chicago*

"This book is a delight to savor and behold. I am someone who believes that the earth is our original monastery, and this worthy guide invites us intimately into the gifts of winter by exploring the rhythms of various birds, bees, and animals during the holy season of Advent. A lovely invitation into the quiet mysteries of darkness." —**Christine Valters Paintner, PhD**, author of *Illuminating the Way: Embracing the Wisdom of Monks and Mystics*

Illustrations





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One Great Love

An Advent and Christmas Treasury of Readings, Poems, and Prayers
Editors at Paraclete Press

Summary

Anticipate, wonder, and rejoice during the sacred days of Advent and Christmas with this elegant keepsake volume of stories, poems, prayers, and art from beloved writers and artists through the centuries.

This beautifully designed gift book weaves together some of the most cherished literature, scriptures, poems, and songs celebrating the sacred season of Advent and Christmas. From the ancient words of the prophet Isaiah to the timeless writings of Louisa May Alcott, Jane Austen, Henry Van Dyke, Charles Dickens, O. Henry, G.K. Chesterton, and Gerard Manley Hopkins, to contemporary voices such as Eugene Peterson, Luci Shaw, Gayle Boss, and Nikki Grimes, *The Advent and Christmas Treasury* provides a diverse and delightful assortment of readings to inspire reflection and bring us back to the real meaning of Christmas.

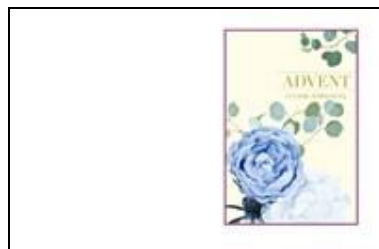
Perfect for reading aloud as a family, giving to a neighbor, friend, or fellow literature-lover, or simply reading on your own with coffee in hand, this book is an invitation to a slower, more meaningful approach to the season of hope.

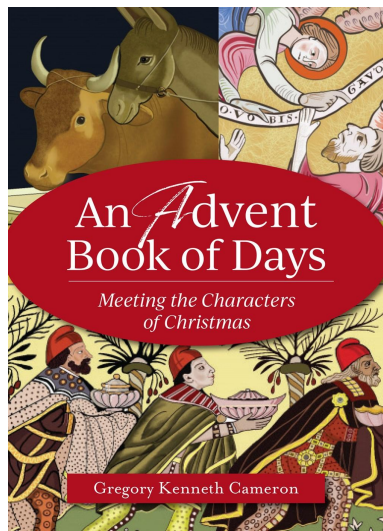
An ECPA 2023 Christmas Bestseller!

Quotes

"We featured this in last week's Advent newsletter but it dawns on me that some of these nicely presented pieces — not least the fiction excerpts from Louise May Alcott and Charles Dickens, and the holiday poems and prayers and promises — really can be used in a family setting, read out loud or passed around. The artwork is mostly classic, the print in a handsomely done, good sized font, the classy color making it a beloved holiday treasure for you and your children. From the ancient words of Isaiah to the timeless writings of Henry van Dyke, O. Henry, and contemporary poets (Gayle Boss, Eugene Peterson, Nikki Grimes and more), *One Great Love* is a fine and lovely book with a real assortment of readings. Not too much, not too fussy or heavy, this is a "just right" volume to have on hand for your family gatherings." — **Byron Berger**, Hearts and Minds Books, *BookNotes*

Illustrations





An Advent Book of Days

Meeting the Characters of Christmas

Gregory Kenneth Cameron

Summary

A Book of Days to nurture and inspire your soul this Advent

From December 1 to December 25, Gregory Kenneth Cameron invites you to partake in a daily feast for the eyes and the spirit. Rich reflections draw upon scriptures, history, and legend about the character of the day – Gabriel, the Virgin Mary, the Star, the Magi, and of course the Christ Child, paired with gorgeous illustrations from the author, adapted from famous works of art. Step into the tradition of *visio divina* inspired by the medieval tradition of the illuminated book of hours, and celebrate the many aspects and persons of the Christmas story through the centuries.

“It is my hope that these reflections, whenever they are read, will help us to discover new depths in the Christmas story, to deepen our faith, and perhaps even to learn something new or unexpected; because over two thousand years, the story of Christmas has become filled with unexpected delights arising from Scripture, history, legend and faith.” —**Gregory Kenneth Cameron**

Contributor Bio

Gregory Kenneth Cameron is the Anglican Bishop of St. Asaph in Wales. Gregory is married to Clare, a teacher of music, and they have three sons. He has a wide range of interests outside ministry and enjoys calligraphy, reading, and film—particularly science fiction. He has gained recognition as a coin designer in his spare time, creating three designs for the Royal Mint.

Excerpts

An Advent Book of Days: Meeting the Characters of Christmas
By Gregory Kenneth Cameron

INTRODUCTION

One of the most familiar scenes at Christmas is of the stable at Bethlehem, whether it be as a crib at home or in church, or perhaps acted out by the children in the local school or church.

St Francis is attributed with the invention of the Christmas crib scene, but every nativity scene assembles a group of characters, some ancient and some modern, which do not necessarily have an obvious similarity to the story of the birth of Jesus as it is told in either of its two versions, in the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Luke. Indeed, even these two Gospels offer very different accounts of the birth of Jesus, with different casts, albeit that the presence of the Holy Family remains at the heart of the drama.

Down through the centuries, new characters such as St Nicholas have joined the story and the celebration of Christmas and, in addition, new stories have been told or elaborated about the characters already there.

This book, which draws on the traditions of the medieval books of hours that brought together prayers for the noble patrons who commissioned them, is a Book of Days, numbering the days from the beginning of December until Christmas. This does not entirely match the season of Advent, which is calculated in a different way, but each chapter of this book can be assigned to one day in the month of December, from the 1st to the 25th. The intention is to revisit each of the characters that make up our Christmas story, and to discover what we know about them, and the stories we tell about them.

Each chapter offers an exploration that draws upon the Scriptures, history and legend



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in respect of the 'character' of the day – one of the people, places or things that have become integral to the Christmas story as it is commonly received. I have augmented this with my own illustrations that I have adapted from some of the most famous works of art depicting the characters of Christmas at different periods of history. This book also aims to provide some spiritual food to nurture readers through the journey of Advent.

There is no absolute reason why these reflections need to be tied to the calendar for December. The twenty-five chapters investigating the Christmas story could be used at other times in taking us on the journey to Bethlehem and offering a meeting with the characters who populate the nativity narrative. It is my hope that these reflections, whenever they are read, will help us to discover new depths in the Christmas story, to deepen our faith, and perhaps even to learn something new or unexpected; because over two thousand years, the story of Christmas has become filled with unexpected delights arising from Scripture, history, legend and faith.

+Gregory Llanelwy
Gregory K. Cameron, Bishop of St Asaph

DAY 1 ANNUNCIATION

The story of the birth of Jesus does not start at Christmas, or even with Advent. Instead it begins in the spring of each year – with an announcement. The date of Lady Day, 25 March, is the first day of the year in the old calendar and, for Christians, the Feast of the Annunciation. For obvious reasons, it is exactly nine months before Christmas Day. However, attention focuses on two characters who are central to the Christmas story – we are invited to reflect upon a girl who is to become a mother, Mary, and a creature of the supernatural, the Archangel Gabriel.

I
Luke is the only Gospel to tell us the inside story of the way in which Mary discovered her pregnancy. While Matthew tells the story from Joseph's point of view, Luke tells the story from the point of view of Jesus' mother – indeed, there is an ancient tradition that Luke had actually met Mary, and listened to her memories of Jesus' birth. For Luke, the Archangel Gabriel is sent from God 'in the sixth month' (of another pregnancy, that of Elizabeth) to announce that Mary is to bear Jesus, who will be 'great, and will be called the Son of the Most High' (Luke 1.32ff). Like Matthew, Luke clearly portrays Mary as a virgin at this stage of the story, despite her betrothal to Joseph, so Mary's reaction is one of dismay: 'How can this be?' Reassured of God's direct action to bring these things to pass, Mary makes the boldest of decisions: 'I am the Lord's servant ... may it be as you have said' (Luke 1.38).

II
It used to be believed that 25 December was chosen by the early Christians as the date for Christmas because they wished to appropriate the pagan feast day of 'Sol Invictus', the Unconquered Sun. In fact, the evidence is shaky, and the possibility is that the reverse is true and 25 December was chosen as a feast for Sol Invictus in order to compete with the Christian celebration of Christmas, while linking in to the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year, which fell a few days earlier, and when, to some minds, night fails to conquer the power of the day, and the days start to grow longer again.

There is every possibility that 25 March was identified as the date for the Annunciation *before* 25 December was chosen for Christmas. To some of the earliest calendrists (those who tried to sort out the mysteries of the earth's and God's calendar), 25 March, a date associated with the spring equinox, was the first day of creation, and therefore a fitting day to mark the conception of the Son of God. Until 1752, every new year was dated from 25 March, and it was traditionally known as 'Lady Day', a term that is still in use in the English legal system as one of the quarter days, when rents

were to be paid and debts settled.

III

For many ancient societies it was conception, not birth, that marked the start of a human life. It also marks the beginning of the central mystery of the Christian faith, the Incarnation, when God takes flesh and begins his dwelling among us. Not surprisingly therefore, the Annunciation became a major theme in Christian art, with all manner of angels greeting the Virgin Mary, who was reputed to have been disturbed in the middle of her prayers (which is why she is shown in this picture with her thumb keeping her place in her book).

Today's picture is based on a painting of the Annunciation by two Renaissance artists, Simone Martini and Lippo Memmi, and is housed at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. I chose this depiction, painted in 1333, because it seems to me that Martini is very clever at catching emotion by physical stance. Gabriel's cloak swirls outwards as he arrives, drops to his knees, and begins his greeting. The Virgin Mary physically seems to draw back in confusion at the angel's greeting, just as Luke describes her: 'much perplexed'. Blue seems to have become a favorite color for Mary's robes because in iconography blue is the color of heaven and of the divine. At the Annunciation, Mary is clothed with the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit, while her humanity peeps out in the red of her dress.

IV

The invitation and call of God to Mary to take on the role of mother of Jesus holds a fascination for Christians not only for their central place in the story of Jesus, but also because it speaks to us of vocation – God's call to us and his purpose for our lives. Mary's response, in accepting God's call, with all its challenges, therefore becomes a model of how we should respond when God calls us: 'May it be as you have said' (cf. Luke 1.38).

We, of course, are unlikely to be sent the Archangel Gabriel to make it plain to us what God wants of us, and fortunately there is probably no task for us as difficult as taking on the role of Mother of the Saviour of the World. However, Christians do believe that there will be a path that God wishes us to follow – if not exactly pre-ordained, then at least an invitation to fulfil the gifts and opportunities that he has given to us – and which becomes for us the path to fullness of life.

Let us pause to reflect, and pray this Advent that God will make his will for our lives clearer and plainer – and that he will assist us in giving the same answer as Mary: 'Your will be done.'

Lord of the Ages, who calls us to live into the fullness of life, and to discover our destiny in your will for our lives, help us to learn from the example of Mary who, though troubled by the message of the angel, was still prepared to say 'yes' to your will. Amen.

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Illustrations

DAY 4
THE HOLY SPIRIT



Hovering behind the interaction between Mary and Gabriel is the presence of the Holy Spirit, that mysterious person of the Holy Trinity at work in the world. Who is the Holy Spirit, and how is the Spirit present among us?

I

In Luke's Gospel, Gabriel speaks to Mary, promising that it is by the power of the Holy Spirit that her child will be conceived. In Matthew's Gospel, Joseph is assured in a dream that the child is simply "born of the Holy Spirit", but the emphasis in both Gospels is that the human Jesus comes into being as a result of the direct intervention of God. This is no normal human birth.

The words of Gabriel in Luke, which speak of the overshadowing of the Most High, echo the words of Genesis chapter 1 in which it is the Spirit of God that broods over the world and brings it into being: Jesus is God's new creation.

11

DAY 5
JOSEPH



When the news of Jesus' birth is announced by the angel, Mary is already betrothed to a man called Joseph. If the Gospel according to Luke is the tale of Mary, the Gospel of Matthew appears to tell the story from Joseph's point of view. Today we meet Joseph, called to be a father in a way he could never have anticipated.

I

There is no Gabriel here. Matthew simply records that, before they had become intimate, Mary was "found to be with child". Mary's pregnancy, then, is discovered before the betrothal couple had come together, so Joseph quite naturally determines to put Mary aside. He seems a decent sort, seeking to avoid

12

DAY 1
ANNUNCIATION



The story of the birth of Jesus does not start at Christmas, or even with Advent. Instead it begins in the spring of each year - with an announcement. The date of Lady Day, 14 March, is the first day of the year in the old calendar and, for Christians, the Feast of the Annunciation. For obvious reasons, it is exactly nine months before Christmas Day. However, attention focuses on two characters who are central to the Christmas story - we are invited to reflect upon a girl who is to become a mother, Mary, and a creature of the supernatural, the Archangel Gabriel.

I

Luke is the only Gospel to tell us the inside story of the way in which Mary discovered her pregnancy. While Matthew tells the story from Joseph's point of view, Luke tells the story from

1



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Happy Birthday, Christmas Child!

A Counting Nativity Book

Laura Sassi, Gabi Murphy

Summary

Join Mary and Joseph, angels, shepherds, sheep, and various stable critters as they celebrate the birthday of a very special baby in this rhyming counting book for little readers and their families.

Written by bestselling author Laura Sassi and illustrated by Gabi Murphy, *Happy Birthday, Christmas Child!* celebrates the warmth, wonder and excitement of the night Jesus was born. Written in gentle rhyme with bright illustrations and lots of things for little ones to notice and count, it's sure to be a Christmas favorite.

Intended for little ones ages 0 - 4 and their families, *Happy Birthday, Christmas Child* is:

- sturdy board book perfect for little hands
- a charming introduction to the wonder and joy of Christmas
- a spark for conversation about how Christmas is when we celebrate Jesus' birth
- a fun way for toddlers and preschoolers to practice counting and naming things
- a great gift option for Christmas, birthdays, baby showers, children's ministry, preschool programs and more
- an ECPA 2023 Christmas Bestseller

Visit happybirthdaychristmaschild.com for lots of wonderful free resources – plan a birthday party for Jesus, activity pages, and more!

Contributor Bio

Laura Sassi has a passion for telling stories in prose and rhyme. She is the author of multiple books for young children including the best-selling *Goodnight, Ark*, which was a 2015 Christian Book Award Finalist; *Goodnight, Manger*; *Diva Delores and the Opera House Mouse*, which is a 2021-2022 Iowa Goldfinch Award Nominee; *Love Is Kind*, which was a 2020 Anna Dewdney Read Together Award Honor Book; *Little Ewe: The Story of One Lost Sheep*, *Bunny Finds Easter*, and *Happy Birthday, Christmas Child!*, her new counting board book.

Laura had a successful teaching career before becoming a children's author. She's been a homeschool mom, children's ministry director, historic museum interpreter, and more. She writes daily from her home in New Jersey and finds special joy in pointing kids to God and to good through story and sharing her love of reading and writing at school visits, church gatherings and other events.

Quotes

"A fun and engaging introduction to the Christmas story." —**School Library Journal**

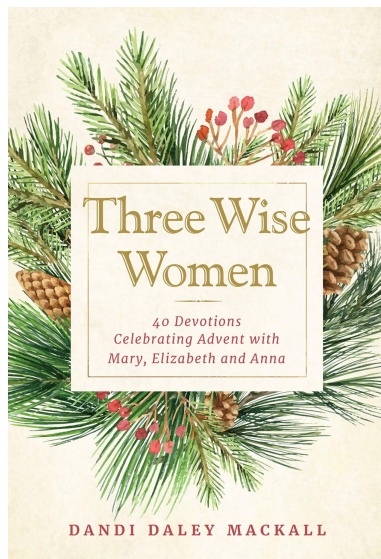
"You will not be able to read this book without smiling! Every single page of this counting Christmas offering from Laura Sassi is filled with delight. From one stable to ten tiny toes, this book is a joyous, fun, interactive way to celebrate the season with little ones." —**Glenys Nellist**, author of *Snuggle Time Christmas Stories* and *Good News! It's Christmas!*

"A creative re-telling of a timeless story—young children will smile with the turn of each page." —**Christine Voegeli**, Director of Children's Ministry at New Providence Presbyterian Church

"*Happy Birthday, Christmas Child* has everything I'm looking for in a faith-based picture book—lilting rhymes, a sweet story, and, most importantly, Biblical truth! It deserves a place in your holiday book basket." —**Kristin Wynalda**, creator of Big

Illustrations





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Three Wise Women

40 Devotions Celebrating Advent with Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna

Dandi Daley Mackall

Summary

You are invited to spend the 40 days of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany in the company of Mary the mother of Jesus, Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, and Anna the prophetess at the temple in Jerusalem.

Anticipate, celebrate, and marvel at Jesus' birth with *Three Wise Women*, a richly researched and faith-building new devotional by Dandi Daley Mackall. We don't hear many details directly from these three women at the heart of the first Christmas, but Scripture, studies in biblical culture, and an open heart that asks "what if" allows readers to experience new revelations for the holy season that will encourage and strengthen you in becoming a wise woman of God.

As bestselling author Dandi Mackall reflects on the events and lives of these *Three Wise Women*, she encourages you to:

- Delve deeper into what these real-life women may have experienced
- Ponder a new aspect of the journey toward Christ's birth and beyond through the voices of Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna
- Meditate on Old and New Testament Scriptures that speak to women's hearts across generations and cultures
- Grow closer to God through insightful devotional readings about Patience, Hope, Faith, Trust, Persistence, Sacrifice, Joy, Grace, Love, Confidence, and more
- Reflect on your own life using the daily "Pondering Questions," as you see the story of Jesus' birth afresh through the eyes of faithful women
- Join with other women in a small group or Bible study to take a faith journey together with *Three Wise Women*

An award-winning author, speaker, and passionate scholar of the Scriptures, Dandi shares her heart for Jesus and her own faith journey through this inspired and timely devotional. Beautifully designed with a two-color interior, *Three Wise Women* is the perfect book to accompany all believers through this holy season of the year, a lovely early Christmas gift, and an excellent resource for women's Bible study groups.

An ECPA 2023 Christmas Bestseller!

"Dandi Mackall has done something important, and beautiful, and good, calling her readers to ponder anew this miraculous season when the gift of all gifts was bestowed upon us all, and to do so through the eyes of the blessed women involved. This is a wonderful book." —Bret Lott, author of *New York Times* bestselling book *Jewel* and *Letters and Life: On Being a Writer, On Being a Christian*

Visit threewisewomenbook.com for a study guide, journal, and more free resources to enhance your Advent devotions!

Contributor Bio

Dandi Daley Mackall is the award-winning author of over 500 books for children and adults. She visits countless schools, conducts writing assemblies and workshops across the United States, and presents keynote addresses at conferences and young author events. She is also a frequent guest on radio talk shows and has made dozens of appearances on TV. She has won several awards for her writing, including the Helen Keating Ott Award for Contributions to Children's Literature, the Edgar Award, and a two-time Mom's Choice Award winner. Dandi writes from rural Ohio, surrounded by her writer-husband, Joe, their three children and their families, plus horses, dogs, cats, a turtle, a tortoise, and more.

Quotes

"There is something so calming, so thoughtful, so—forgive me—wise about this book that it seems as though it's been here among us for a long time already: a Christmas devotional that brings to us the lives of the three women most important to the birth of our savior: Mary, Elizabeth and Anna. Dandi Mackall has done something important, and beautiful, and good, calling her readers to ponder anew this miraculous season when the gift of all gifts was bestowed upon us all, and to do so through the eyes of the blessed women involved. This is a wonderful book." —**Bret Lott**, author of *New York Times* bestselling book *Jewel* and *Letters and Life: On Being a Writer, On Being a Christian*

"Dandi Mackall tells the story of Jesus' birth from the perspectives of Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna in these devotions, allowing readers to imaginatively inhabit the thought world of first-century Middle Eastern women. The three wise women emerge as gentle, strong, and deeply faithful. Each reflection is accompanied by Bible verses, questions to ponder, and a brief prayer." —**The Christian Century**

"Chills and tears and just WOW. *Three Wise Women* is a stunningly beautiful perspective of the three women who take part in the most transformative event of all time, the birth of Christ. Dandi has breathed life and emotions into the portraits of these women as they experience the miracle of the greatest gift this world has ever known. We feel their fear and faith, their worry and wonder, their loneliness and love as they walk through the days that changed the world forever. And by walking with them, I know that we will be changed forever too." —**Amy Parker**, Bestselling, Award-Winning Children's Author and podcast host

"The selection of relevant content from both the Old and New Testaments will refresh Biblical truths for those who have repeatedly walked the road to Bethlehem. Yet this same Scriptural base will provide a solid factual framework for those who have barely heard the voices of these three women. I especially appreciated the rich word pictures of life in Middle Eastern culture at the time of Jesus' birth. Journal entries oozed authenticity as I recalled the imminent urgency to deliver a child as felt by Mary, identified with Elizabeth's loneliness as her husband served God or reclined at the end of the day with the elderly Anna. In the Author's Note, Dandi Daley Mackall invites us to 'draw deeper into the heart of God.' I accepted her invitation to join the *Three Wise Women* and was blessed." —**Dr. Mary Manz Simon**, award-winning author, consultant and speaker

"In *Three Wise Women*, author Dandi Daley Mackall offers readers an insightful volume that can be used for study and reflection through the liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. Each day's reading has a particular focus which includes pertinent Biblical passages and references, a devotional, and questions for reflection which are capped by a short prayer. The author beautifully weaves the stories of Mary, mother of Jesus, Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, and Anna the Prophetess in a way that beckons readers to accompany them in their journey of faith and informs and deepens understanding of their lives. Whether used for personal study or shared with a friend or group, *Three Wise Women* encourages a daily practice which can nurture lives and promote spiritual growth." —**Tish Gayle**, Inscribed Books & Gifts (Cincinnati, OH)

"Paraclete Press is a premier publisher of ecumenical books with a liturgical and sacramental perspective; their Advent and Lenten books are not just staples for us, but true joys to promote. We stock almost everything they do and, in this case, we're delighted for this lovely book by an author who is known for doing charming children's books, YA stuff, and delightfully evangelical resources for Christian living. This may be her most sophisticated project yet and yet it carries her grace and insight. Writing from rural Ohio, she help us, as she says, "anticipate, celebrate, and marvel" at Jesus's birth. I suppose this is designed mostly for women readership, but you know us — we'd recommend it to anyone who needs this Biblical content, this encouragement, this bit of healthy calm, published in a handsome hardback. It has illustrations and even a ribbon marker, making it a very nice gift." —**Byron Borger**, Hearts and Minds Books

Illustrations





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Share the Joy! A Christmas Lift-the-Flap Book

Keep Jesus at the Center this Advent & Holiday Season with This Rhyming Storybook about the Nativity for Children Ages 0-4

Valerie Ellis, Sergio de Giorgi

Summary

It's Christmas, and there is so much to be excited about! This lift-the-flap book helps kids explore and share all the fun, love, and true joy of this special time of year.

This first book from author, speaker, and mom Valerie Ellis celebrates all the wonderful things that bring us joy at Christmastime! Charming rhymes and vibrant illustrations will entice little readers to lift the flap to learn even more about how they can help make Christmas special for others, and share the gift of Jesus's birth with everyone.

Intended for children ages 0-4 and their caregivers, *Share the Joy!* is:

- an 8X8 inch, sturdy and colorful board book with engaging, durable flaps — perfect for excited, busy little hands
- a wonderful introduction to the joy of giving and receiving at Christmas
- a fun way to help parents teach ideas like generosity, kindness, and empathy to sensitive young hearts
- filled with rhythmic, rhyming language little ears will love
- a great gift for Advent or Christmas, birthdays, baby showers, children's ministry, preschool programs, church nativity plays, and more
- an ideal children's library, nursery, and preschool resource

Contributor Bio

Valerie Ellis is a children's book author, speaker, and founder of the multi-author online resource *Our Everyday Parables*, which offers book reviews and parenting ideas for families pursuing faith and compassion. A certified teacher, Valerie is passionate about helping kids and parents connect with God and each other in the everyday moments. Her upcoming books are designed to serve families at the intersection of faith and fun. Valerie is also a nonprofit consultant, trainer, and grant proposal writer in the Houston area, where she lives with her husband, Josh, and their two boys. For more information, visit ValerieEllis.com and connect with Valerie at @iamvalerieellis.

Sergio De Giorgi was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where he currently lives with his wife Viviana and two daughters, April and Emma. As a young child, he dressed up in his superhero costume to explore his neighborhood, jumped over rooftops, and went home to write and draw about his superhero adventures. He has never stopped drawing. When his first daughter was born in 2000, he started writing and illustrating for children. In his free time, Sergio enjoys designing and manufacturing wooden and paper toys.

Quotes

"*Share the Joy!* is the perfect way to invite children to celebrate Advent by giving one another our presence, instead of getting lost in the consumer fever of presents that do not last." —**Chris Seay**, Pastor of Ecclesia Houston and author of *Advent Conspiracy*

"With its fun, lift-the-flap design and beautifully vibrant and diverse illustrations, *Share the Joy!* encourages little ones to seek and celebrate the true joys of Christmas: the love of family and friends, giving and thanksgiving, and—most of all—the celebration of the Savior who 'changed the world with His great love!' A must for Christmas!" —**Tama Fortner**, ECPA award-winning and bestselling author of more than fifty books

"Kids will delight in their favorite Christmas activities, and parents will love the 'share and serve' twist revealed under each flap. *Share the Joy!* is a perfect way for little hearts to learn that Christmas is about more than treats and gifts." —**Christie**

Thomas, Christian parenting coach & award-winning children's book author

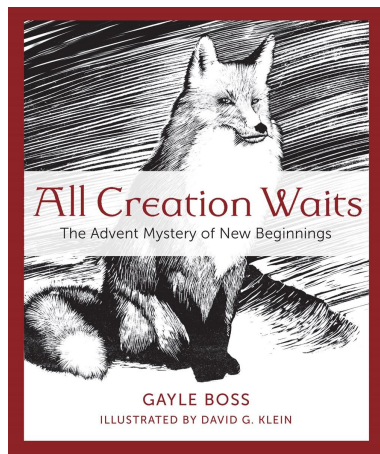
"What a delightful Christmas offering from debut author Valerie Ellis! With interactive lift-the-flaps and a focus on kindness and generosity, *Share the Joy!* truly is a joy to share with little ones." —**Glenys Nellist**, author of over thirty children's titles including *Good News! It's Christmas!* and *Snuggle Time Christmas Stories*

"With sweet, playful language and vivid illustrations, *Share the Joy!* encourages a heart for generosity in even the youngest children. By modeling sharing during regular Christmas traditions, children's favorite holiday is repositioned as a Christ-centered season of missional love. A perfect book for every family's Christmas collection!"
—**Lindsey Schultz**, Children's Ministry Director, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, East Side, New York City

Illustrations







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All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings

The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings

Gayle Boss, David G. Klein

Summary

From the bestselling author of *Wild Hope* — a beautiful book for Advent.

Open a window each day of Advent onto the natural world. Here are twenty-five fresh images of the foundational truth that lies beneath and within the Christ story. In twenty-five portraits depicting how wild animals of the northern hemisphere ingeniously adapt when darkness and cold descend, we see and hear as if for the first time the ancient wisdom of Advent: *The dark is not an end but the way a new beginning comes.*

Short, daily reflections that paint vivid, poetic images of familiar animals, paired with charming original wood-cuts, will engage both children and adults. Anyone who does not want to be caught, again, in the consumer hype of “the holiday season” but rather to be taken up into the eternal truth the natural world reveals will welcome this book.

An ECPA 2023 Christmas Bestseller.

Learn more about *All Creation Waits* and find free resources at AllCreationWaits.com

Contributor Bio

Gayle Boss writes in Michigan, where she was born and raised. Her life-long love of animals and her immersion in spiritual texts and practices have melded in poems and essays that explore how relationships with animals specifically, and an attentive presence in the natural world generally, restore us to our deepest selves. The mother of two grown sons, she lives in Grand Rapids with her husband.

David G. Klein is an award-winning graphic artist with illustrations for the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, Random House, Tor Books, DC Comics, and Marvel. He is a graphic novelist, printmaker, engraving artist, and co-founder of Brooklyn-based Point Made Animation.

Quotes

"This is the book I gave to my family and friends two Christmases ago in hard copy. It is one of the most beautiful books I have ever seen and so deeply moving with the story each day from December 1 to December 25 about what it takes for different animals to get through the winter cold. This book is something to share with your family or even alone to touch something that is very rare, and so real and heart-rending." —**Trina Paulus**, author of *Hope for the Flowers*

"Gayle Boss writes lovingly about animals in their habitats using rich and lyrical language. Children will learn—and be awestruck—as their parents read about creatures they know, and don't know. I'm certain families will make reading this lovely book together a yearly tradition, whether they observe Advent or not. *All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings* is a beautiful addition to any family library." —**Deborah Heiligman**, author of *Charles and Emma: The Darwins' Leap of Faith*, a National Book Award Finalist

"This book reminds me of what St. Paul tells us in Romans 8:19—All creation waits! In this invigorating view of Advent the contrasts are beautifully presented—between darkness and light, waiting and arrival, sleeping and waking, human and animal creatureliness. The stories and illustrations partake of the kind of reality Christ exemplified in his Advent...How helpful it is to join the animals during their Advent waiting." —**Luci Shaw**, Writer in Residence, Regent College, author and poet

"To be awake in the world each winter is to sense loss, to know the weight of waiting. This book's illustrations and descriptions of the winter habits of 24 animals are gentle lessons in biology—about how lactic acid pools in the bloodstream of a turtle or a porcupine's gut digests wood. But the animals are also a metaphor for faith, and the final chapter explores the meaning of a God who became incarnate 'as a child at home among animals' for the sake of a creation that still waits." —**Christian Century**

"*All Creation Waits: The Advent Mystery of New Beginnings* showcases twenty-five fresh images of the foundational truth that lies beneath and within the Christ story. In twenty-five portraits depicting how wild animals of the northern hemisphere ingeniously adapt when darkness and cold descend, we see and hear as if for the first time the ancient wisdom of Advent: The dark is not an end but the way a new beginning comes. Short, daily reflections that paint vivid, poetic images of familiar animals, paired with charming original wood-cuts, will engage both children and adults. Anyone who does not want to be caught, again, in the consumer hype of 'the holiday season' but rather to be taken up into the eternal truth the natural world reveals will benefit immensely from reading *All Creation Waits*. An informative and inspiring read from cover to cover, *All Creation Waits* is especially recommended to all members of the Christian community regardless of denominational affiliation. —**Midwest Book Review**

"Each of the beautiful creatures in this little book is a unique word of God, its own metaphor, all of them together drawing us to the One we all belong to. Adapting to the dark and cold they announce in twenty-four different ways the Good News of Advent: that through every dark door the creating Love of the universe waits." —**Richard Rohr, OFM**

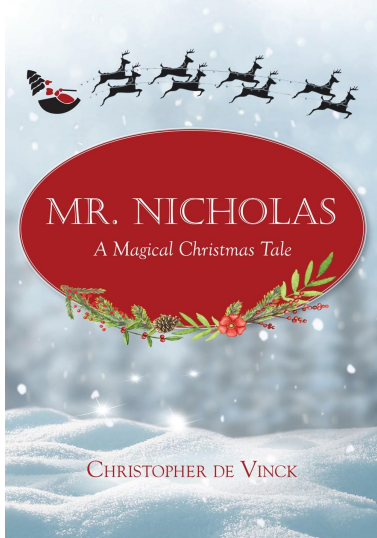
"A wonderfully refreshing *sidelong* book that makes you stop and think and ponder and consider and contemplate and see not only Advent but your entire blessed life with new eyes. Which seems to me to be the whole point of any generous honest art. Which *All Creation Waits* most certainly is." —**Brian Doyle**, author of *Chicago*

"This book is a delight to savor and behold. I am someone who believes that the earth is our original monastery, and this worthy guide invites us intimately into the gifts of winter by exploring the rhythms of various birds, bees, and animals during the holy season of Advent. A lovely invitation into the quiet mysteries of darkness." —**Christine Valters Paintner, PhD**, author of *Illuminating the Way: Embracing the Wisdom of Monks and Mystics*

Illustrations



"May the charm of this little book add to the beauty of your neighborhood."
—From the foreword by Joanne Rogers, wife of Fred Rogers



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Mr. Nicholas

A Magical Christmas Tale

Christopher de Vinck, Joanne Rogers

Summary

A story that helps us see the unique goodness in each person.

Every town has its secrets. When it becomes known that Mr. Nicholas, the eccentric owner of the local hardware store, is somehow involved with reindeer, toys, and children, the town becomes more and more suspicious that this man is more than just a clerk on Main Street.

JB, a clever, open ten-year-old boy with Down syndrome, is able to figure out the secret from the first time Mr. Nicholas gives him a chocolate deer wrapped in gold foil.

JB's father and mother, both cynical and on the brink of divorce, follow the adventures of JB as he flies on the back of a reindeer, feeds Mister Rogers's fish, and defines what can be forgotten by those who are too busy to remember the magic of Christmas, cuckoo-clocks, and love.

Contributor Bio

Christopher de Vinck, husband, father, and grandfather, earned his doctoral degree from Columbia University and devoted 40 years to his career in public education. He is the author of countless essays for the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Chicago Tribune*, *National Catholic Reporter*, *Dallas Morning News*, *USA Today*, *Reader's Digest*, and *Good Housekeeping*, and thirteen books including the bestselling *The Power of the Powerless: A Brother's Lesson of Love* about his severely disabled brother Oliver and the difference Oliver made in this sometimes jaded world.

De Vinck's books have won two Christopher Awards, the 2021 Illumination Book Award's Gold Medal in the category of Christian Living, and "Best Column" by the National Catholic Press Association. He still believes in Santa Claus.

Quotes

Praise for Mr. Nicholas

"In this book about Christmas, written by one of Fred Rogers' closest friends, you will see how *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* spoke to the broken parts of who we are and how it guided us to see the unique goodness in us all. May its charm add to the beauty of your neighborhood." —**Joanne Rogers**

"In Christopher de Vinck's novel *Mr. Nicholas*, a hardened newspaperman's life is rocked by a small boy's love and an encounter with a mysterious old man. On his way to interview a beekeeper, Jim sees Anna's car clinging to the edge of the road. He stops to help, and they connect—as if each were tapped into the same current. But once married, their differences open a gap between them. Anna suggests that a baby could bridge that gap. But when JB is born with Down syndrome, Jim's rejection of his son leads Anna to file for separation. Jim feels disappointed in his career; he faces a sad and lonely Christmas. Gradually, though, the time he spends with his son opens his eyes to a world in which magic is real and everyone is worth loving. Anna cannot see the changes in Jim, and when JB goes missing, she blames him. She suspects that JB's friend, Mr. Nicholas, a scavenger and owner of a hardware store that hides a mystery, is responsible, too. Told in Jim's voice, this is a story about the power of a boy's relentless love. Tense and stressful at first, it makes the changes in Jim palpable through his inner reflections, his conversations with others, and through small actions that reveal his growing love for his son. Suspense grows as Mr. Nicholas comes under investigation for JB's disappearance. Jim questions the old man, who asks him some probing questions in return. In the book's satisfying conclusion, Jim realizes the importance and beauty of the ordinariness that makes life worth living and gives Christmas its true meaning. Sensitive and heartwarming, Mr. Nicholas is a magical

Christmas story in which lives and hearts are changed by a small boy's unconditional love." —**Foreword Reviews** (September / October 2021)

"Sensitive and heartwarming, *Mr. Nicholas* is a magical Christmas story in which lives and hearts are changed by a small boy's unconditional love." —**Episcopal Journal**

"I just finished reading *Mr. Nicholas*. I found it to be an endearing story and one which touched my heart. JB's character, with his freedom, imagination, trust, and uncomplicated love, teaches readers, and his parents, the relevance of Jesus' exhortation to "turn and become like children" (Mt 18:3). And, this is most definitely a story of turning. I really appreciate the way in which JB and Mr. Nicholas intuitively work as a team to open the eyes of Jim and Anna and to help them grasp the unifying power of love — JB's love, their own love. Jim's tears at the end of Chapter 15 are the realization of the turn. I hope many families will enjoy this wonderful tale. And, I would not be surprised if it has a healing effect for some in fractured relationships."

—**Stephen Dalton**, Head Librarian, Theology and Ministry Library at Boston College

Praise for Christopher de Vinck

"De Vinck's point of view about life and love and children and teachers is important for the world at this near end of a sorry century. I would like as many people as possible to know his work." —**Madeleine L'Engle**

"Chris de Vinck is a blessing through his writing and his person. I'm grateful for his simple wonders, and the great wonders of our lifelong friendship." —**Fred Rogers** (Mister Roger's Neighborhood)

"We sometimes fall into the habit of thinking that the weakest among us, like your brother Oliver, are a burden we must stoically bear. But you show that they can teach us the deepest lessons of love. Your writing will help many people to recognize this truth." —**President Ronald Reagan** (Unsolicited letter from the President when he was in the White House)

"Christopher de Vinck's love of family and respect for its values shine out of every page he writes. I recommend his thoughtful, generously caring essays to every person who is looking for reassurance that the virtues and verities of the committed life are still alive and well in America." —**Eunice Kennedy-Shriver**

"Excellent and often very moving essays." —**John Updike**

"For years I've been reading Chris de Vinck's essays in newspapers, magazines, journals and books. Here at last is de Vinck—father, teacher, dreamer—under one roof! Now, instead of spending all that time photocopying his articles for friends, I can just send the book." —**Jim Trelease**

"Christopher de Vinck's writings are widely and wisely attentive; they neglect neither the failures and anguish nor the compassion and hope of this world. They are elegant. They give insight and comfort. They cannot help but nurture the spirit." —**Mary Oliver**

"Christopher de Vinck has the insight and the courage to speak for those small devotions, dangerously unfashionable in our time, by which a human community lives." —**Wendell Berry**

"In a time of great international upheaval, full of violence and war, Chris de Vinck's reflections are like a little oasis of peace. More than any other author I know, Chris has the unique gift of revealing the beauty of the ordinary, the truth hidden in the small events of life, and the light shining through the brokenness of our daily existence. This book is a true gift of peace and an urgent call to discover that peace right where we live." —**Henri Nouwen**

"Christopher is the rare combination of art and innocence. He's ever the sophisticated artist and he is even the person whose innocence belies our common conception of artists. Few spiritual writers write with as much literary talent and as much care for the

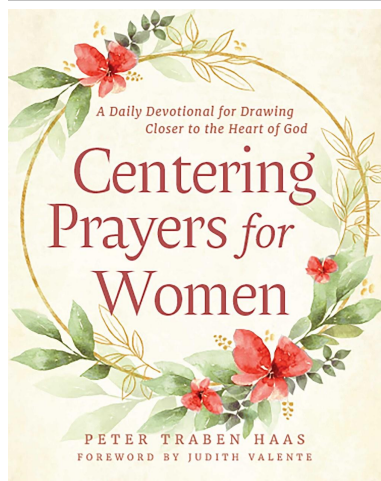
literary quality of what they are doing." —**Ron Rolheiser**

"Chris de Vinck's real subject is magic, the magic to be found in ordinary life, in a conversation with a child, in the unexpected sighting of a school of dolphins. Such magic is there for all to see, but I don't know of another writer who sees it so wholly, with such consistency, and respect, and sweetness. He is like a miner who digs where others see no gold, and who each day finds riches." —**Peggy Noonan**

"These are the wonderful, thoughtful and sensitive and lyrical and personal reflections of a teacher, a poet, an essayist, but most of all a wise and human pilgrim who has a lot to offer the rest of us, his fellow pilgrims." —**Robert Coles**

"Charles Lamb comes to mind when I think of Christopher de Vinck. Here is a true affinity across more than a hundred years. Who today but de Vinck has that charm, delightful humanity, laughter and wisdom? Rare the writer who does, so we must treasure Christopher." —**May Sarton**

Illustrations



Centering Prayers for Women

A Daily Devotional for Drawing Closer to the Heart of God

Peter Traben Haas, Judith Valente

Summary

Centering Prayers for Women is a collection of 365 daily prayers for moments of silence and meditation, in a beautiful new edition especially for women. In the midst of busyness and noise, and being pulled in many different directions, Centering Prayers for Women provides a moment of deep quiet, to draw closer to the love of God. The love, warmth, and peace that radiate from these brief daily prayers spring from the ancient Christian practice of contemplative prayer.

Centering Prayers for Women is:

- A book of simple, gentle daily devotions to grow our awareness of God’s presence
- An invitation to find peace and stillness, to listen and just be
- Ideal for centering your mind and heart at the beginning of the day, or at bedtime, to calm anxiety
- An ideal gift for anyone who feels lost, doubting, or fearful, anxious, or needs reassurance of the intimate love of God
- A helpful tool for letting the noise of the world recede and entering a prayerful space
- Structured by the natural seasons of the year, and includes special prayers for holy days

Rooted in Scripture and timeless Christian wisdom, these open-hearted prayers are rich in imagery, helping us connect with God as Living Water, Source, Sustainer, Living Gate, Love, Wisdom, Beauty, Strength in Life, Abba, Eternal Listener, Grace-giver, God of Gentle Power, Beloved Source of Security, and more. Centering Prayers for Women is a perfect companion for a personal retreat, or to pray with others in community.

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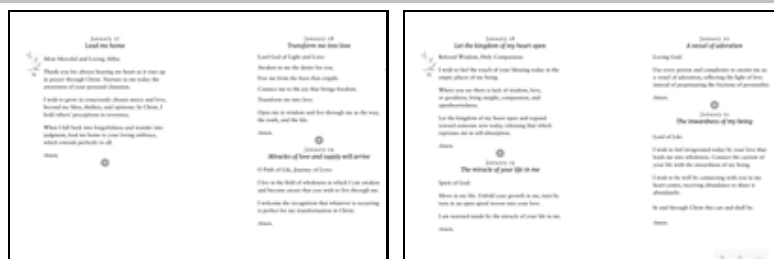
320 Pages
Grades 12 And Up
Religion / Christian Living
REL012020

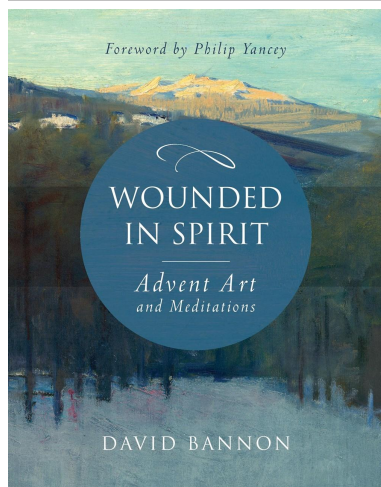
6.5 in H | 5.3 in W | 0.6 lb Wt
Status: **ACTIVE**

Contributor Bio

Rev. Dr. Peter Traben Haas is an ordained Teaching Pastor in the Presbyterian Church (USA). Peter earned a B.A. from Moody Bible, an M.Div. from Princeton Seminary, and a Doctorate of Ministry from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. His primary aim as a pastor and author is to strive to convey, interpret and apply biblical wisdom and truths so that readers and hearers are edified and nurtured on their journey deeper into Christlikeness.

Illustrations





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Wounded in Spirit: Advent Art and Meditations

A 25-Day Illustrated Advent Devotional for the Grieving with Scriptures and Stories Drawn from the Works and Lives of Artists, Poets, and Theologians

David Bannon, Philip Yancey

Summary

When celebrating Christmas does not come easily, David Bannon offers a book of reflection, beauty, and hope.

Christmas is difficult for many of us. While some are expressing joy, others are re-living painful memories and reminders of loss. This book is a journey of beauty and meditation for those for whom ordinary Advent devotionals could never help.

David Bannon writes from profound personal experience. His reflections provide a way to commune with Scripture and with God. These are paired with beautiful paintings created by wounded artists, including Gauguin, Tissot, Caravaggio, Tanner, Delacroix, Van Gogh, and Dürer. In their wounds, and from our own, we may once again encounter "God with us."

Based on the latest research in history and grief, *Wounded in Spirit* also returns to where Christian art began. From mourning in Roman catacombs to works of the masters, Bannon leads us to join the world's great artists on their pilgrimages of brokenness. This is a book of hope.

Contributor Bio

David Bannon taught college for many years and publishes on art, history, culture, and translation. He has appeared on The Discovery Channel, A&E, and The History Channel and has been interviewed by NPR, Fox News and *The Wall Street Journal*. He has lectured at libraries and museums and was curator of Asian art for the Florence Museum of Art and History in South Carolina. The present book is a result of the author's own brokenness, wounds and grief: he was convicted on felony charges in 2006; his daughter, Jessica, died in 2015. David currently lives in South Carolina with his wife and their cat, Yeti.

Quotes

"For those who are hesitant to leap into the good news too quickly, David Bannon's book of Advent art and reflections will be a valuable resource. 'We are so accustomed to rushing through life,' says the author in the introduction. Bannon, who has a felony conviction and whose adult daughter died in 2015, has lived through the realities of failure and grief. In this book, he intersperses carefully curated photos of Christian art with his own reflections on the artists—their lives, their tragedies, and their persistent hopes. Bannon also evokes an honest grappling with grief by including brief quotations from a variety of thinkers: Carl Jung, Annie Dillard, Terence Fretheim, Isabel Allende, Elie Wiesel, Julian of Norwich, Simone Weil, N.T. Wright, and Søren Kierkegaard make appearances. Particularly evocative are the excerpts from Friedrich Rückert's poems, which Bannon translates here into English for the first time: *Do not wrap yourself around the night, / bathe it in eternal light. / My tent is dark, the lamp is cold, / bless the light, the Joy of the World!*" —**Elizabeth Palmer**, *Christian Century*

"This glorious full-size hardback book (with a wonderful foreword by Philip Yancey) is the most beautiful devotional book of the season. Each meditation is paired with a moving reproduction of classic art, nicely reproduced on rich, glossy paper. In this mature and artful presentation, it reminds us of the early (now out of print) Paraclete classic *God With Us*. (That is still available in the "readers edition" that omits the artwork and remains one of our best-sellers in recent years with its literary ruminations and poetry and mature reflections.) Like that one, this is a treasure to behold. *Wounded in Spirit* stands out not only because of the subtly lavish design but because of its amazing content and spirit. David Bannon writes from profound personal

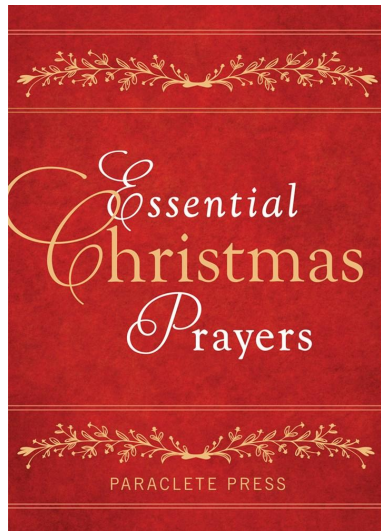
experience, offering ways to commune with God through Scripture. He also tells some poignant stories of artists who lived through great pain. He himself has gone through some very odd stuff, and much grief. His adult daughter died of a drug overdose even as his own professional life was in difficulty. I could review this book in great detail, but I suppose you get the picture – it is very handsome, mature, thoughtfully spiritual and honest about the great brokenness of our lives, of our society, of our times. This book will inspire in the deepest, truest sense of the word as it evokes ways to be honest about our sadness and helps us find God’s comfort (and joy) in this season. That is uses artwork to help us get there is such a blessing as sometimes words just fail. This book is a gift for the hurting, but a gift for any of us who feel what we feel these days.”

—**Byron Berger**, Hearts and Minds Books (Dallastown, PA)

“‘Christmas can be a time of joy but also of tears, memory and prayer. Celebration does not always come easily.’ So describes *Wounded in Spirit: Advent Art and Meditations*, a gorgeous full-color art book to help the grieving get through the season...If you like art and find that it feeds your soul, and you are struggling with grief as Christmas approaches, this may be the Advent book for you. Every day there is a new artist, with one or two examples of their work and several quotations about grief and loss and love. Here’s a two-page spread of a typical day’s meditation. The liturgical season of Advent begins this Sunday, December 2, but the book is organized by the month of December, with the daily reflections beginning on December 1 and ending on Christmas Day. Instead, the book focuses on what was going on in the lives of the artists themselves. The answer: a world of pain. Some of the artists profiled here are famous for their suffering, like Vincent Van Gogh, whose infamous ear mutilation happened the day before Christmas Eve. But many are painters I’ve never heard of, and their stories are heartbreaking...As Richard Rohr puts it in one of the book’s well-chosen quotations, ‘I think your heart needs to be broken, and broken open, at least once to have a heart at all or to have a heart for others.’ This Advent, may you work through grief and beauty simultaneously. God is good.” —**Jana Riess**, author of *Flunking Sainthood*, Religion News Service

“This book summons an almost visceral response in its brilliant counterpoint to the customary understanding and celebration of Advent and Christmas. In the arena of wounds and griefs, though each experience is unique, we are joined in our humanness, finding common ground. The word sympathy means being together in profound distress. Art makes such anguish visible. Commentary penetrates and elucidates. These meditations and images are a marvelous gift.”—**Luci Shaw**, Writer in Residence, Regent College, author and poet

“*Wounded in Spirit* has become my guide.” —**Philip Yancey**



Essential Christmas Prayers

Paraclete Press

Summary

This beautiful collection of inspiring holiday prayers will bring back heartwarming memories and open new understanding of the sacred season. Many of us feel a little closer to our faith during the Christmas season—even those without a regular faith practice. Around us, people are talking about peace on Earth and goodwill towards all, while deeply rooted Christmas rituals and traditions and familiar prayers speak to our hearts—a refreshing respite in this age.

Contributor Bio

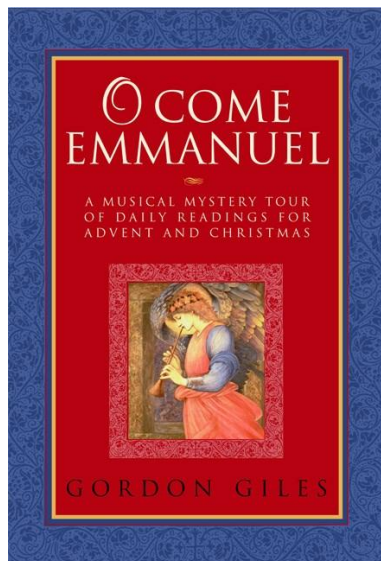
The Editors of Paraclete Press are committed to offering inspirational texts to encourage readers on their spiritual journey.



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Status: **ACTIVE**



O Come Emmanuel: A Musical Tour of Daily Readings for Advent and Christmas

Gordon Giles

Summary

Make Christmas special this year by exploring the legends, message, and theology behind some of your favorite carols and hymns. This book of daily devotions will take you from December 1 to January 6, from the first days of Advent, through Christmas, ending at Epiphany. Each day, Gordon Giles invites you to draw closer to God through spiritual and historical explorations of beloved, familiar music.

As you read and reflect, you will be asked to consider the meaning of some of the famous Christmas carols that we sometimes sing without a passing thought. You will be introduced to obscure saints as well as living poets and musicians of faith, and you will hear the timeless truths of love and forgiveness, pain and loss, darkness and light.

Quotes

"If, like me, you have always been confused by the imagery of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas,' you will find this book both compelling and illuminating. Gordon Giles has selected a kaleidoscopic mixture of musical settings of scripture, hymns and carols, from Gibbons to Taizé, Plainchant to Kendrick, via Bach, Berlioz, Vaughan Williams, Menotti and many others. He writes with engaging insight and perception, providing us with material for reflection, prayer and meditation." —**John Scott**, Organist and Director of Music, St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, New York City

"If you've ever wondered about the origins of a favorite Christmas carol, you'll enjoy this book, subtitled *A Musical Tour of Daily Readings for Advent and Christmas*. Like most devotionals, the book offers daily readings and meditations. It goes from the beginning of December to the Feast of the Epiphany on Jan. 6. The centerpiece of each day's reading, however, is an exploration of the history and spiritual significance of a beloved piece of Christmas music." —**Mary A. Jacobs**, *Dallas Morning News*

"*O Come Emmanuel: A Musical Tour of Daily Readings for Advent and Christmas* by Gordon Giles is a handy spiritual book for the holidays. This pretty paperback of 165 pages contains song lyrics and poems, a reading and a prayer for each day from Dec. 1 to Jan. 6. It's bound to add to the reader's appreciation for the holy days, and you can keep it and read it with the family every year, finding something new each Christmas season." —**Record-Courier**

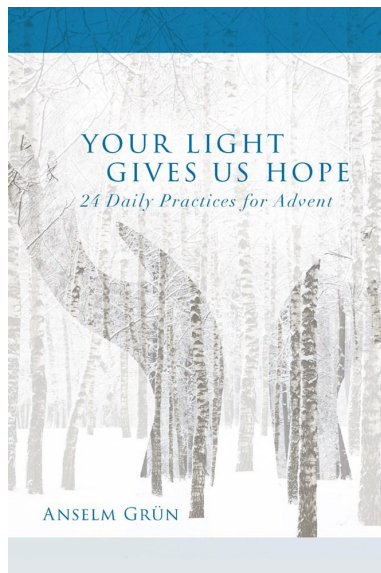


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Wt

Status: **ACTIVE**



Your Light Gives Us Hope

24 Daily Practices for Advent

Anselm Grün

Summary

Celebrated author and Benedictine monk Anselm Grün offers a daily reader of very simple and often quite direct Advent reflections. Anselm Grün shows the reader how to approach the festive season consciously, making it a blessed time for ourselves and our families. He draws on his experience as a spiritual director to offer practices for personal devotion or for family prayer for each day of Advent. Also included are special reflections for the Sundays of the season. Anselm Grün's titles have sold more than 15 million copies in 30 languages. This title brings his spiritual wisdom to American readers who are eager for a new voice among titles for the Advent and Christmas season.

Contributor Bio

Anselm Grün, OSB is a German Benedictine monk, Cellerar of Münsterschwarzach Abbey. He teaches courses and lectures, offers spiritual direction, and is author of approximately 300 books focusing on spirituality, which have sold more than 15 million copies in 30 languages.

Quotes

"A daily reader of very simple and often quite direct Advent reflections. Anselm Grün deftly shows the reader how to approach the festive season consciously, making it a blessed time for ourselves and our families. He draws on his own personal experience as a spiritual director to offer practices for personal devotion or for family prayer for each day of Advent. Also included are special reflections for the Sundays of the season. *Your Light Gives Us Hope* brings the spiritual wisdom of Anselm Grün to a new generation of American readers who are eager for a new voice for celebrating the Advent and Christmas season." —**Midwest Book Review**

"Father Grün is a very well-known author of both adult and children's books, especially in Europe. His courses on formation and his ministry of spiritual direction are universally appreciated—he's sold over 15 million copies of his many books in over 30 languages! He brings to mind, at least in this regard, the irony of Thomas Merton, a huge, best-selling author and public speaker known the world over, despite his having been a Cistercian who took a vow of silence, and was usually silent when at his Abbey. In any event, Grün is known as gentle, still, man, and his calm spirit is nearly felt in his books; this one is no exception. He invites you to come 'face to face with the God who loves you' and he helps illuminate a path towards that encounter by helping you learn to experience, to practice, even in our waiting. Each chapter, in fact, pairs a Scripture, an Advent tradition, and a simple practice. Some may think this is too simple but it is deceptively so. His psychological insight, his theological rigor, and his Biblical warmth and wisdom makes this book a very nice way to help Jesus come daily into our own hearts, even as He comes into the whole world." —**Hearts & Minds**

"An excellent guide." —**The Leaven**

"Translated from German, *Your Light Gives Us Hope* is separated into short chapters that direct readers to practice mindfulness during the hectic weeks leading up to Christmas. Readings connect the Rule of Benedict with Scripture and tales of the angels, prophets and the saints...Grün, a German Benedictine monk and author, notes Advent as a 'premature celebration of Christmas' and—keeping mindfulness in mind as a practice in addition to a theory—most of the chapters give suggested practices to connect with God through stillness and reflection that tie into the day's theme, all the way through to the end of Advent, which Grün marks as a new beginning. Grün's afterword is notable in its length and in its reach to address some of the deeper spiritual and psychological factors that drive addictions and compulsions, which can prevent starting anew, drawing on his experience as a counselor and emphasizing



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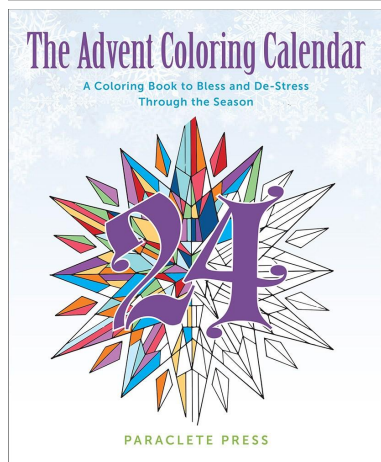
112 Pages
Ages 0 And Up
Religion / Holidays
REL034020

8.5 in H | 5.5 in W | 0.5 lb Wt
Status: **ACTIVE**

beginning again through healing.” —***Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette***

“Recover the original meaning of Advent as a time of stillness, waiting and watching. Fr. Anselm Grün illuminates a path for his readers through the days leading to Christ’s coming at Christmas, but also to his daily coming in our hearts. Twenty-four meditations on Scripture and Advent traditions are paired with simple practices to help all of us experience more intentionally Christ’s saving power in our lives.”

—**BuildFaith.org**



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\$11.99
Coloring Book

64 Pages
Art / Color Theory
ART007000

8.5 in H | 7 in W | 0.3 lb Wt
Status: **ACTIVE**

The Advent Coloring Calendar

A Coloring Book to Bless and De-Stress Through the Season

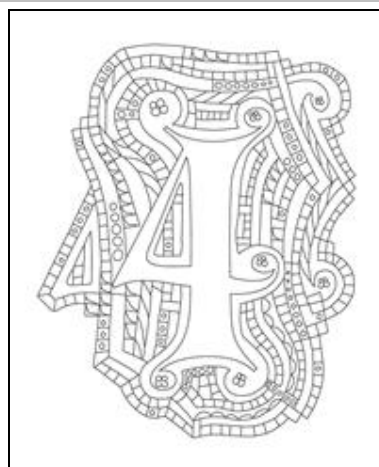
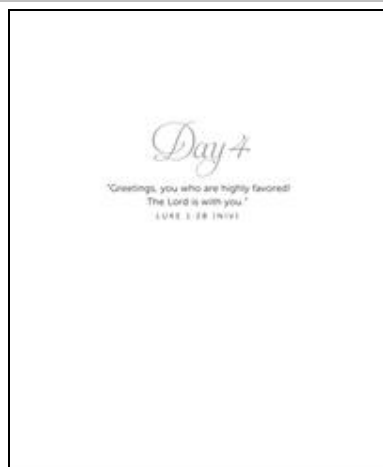
Paraclete Press

Summary

Find some relief from the stress of the season with this fun and artistic new way to count the days until Christmas! *The Advent Coloring Calendar* will provide a daily dose of peace and focus. Create something beautiful by coloring a pattern for each of the 24 days before Christmas.

"Sometimes coloring is just coloring. To put crayons to paper and create a rainbow of marks and swaths is relaxing, playful, and maybe even artistically satisfying. But sometimes coloring is more. To put colored crayons, markers, or pencils to paper is to create a pathway to the numinous. Coloring invites the body and the senses into an experience of inner stillness. While the hand moves, the mind and the body slow down. The heart and the ears open carving a space for rich silence and an opportunity for God to speak." —**Sybil MacBeth**, author of *Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God*

Illustrations





That Baby in the Manger



ANNE E. NEUBERGER *Illustrated by Chloe E. Pitkoff*



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That Baby in the Manger

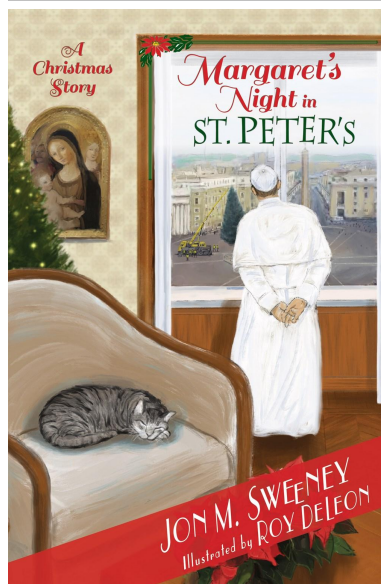
Anne E. Neuberger

Summary

That Baby in the Manger is a children's Christmas picture book with a needed message about inclusion and acceptance of cultural differences. As the children of a small church struggle with the portrayal of the Holy Family in the Nativity scene as European—not Middle Eastern and not necessarily like them—they learn more about Jesus's love for all children.

Contributor Bio

Anne E. Neuberger has been a freelance author of children's stories, books, activities and curricula for over 25 years. The majority of this has been for religious education, including books on Saints Kateri Tekakwitha and Francis of Assisi, as well as ongoing work for the Maryknoll Classroom Program. You can also see her work at www.anneneuberger.com.



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Juvenile Fiction / Holidays &
Celebrations
JUV017010
Series: The Pope's Cat
8.5 in H | 5.5 in W | 0.3 lb Wt
Status: **ACTIVE**

Margaret's Night in St. Peter's (A Christmas Story)

Jon M. Sweeney, Roy DeLeon

Summary

Margaret — The Pope's Cat — is back! Illustrated in full color.

Bang! Slam! Boom! Loud sounds in St. Peter's Square had been going on for nearly an hour already. Margaret was annoyed, because as you may know, cats like to sleep. A lot.

The apartment where Margaret lives with the Pope, ever since he adopted her off the streets of Rome, looks out onto St. Peter's Square. And the noises down there kept waking Margaret up.

She rolled over, covering her ears with her paws.

A few minutes later, the sounds began again, as more trucks arrived to unload even more chairs. *Beep, beep, beep, beep* went the trucks as they backed up to where men in yellow jackets were waiting to unload them. Then came *Bang! Slam! Boom!* all over again, as the men arranged the chairs in rows facing the portico of St. Peter's Basilica.

All of this was in preparation for a special event to take place the following day, Christmas.

In this delightful new story from their lives, the Pope takes Margaret on a tour of St. Peter's. But when he's called away to work, Margaret gets lost in the world's largest church. She meets saints, children, tourists, and the artist Michelangelo's famous statue, The Pieta, before being reunited with the Pope as Midnight Mass is about to begin.

Contributor Bio

Jon M. Sweeney's popular history, *The Pope Who Quit*, was optioned by HBO. In addition to *The Pope's Cat* series for children, he's the author or translator of many other books including *The Complete Francis of Assisi*, and *Francis of Assisi in His Own Words: The Essential Writings*, often used in classes, book groups, and for individual study by people around the world wanting to know more about St. Francis of Assisi. Jon lives in Milwaukee with his wife, daughters, and cats.

Roy DeLeon is an Oblate of Saint Benedict, spiritual director, yoga instructor, graphic designer, and professional visual artist in Seattle. He is also author of *Praying with the Body*.

Quotes

"So beautifully written and illustrated! I think that children and adults will love this book." —**Msgr. Charles Pope**, "Morning Glory" radio show, EWTN, December 10, 2018

"This beautiful book is a love letter to the church, to Christmas, to Rome, and to St. Peter's Basilica—and not just for children!" —**James Martin, SJ**

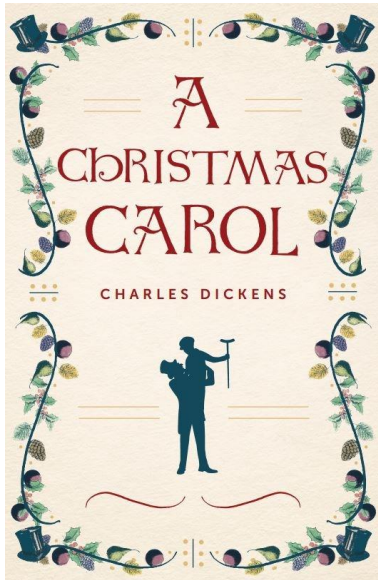
"What could be more endearing than a charming and curious stray cat? It could only be the cat that's been adopted by the pope and has free run of the Vatican at Christmastime: Margaret! This enchanting and beautifully illustrated storybook will tickle your fancy! I highly recommend it to children and adults alike!" —**Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle**, EWTN TV host and author of *Angels for Kids* and *Our Lady's Message to Three Shepherd Children and the World*

"Have you ever wished you could celebrate the wonder of Christmas within the beauty

of the Vatican? Take a step inside St. Peter's Basilica with the Pope's special friend Margaret the cat and see the Church's celebration of the Nativity with fresh eyes and a glowing heart. Jon Sweeney playfully invites us into another adventure featuring exquisite color illustrations by Roy DeLeon. Sensational!" —**Lisa M. Hendey**, founder of CatholicMom.com and author of the *Chime Travelers* series

"A cute introduction to life at the Vatican for children ages 6 – 10." —**Today's Catholic Homeschooling.com**

"This series about Margaret, the cat and her best friend, the Pope, may be intended for young readers but the gentle stories will delight any adult. Margaret has free rein in the Vatican and through her eyes we can enjoy the Christmas celebrations taking place there, in the middle of Rome. You know what they say about cats and curiosity? Well, Margaret is true to her species which will lead her to a new adventure in the very heart of St. Peter's. This is the perfect book (Christmas present?) for anyone ages 4 — well, any age. It will warm the heart." —**Brenda Repland**, *Eyes on World Cultures*



A Christmas Carol

Charles Dickens, John Leech

Summary

Includes illustrations from the original 1843 edition by "The Man Who Invented Christmas" – Charles Dickens!

This paperback edition of Charles Dickens *A Christmas Carol* recaptures the charm of the first edition — a perfect stocking stuffer.

A lovely gift book for anyone who doesn't yet own the timeless classic. Who can resist the story of the bad-tempered Ebenezer Scrooge's transformation into a kinder and more loving version of himself? The visiting ghosts of past, present, and future? The deeply good Bob Cratchit and his son Tiny Tim? Create or revive a tradition and gather to read this classic tale each and every year.

The original engravings by John Leech make this a gift that all will treasure!



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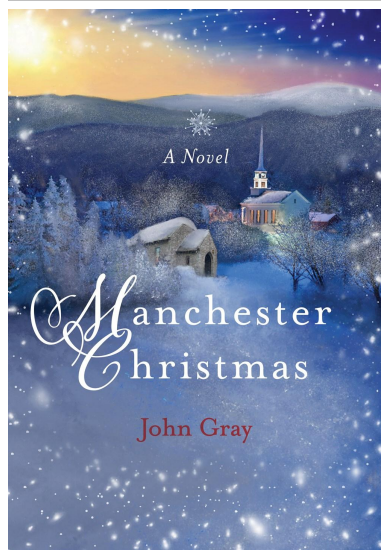
125 Pages
Black and white illustrations
Ages 0 And Up
Fiction / Holidays
FIC058000
8.5 in H | 5.5 in W | 0.3 lb Wt
Status: **ACTIVE**

Contributor Bio

Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was a well-loved, Victorian-era British author and social critic. He wrote numerous works that are now considered classics and created some of the best-known fictional characters of all time.

Quotes

"Paraclete Press has created a stocking stuffer sure to convey the holiday spirit—an affordable paperback edition of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* featuring the illustrations that adorned the first edition 173 years ago. Dickens introduced readers to heartless Ebenezer Scrooge, his kind-hearted clerk, Bob Cratchit, lame Tiny Tim and host of spirits in "A Christmas Carol in Prose, Being a Ghost-Story of Christmas" back on Dec. 19, 1843. With themes of rebirth and redemption, *A Christmas Carol* helped accelerate social reform in 19th-century England - particularly regarding such issues as debtors' prisons and workers' rights. Dickens gave readings from *A Christmas Carol* during book tours. He read from his holiday tale before a sold-out crowd of 1,300 at the old Haynes Opera House and Music Hall at the corner of Pyncheon and Main streets in downtown Springfield on March 20, 1868. Dickens walked about the streets of Springfield, staying at the Massasoit House, now the site of the Paramount Theater, and spent some of his time checking out the boat houses along the Connecticut River. He left by train for Worcester to continue a grueling tour of America, which biographers believe contributed to his death two years later." —**Ray Kelly**, *The Republican*



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Manchester Christmas

A Novel

John Gray

Summary

"Sweet, romantic, and suspenseful, *Manchester Christmas* is an unexpected gift."

—**Richard Paul Evans**

#1 New York Times Bestselling Author of *The Christmas Box*

A young writer is drawn to a small New England town in search of meaning for her life. Soon, she encounters kindness, romance, and is pulled into a mystery centered on an old, abandoned church and the death of a special girl. Are the images that only she can see in the church's stained-glass windows a warning, or is someone trying to reach her, to help heal this broken community? *Manchester Christmas* illustrates how God often uses the most unlikely among us to spread grace and healing in a wounded world. Full of love, hope, and forgiveness, this debut novel from an Emmy-winning writer will touch your heart and have you longing for Christmas in Manchester.

Contributor Bio

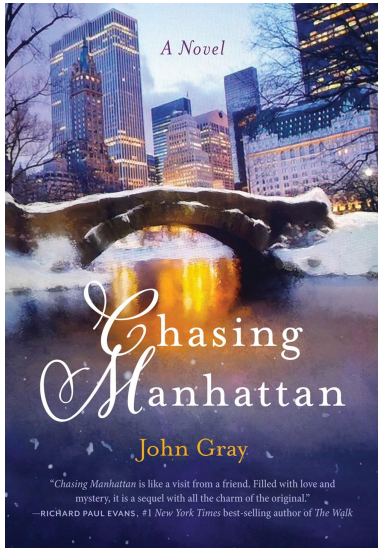
John Gray is an Emmy Award-winning television journalist and columnist in upstate New York, and the author of three popular children's books, *God Needed a Puppy*, *Keller's Heart*, and *Sweet Polly Petals*, and his debut novel, *Manchester Christmas*. John's books have captured the hearts of readers around the world. His heart shines through his uplifting stories, teaching children that kindness is the path to happiness. John donates a generous portion of book sales to help others; he has given \$30,000 to more than 50 animal shelters around the country. John is a father of three and lives in upstate New York with his wife, Courtney, and their five dogs; three of which are rescues.

Quotes

"Sweet, romantic, and suspenseful, *Manchester Christmas* is an unexpected gift." —**Richard Paul Evans**, #1 New York Times Bestselling Author of *The Christmas Box*

"Stuffed to the seams with wholesome holiday cheer, *Manchester Christmas* is an adorable Christian romance set in a snow globe-worthy small town in Vermont. At the beginning of the fall, Chase, a cute-as-a-button writer, drives her convertible from Seattle to Manchester with her adorable dog, hoping to fulfill her deep yearning for pastoral life. Within moments of arriving, Chase is embroiled in a love triangle with two of the town's most eligible bachelors: Owen, a widowed real estate agent and single parent to a boy on the autistic spectrum, and Gavin, a hunky farmer with a master's degree. Their tight-knit community doesn't believe in privacy, and soon, Chase's love life is the talk of the town. Then she rents a rehabbed church and discovers that its rare Tiffany glass windows have the ability to communicate with her. As she grows to trust the windows' messages, Chase enters a new relationship with a God, who has her best interests at heart. For all of its crisp maple leaves, perfect waffles, aww-shucks dialogue, and shabby chic descriptions, *Manchester Christmas* also takes on serious questions about what "home" means to Chase. She's depicted as independent, sassy, and in search of a sense of belonging; one of the novel's most satisfying turns is in her budding bond to the god she sees in the church windows. This is an apple-pie-sweet Christian romance, complete with tender kisses, fireflies, and just the right amount of conflict, as well as a distinctive cast of supporting characters who nudge Chase along as she figures out what she wants, and who she's living for. *Manchester Christmas* is a seasonal fantasy that doesn't worry too much about reality as its characters find new ways and reasons to rub noses in the snow." —**Foreword Review**

Illustrations



Chasing Manhattan

A Novel

John Gray

Summary

From the bestselling author of Manchester Christmas comes a new adventure full of love, generosity, and heart-pounding intrigue.

Following the runaway success of her first novel, Chase Harrington is hiding in Manhattan. Assuming the visions from her past are behind her, Chase takes an assignment that lands her in the center of a new mystery surrounding a mansion known as Briarcliff Manor and deceased millionaire Sebastian Winthrop.

A letter, left by Sebastian, reveals three secrets surrounding the mansion where Chase is now living. Silent messages begin to appear, urging her to help those closest to her who are now in peril, including a deaf child shut away from the world and a war veteran still haunted by his past.

With her handsome boyfriend, Gavin, and faithful dog, Scooter, at her side, Chase must unlock the secrets of Briarcliff, help those she has come to love and face the surprise ending not even she saw coming.

This latest Chase Harrington adventure is so full of romance, kindness, mystery, and astounding twists and turns, it will leave you wanting to grab a flashlight and best friend, to go searching for clues in the dark.

Contributor Bio

John Gray is an Emmy Award-winning television journalist and columnist in upstate New York. He is the author of three popular children's books, *God Needed a Puppy*, *Keller's Heart*, and *Sweet Polly Petals*. *Manchester Christmas* is his debut novel, soon to be followed by *Chasing Manhattan*. John's books have captured the hearts of readers around the world. He always donates a generous portion of book sales to help others. John is a father of three and lives near Albany with his wife, Courtney, and their five rescue dogs.

Quotes

"*Chasing Manhattan* is one of the rare books where the sequel lives up to the first book. Chase and Gavin's adventures are the perfect read for those that love New York City, a great mystery, and a little something special that pulls it all together." —**Dana Perino**, Fox News, and *New York Times* bestselling author of *Everything Will Be Okay*

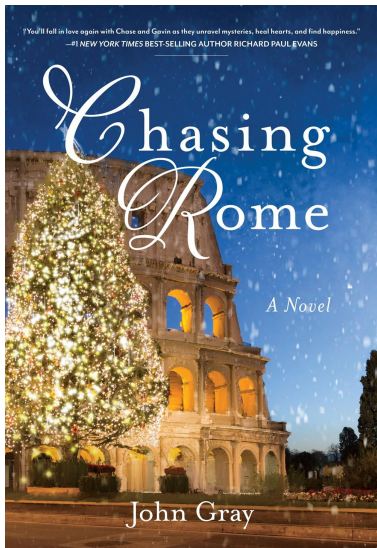
"*Chasing Manhattan* is like a visit from a friend. Filled with love and mystery, it is a sequel with all the charm of the original." —**Richard Paul Evans**, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Walk*

Illustrations



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Chasing Rome

A Novel

John Gray

Summary

From John Gray, bestselling author of *Manchester Christmas* and *Chasing Manhattan*, comes the third novel in a heartwarming trilogy full of charm, romance, and mystery.

Always blazing their own path, newly engaged couple Chase and Gavin decide to forego a typical American wedding, followed by a honeymoon in Italy. Instead, they'll spend the month of December in Rome with a local Italian family, learning the customs and exploring every romantic adventure they can find.

On a trip to the famed Colosseum, Chase and Gavin meet an elderly artist who offers them four riddles that he promises will unlock the most romantic places in all of Italy. As the couple deciphers each clue, they are taken from the canals of Venice to the Bridge of Sighs over the Tiber, to a monastery on the Island of Elba — meeting others who are struggling with secrets, love, and loss. They encounter heart-pounding intrigue and old-world charm on the ancient streets of Rome, and discover that almost nothing is as it seems. Will Chase and Gavin make it to their wedding on Christmas Eve or will they forever find themselves *Chasing Rome*?

Contributor Bio

John Gray is an Emmy Award-winning television journalist and columnist in upstate New York. He is the author of three popular children's books, *God Needed a Puppy*, *Keller's Heart*, and *Sweet Polly Petals*, and the Chase Harrington novels: *Manchester Christmas*, *Chasing Manhattan*, and *Chasing Rome*. John's books have captured the hearts of readers around the world. He always donates a generous portion of book sales to help others. John is a father of three and lives near Albany with his wife, Courtney, and their four rescue dogs.

Quotes

"From the windswept vineyards of Tuscany to the piazzas of Rome, you'll fall in love again with Chase and Gavin as they unravel mysteries, heal hearts, and find happiness." —#1 *New York Times* bestselling author **Richard Paul Evans**

Excerpts

Chasing Rome: A Novel

By John Gray

CHAPTER 1

You Take the Biscuit

There are more than six thousand languages spoken in the world and Chase Harrington was proficient in exactly one: English. Yet, no translation was needed to understand the snarky look she was getting from the neatly dressed barista at the Sciascia Caffè in the Prati neighborhood of Rome.

Chase and her fiancé, Gavin, boarded a flight out of JFK the evening before, just as Jeopardy was coming on the television at the airport bar. After nine sleepless hours on the plane, a six-hour time change, and a bumpy cab ride into Italy's capital city, she needed an immediate influx of caffeine to make this day possible.

It was two in the afternoon on a crisp December day when faded brown floorboards that no doubt had been cut and nailed in place more than a century ago were creaking and whispering secrets under Chase's light feet. She noticed, the moment she walked

in, that this coffee house was nicer than the ones back home, with its ornate wood molding, an exposed brick wall, and large chunky furniture that dared you to sit.

"Did I pronounce it wrong? Do you call a cappuccino something else here?" Chase asked politely.

The barista remained still as a statue, his frozen gaze fixed on Chase's lovely, albeit tired face.

Just then, a different voice chimed in, "He won't give it to you, luv."

The words, in an alluring accent, came from an attractive young woman with long red hair who was seated at a small table to Chase's left.

Chase turned to the lady with the charming brogue and asked, "Why not?"

The redhead put her newspaper down now and replied, "Cappuccino is never served this late in the day in Rome. Better to get a coffee."

Before Chase could change her order, the front door to the café flung open and a tall, handsome man stepped halfway in.

"Are you good, babe?" he said, turning every head in the place.

It was Chase's fiancé, Gavin Bennett, holding a brown leather leash that led to her Australian shepherd, Scooter.

"Yes," Chase replied, a bit flustered. "Just trying to get the hang of ordering something to drink in Italy. We've been here less than an hour and I've already broken a rule."

She could see Gavin's confusion but waved him away with her hand, saying, "I'm fine. Be right out."

Gavin flashed that broad, disarming smile and replied, "Sounds good. Hey, can you grab me a coffee, hon?"

Chase turned back to the waiting barista and said, "Forget the cappuccino. Two coffees, please."

The man immediately smiled, then turned his back to Chase and got busy working at a large silver machine with enough shiny knobs to launch a space satellite. There were hissing and banging noises that for some reason reminded Chase of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. The Oompa Loompa spun back around and placed two small cups on the counter in front of Chase.

"Here we are, that is two euros," the barista said in perfect English.

"Oh, so we do speak American, eh?" Chase said with a hint of mischief in her voice.

The barista didn't crack a smile but gave Chase a quick wink with his right eye. Chase reached into her jacket pocket and pulled out a fistful of strange-looking coins and currency.

"They gave me this at the exchange counter after we landed," she said, hoping the man in the apron could offer some assistance.

Chase looked at the redhead, who was enjoying the show from her table, and said, "I'm a shopkeeper's dream, the silly American who doesn't know what anything costs and will probably pay fifty bucks for a drink."

The woman replied, "Not to worry, Antonio is very honest."

Chase looked back to the barista and said, "So, you're Antonio. Nice to meet you."

The barista plucked coins from her open hands and said to Chase, "These are each worth one euro. I'm taking two."

Chase smiled, answering, "Thank you, Antonio. Let me give you a tip."

The barista stepped back as if she had offered him poison, raising both hands in front of him.

"Not allowed," he said firmly.

Chase, then mumbling to herself, "Wow, okay. So, no cappuccino after noon and no tipping, got it."

As Chase was about to go outside with her two coffees, she turned to the redhead and said, "Thank you for the help earlier. I'm Chase."

The woman, wearing a white knit sweater and jeans, rose from her seat and extended her hand to shake, answering, "Riley, and you're welcome, luv."

Chase smiled, asking, "Is that an Irish or Scottish accent?"

Riley feigned a shocked expression and raising her voice, "Oh, St. Francis on a bicycle, my poor granda must be spinning in his grave back in County Cork. That's Ireland, dear."

"Gran-what?" Chase replied.

"Da, Gran-Da, that's my grandfather," Riley explained.

Chase nodded, "Gotcha. Well, I love the accent and your name, very pretty."

Riley folded her arms and replied, "You wouldn't think so if you knew the rest of it."

Chase had to ask, "The rest?"

"O'Reilly, is me last name, believe it or not, as you Americans say."

Chase trying not to smile, then said, "So, your name is Riley O'Reilly?"

"It's worse than that," she answered. "My full name is Ophelia Riley O'Reilly."

Chase chuckled, then said, "So, if we use your first initial?"

"That's right," she replied. "My name is O. Riley O'Reilly. My da had a sense of humor."

The thought of it made both women share a laugh.

Chase liked this stranger and smiled warmly, saying, "I have to run, but it was really nice meeting you, Riley."

Just then the door opened, and Gavin poked his head back in again. "Not to be a bug, but it's chilly out here."

Chase set down the coffees, ran to the door, and grabbed Gavin by the hand. "This is my fiancé, Gavin. And Gavin, this is Riley."

Gavin extended his hand to shake hers, saying to Chase, "We just landed and you're already making friends."

Riley grasped Gavin's hand with both of hers and exclaimed, "Stop it, now. I've seen some dingers in my day, but you take the biscuit."

Gavin couldn't help but laugh out loud, "I'm sorry. What?"
"The biscuit, what you'd call the cake," Riley explained, adding, "And dinger means good-looking."

Chase intervened, saying, "I think she's calling you a stud muffin, babe."

Riley laughed and replied, "I don't know that expression, but she sounds about right."

Riley's eyes then darted down to the floor looking at Chase's dog. "And who have we here? Is he Irish? He looks a wee bit Irish."

Gavin answered, "Australian, actually. His name is Scooter."

Riley bent down on one knee to see the pup's face and rub his head, saying, "Sorry your gal is leaving you out in the cold, Scooter. I could talk the hind leg off a donkey if you let me."

Gavin looked at Chase, then whispered, "A donkey?"

Riley rose and looked at the happy couple, explaining, "Old Irish saying. Just means I'm a chatterbox."

Gavin picked up the small drinks Chase had just purchased, asking, "What's this?"

The cups were much smaller than a normal cup of coffee and filled with a dark black liquid.

Riley, again in her thick Irish accent, explained: "I saw the whole thing, Gavin. She tried, but ordering drinks in Italy can be a bit tricky if you don't know the lingo."

Gavin and Chase just stared at Riley, enjoying her accent and personality.

Riley continued. "Here you can only get cappuccino in the morning, and if you ask for coffee you get espresso."

Chase looked at Gavin and said sarcastically, "You read ten books on life in Italy and somehow you missed that chapter?"

Riley poked her red head in between them and whispered, "What you want to order is a Caffè Americano."

"And that's coffee?" Gavin asked.

"Not exactly," Riley answered. "But close."

Gavin looked at his watch. "Hon, we should, you know?"

Chase agreed. "I didn't realize it was that late."

Riley, curious now, asked, "What hotel you staying in? Is this your honeymoon?"

Chase held up her left ring finger to reveal the Tiffany's diamond Gavin had given her the year before. "Engaged, but that's why we're here, to be married."

Riley gave Chase and Gavin an unexpected hug, "Well, good on you both then."

Gavin explained, "We're actually not staying at a hotel. Chase thought it would be

more fun to stay with a family for a few weeks and learn the culture. So, we'll be in a home in the Monti neighborhood of Rome."

Riley lit up. "Very nice indeed, and not so far from the Vatican, if you fancy a chat with the Pope."

Chase finished her strong drink in one gulp, put the cup down on the table, then said, "It was so nice to meet you, Riley. I hope I see you again."

Riley returned to her seat and replied, "This is my spot most afternoons at two."

Riley sipped her own drink, then added, "And it was nice to meet you both."

Outside the café, Chase and Gavin spied a large orange taxi sign on a metal pole at the corner. They didn't stand more than two minutes before a car arrived and a stout man in a wool cap stepped out to open the door for Chase.

Gavin fished a small piece of crumpled yellow paper from his jacket pocket. Speaking slowly, he read aloud, "Via dei Capocci, number eleven."

The driver didn't respond. Instead, he returned to the front seat, put the car in gear, and off they went. A few blocks into the trip the driver turned and said in almost perfect English, "Three minutes. You weren't too far."

Chase smiled at the driver and asked, "Do most people in Rome speak English?"

She saw him nod his head up and down in the rearview mirror, before answering, "Sì. I mean yes. Most."

Both Gavin and Chase were mesmerized by the beauty of the architecture as they slowly made their way down the streets of Rome. Some Gothic, most with a Greek vibe. Occasionally they'd come to an abrupt halt and the driver would gently tap on the horn to get someone's attention.

Double-parking was common on Rome's narrow streets, and the two of them swallowed hard as the cab squeezed through passages that appeared too small to fit.

When three minutes were up, the driver double-parked himself and said, "Eleven on Via dei Capocci."

Chase paid him in euros and the pair emerged from the cab holding hands. The building looked like many of the brownstones back in Manhattan, with a red brick façade and a thick tile roof, serving, now anyway, as a landing pad for a half-dozen noisy birds.

"Tell me again what we're doing here?" Gavin asked facetiously, as he looked up at the building.

Chase turned to meet his eyes, "Come on, anyone can stay at the Marriott. I want to feel like we're a part of it."

Gavin, answered back: "By staying with strangers in a strange place?"

Chase sighed now, asking, "Since when are you NOT up for an adventure?"

Gavin could see disappointment in her face and quickly snapped out of his funk, answering, "You're right. You're always right. This could be fun."

Chase then shifted to a more serious tone, saying, "And remember, Mr. Bennett, you have the most important assignment of all."

Gavin smiled. "I know, you want me to plan a month of romantic adventures."

Chase then spun in a circle on the cobblestone sidewalk with her arms extended to each side, saying, "And with all of Italy to choose from, the options are endless."

Gavin looked up at the building again, asking, "You sure about this place? The lady of the house barely spoke English on the phone, and she sounded—"

"Rude?" Chase finished his thought.

"I was going to say, um, what's the word?" Gavin added. "Joyless."

Chase took his hand again. "Perhaps we can bring her some joy then. Besides, if we want real Rome, this is the place—I can feel it."

Gavin replied, "And she's okay with Scooter staying?"

Chase answered, "I told her about him, and she said fine."

Just then, the two of them heard an older woman clear her throat from above. Both sets of eyes traveled up the front of the building to a tiny balcony where a woman in a modest house dress stood with her arms folded like a proctor giving an exam.

"Are you two going to talk all day or get in here?" the woman called down with a heavy Italian accent.

Curly gray hair framed her wrinkled face and dark, sad eyes.

"Not too late for the Marriott," Gavin mumbled to Chase, as he looked up at the woman hovering above like a hawk on a tree branch.

Then a different voice called out from behind, "Ignore her, she's just mad that I didn't clean up after breakfast."

Gavin and Chase turned to find a beautiful woman a bit older than Chase with long dark hair, full lips, and dusty brown eyes.

She said in a welcoming tone, "I'm Francesca. That's my mother-in-law barking at you. Let's go in before she dumps water on the three of us."

Chase squeezed Gavin's hand, and with Scooter in tow the three began their Italian adventure. They didn't know that the moment they stepped through that door, they'd be walking into a mystery filled with hope, loss, and endless love.

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Illustrations



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Jesus's Story

Editors at Paraclete Press

Summary

In simple language and with sweet illustrations that young children will love, this book retells the stories of Jesus. Share in the excitement of the night that Jesus was born, his baptism by his cousin John and the calling of his friends, the fishermen who were to become his disciples!

Join Jesus as he shares the loaves and fishes with the crowds, and celebrate when he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. After Jesus rises from the dead, his friends receive God's Spirit. It's like a little flame above their heads! They tell each other, "Let's talk about Jesus to everybody!"

In a padded board format, this book is perfect for little fingers!

Contributor Bio

The Editors of Paraclete Press are committed to offering beautiful children's books that will help parents and religious educators to teach the truths of the faith to the next generation.

Illustrations





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Mary's Story

Editors at Paraclete Press

Summary

With simple language and lovely illustrations, this book retells the stories of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Share in the excitement as Mary learns from the Angel Gabriel that she will become Jesus's Mommy.

Be with Mary as she teaches Jesus to walk and to read, and join Joseph as he shows Jesus how to cut wood and use carpenter's tools.

As Jesus grows older, he sets off to tell people that God loves them. Mary is always there, and she loves to see Jesus surrounded by all his friends!

A wonderful book to read aloud to children!

Contributor Bio

The Editors of Paraclete Press are committed to offering inspirational texts to encourage readers on their spiritual journey.



My SOUL WAITS

*Praying with the Psalms through
Advent, Christmas & Epiphany*

MARTIN SHANNON, CT



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My Soul Waits

Praying with the Psalms through Advent, Christmas & Epiphany

Martin Shannon

Summary

For Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, this new devotional combines the words of the Psalms, meditations from the Church Fathers, and a prayer as a guide for the reader through the various twists and turns on the journey to our Lord's Nativity. These beloved words from Scripture mirror our own thoughts and emotions—hope and expectation, suffering and patience, confession and healing—and are as relevant for the modern spiritual reader as when they were first sung in the Temple.

Contributor Bio

Fr. Martin Shannon is an Episcopal priest, liturgist, and writer of daily devotional collections, seasonal studies, and other materials for spiritual formation at his home, the Community of Jesus on Cape Cod, MA. He holds a PhD in Liturgical Studies from the Catholic University of America. He and his wife, Mary, have four grown children.

Quotes

"*My Soul Waits* is a simple but beautiful and measured reflection on daily psalms: helping us meditate on the purpose of each psalm, lifting up wisdom from ancient Church Fathers, and offering honest prayers for 21st century faith. It's Shannon's original prayers especially that resonate with my spirit. The prayers long for Home; they confess Hope; they celebrate What Has Been Done; they meditate on What Will Be. With each prayer, my heart wants to dance, to shout, to weep, to whisper, and Shannon ties them beautifully and subtly to the daily psalm readings. Each day's meditation indicates that a reader should begin with the psalm; personally, I find myself not only beginning with the psalm but repeating it again at the end of the meditation in order to trace the threads between Scripture, the excerpts of Church Fathers, and Shannon's prayers. Listening deeply for the soul's essential stories that reverberate across the centuries, Martin Shannon accompanies us through the longing of Advent to the revelation of Epiphany. *My Soul Waits* is a balm to the restless spirit—speaking myself as one who is impatient with waiting. It is a patient companion through six weeks of triumph and trembling, turmoil and tenderness. Reading Shannon, my heart believes again that it can wait with hope for Christ's fulfillment. With every amen, I am renewed." —**Rachel Hackenberg**, author, speaker, ordained minister

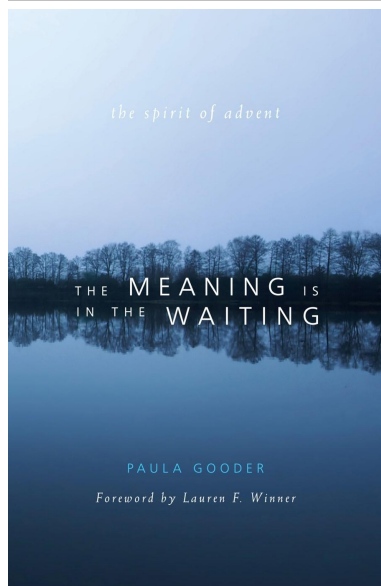
"Steeped in Benedictine spirituality, Fr. Shannon lives and prays the psalms in community. The 41 psalms (which take us from Advent to Epiphany) include psalms of praise, psalms of lament, penitential psalms, psalms of thanksgiving, orientation, disorientation, reorientation. Shannon's daily reflections on the Psalms, describe the world of the psalmists, the theology of the psalms and their significance for us, with an eye especially for this season. Each entry also ends with a word "from the Fathers" (notable saints from the early centuries of the church). Shannon also includes short profiles of the Church Fathers quoted in this book. The Psalms are the prayerbook of the church, and Fr. Shannon is a good guide to take us through this season!"
—*Thoughts, Prayers, and Songs*

"*My Soul Waits* is predicated in St. Benedict's writings that emphasize Advent as a time of preparation for Christmas. Shannon describes the trading of vestment colors and adjustments to the liturgy in the weeks leading up to Christmas as outward signs of Christmas approaching, but emphasizes that 'the meaning is in the waiting.' This book of Psalms is divided by chapter and preceded by brief descriptions of the background and context of each, to which Shannon adds personal reflections and ties to Scripture, along with quotes from Christian theologians including Augustine, Cyril and Jerome. The psalms are presented in no particular order (in keeping with life's randomness, Shannon notes) other than by the themes as listed in its title, and its 41 psalms take

readers beyond Christmas and into early January." —*Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*

"Martin Shannon offers a guide for the reader on the journey to the Nativity. This devotional reflects our experiences of hope and expectation, suffering and patience, confession and healing, through the words of the psalms and prayers and meditations from the early Church." —BuildFaith.org

"An inspiring, and deeply experiential journey through the Psalms of the Advent season. The author takes us on a pilgrimage within with a steady and enriching guide to the great feast of the Savior's birth." —**Abbot Primate Gregory Polan, O.S.B**



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The Meaning is in the Waiting

The Spirit of Advent

Paula Gooder

Summary

Is it worth the wait?

Paula Gooder shows how the spiritual practice of waiting is vital to our well-being. With warmth and insight, she helps us re-learn the skill of waiting, and invites us to engage with the real, flesh-and-blood people that are the subject of our Scripture readings and lessons each Advent: Abraham and Sarah, the Hebrew prophets, John the Baptist, and Mary. Each of them exemplified how to wait upon God for wisdom, joy, and the meaning of life.

"In this winsome yet provocative Advent devotional, I began to sense something I had not understood before, in any of my other Advent observances -- it is not just we who wait. God is waiting too. 'The Lord waits, that he may be gracious unto you,' says Isaiah, one of the prophets who interests Paula Gooder most. God waits on us, for our attention, for our visits home; God waits for our vision, and our ear." -Lauren Winner, from the foreword

The Meaning Is in the Waiting is arranged for daily reading in the hectic run-up to Christmas. This thoughtful book will enable you to grow more fully into a way of being that is expectant rather than urgent, more focused on God's presence right now than on some imagined future.

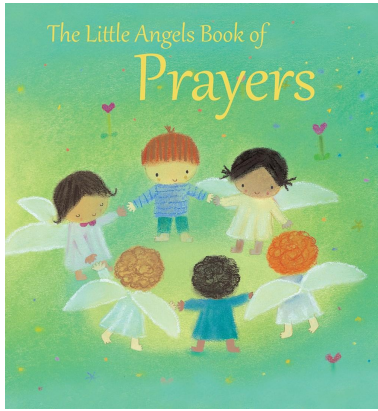
Contributor Bio

Paula Gooder is Canon Theologian of Birmingham Cathedral, a visiting lecturer at King's College, and travels throughout North America and Europe leading workshops and inspiring Christians to deepen and express their faith in new ways.

Lauren F. Winner is the popular author of three books, including *Mudhouse Sabbath* and *Girl Meets God*.

Quotes

"In this winsome yet provocative Advent devotional . . . I began to sense something I had not understood before, in any of my other Advent observances—it is not just we who wait. God is waiting, too. 'The Lord waits, that He may be gracious unto you,' says Isaiah, one of the prophets who interests Paula Gooder most. God waits on us, for our attention, for our visits home; God waits for our vision and our ear." —Lauren F. Winner, from the Foreword



The Little Angels Book of Prayers

Elena Pasquali, Dubravka Kolanovic

Summary

This sweet collection of prayers and blessings is the perfect gift for a new baby, or for a young child on the occasion of Baptism, First Communion, Easter, or a birthday.

Soft pastel illustrations accompany the simple, joyful text that reassures children of God's love and protection.

Contributor Bio

Elena Pasquali worked for some years in children's publishing before going on to be an author in her own right. She has a special interest in researching and retelling folk tales from around the world.

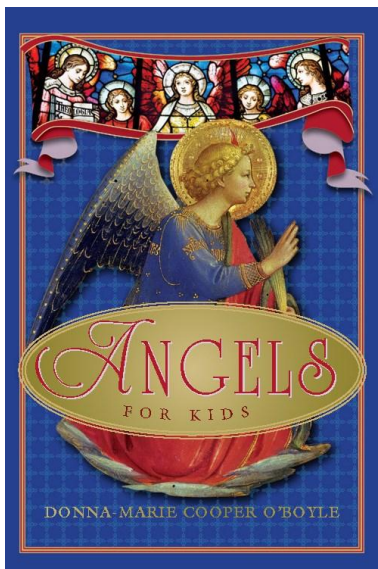
Dubravka Kolanovic was born in Croatia. She studied at Savannah College of Art and Design. She lives and works in Zadar on the coast of Croatia with her husband, two sons, and a dog. She illustrated the best-selling *My Baptism Book*.



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Angels for Kids

Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle

Summary

The invisible world of angels is so often overlooked, though it has been present since before the dawn of Creation, offering attentive service and protection to humankind. Based on Catholic teaching, *Angels for Kids* offers proof of the true existence of angels while dispelling prevalent contemporary myths.

This inspiring book will open the eyes and hearts of youth and their families to a greater awareness of the unseen world, as well as provide warm encouragement to keep company with the incredible angelic friends who unceasingly glorify God and who have been a significant part of salvation history; protecting Jesus throughout His life, announcing heaven's plans, and guiding and protecting the faithful. A chapter of special prayers to the angels completes the book.

Contributor Bio

Catholic wife, mother, and grandmother, **Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle** is known worldwide for her heartfelt encouraging words and down-to-earth guidance. Meeting St. Teresa of Calcutta deeply impacted her soul and transformed Donna-Marie's life. She weaves the wisdom from her ten-year friendship with the saint of the gutters into her work. Donna-Marie is the EWTN Host of three television series which she created, a world-renowned speaker, award-winning journalist, and best-selling and award-winning author of thirty books. She leads pilgrimages and gives retreats worldwide.

Quotes

"Angels are our protectors, companions, and God's messengers. In *Angels for Kids*, Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle shares the important role they play in our lives in language that is compelling and at the same time accessible for little souls. Buy this book for your kids, savor some reading time along with them, and you'll be amazed by how much you'll learn too!" —**Lisa M. Hendey**, author of *A Book of Saints for Catholic Moms* and founder of www.CatholicMom.com

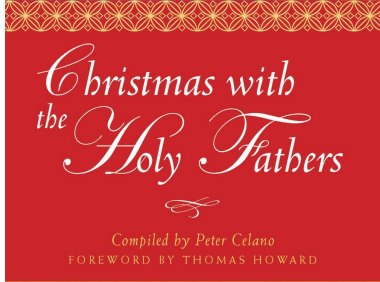
"All children should grow up knowing the companionship and powerful help of the holy angels. All children should grow up knowing the truth that this book teaches. It makes for a happier, more confident life. God created the angels to serve us as they glorify Him. We show our gratitude by enjoying their friendship, and Donna-Marie tells us how." —**Mike Aquilina**, author of *Angels of God*, *A Year with the Angels*, and *Entertaining Angels*

"What a delightful little book! *Angels For Kids* is wonderful in its simplicity and, yet, profound in its content and impact. Children of all ages will greatly benefit from this little catechesis on the angels. This book is truly a gem, containing both beautiful prayers and childlike insights, and Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle has outdone herself in offering to all God's children this angelic treasury!" —**Fr. Donald Calloway, MIC, STL**, author of *Under the Mantle: Marian Thoughts from a 21st Century Priest*

"Science calls us to believe in the unseeable – black holes in space, which cannot ever be seen because they absorb all light before it can reflect back to an observer. They believe in black holes because of anomalous behavior in space. So also, Christians, like Jews, Muslims, and many other religious people around the world and throughout history believe in angels, not only because of anomalous behaviors we experience in life's events but also because of God's Revelation in Scripture. We do well to introduce children to these facts, along with astronomical facts, to prepare them for a mature spiritual life. This book is such an introduction, and parents might be reminded of their own angels as they read with their children." —**Fr. Mitch Pacwa, S.J.**

"*Angels for Kids* by Donna-Marie Cooper O'Boyle surveys the whole Bible in a touching

way . The book reminds its young readers that they are always lovingly cared for by God and protected from every kind of harm.” —**Jack Wintz**, author of *I Will See You in Heaven*



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Christmas with the Holy Fathers

Peter Celano

Summary

Now in paperback for the first time, *Christmas with the Holy Fathers* guides readers through Advent, Christmas and Epiphany with the words of Pope's past.

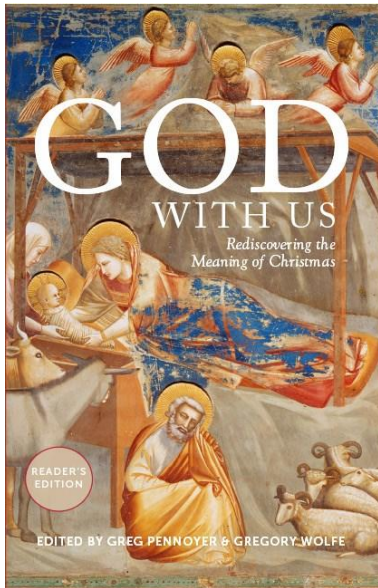
Contributor Bio

Peter Celano is an editor at Paraclete Press, and is also the author of *My Year with the Saints for Kids*.

Quotes

"This little book is a compilation of passages taken from various addresses given by the Holy Fathers, from Pope St. Leo the Great to the two most recent pontiffs. The variety of speakers and topics help to demonstrate the timelessness of the Church's message about Christmas as well as the universality of the coming of Christ...Each excerpt transports the reader back into the mystery of Christmas and the importance of Advent while not requiring a debilitating block of time in one's personal schedule. The book is broken down into sections pertaining to Advent, Christmas Eve, the Nativity, the Epiphany, and the significance of the Mother of God. Within each section are a variety of texts which can be read one at a time or together...*Christmas with the Holy Fathers* is perfect for carrying in a purse or backpack and convenient to read while waiting in line, for a moment or two before Mass, or while taking a break from work or school. In any situation, the book is guaranteed to bring the reader back to a calmer, more mystical place and to prepare them, in small increments of the coming of the Savior."

—**Katherine Haas**, *Catholic News Agency*, online review



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God With Us

Rediscovering the Meaning of Christmas (Reader's Edition)

Greg Pennoyer, Gregory Wolfe, Scott Cairns, Emilie Griffin, Kathleen Norris, Eugene Peterson

Summary

Christmas is the season most difficult to grasp and understand in all its spiritual richness. The sentimentality and commercialism that dominate the season tend to obscure the profound mystery at its heart: the Incarnation. *God with Us* provides the perfect way to slow down and reconnect with the liturgical and sacramental traditions of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. In this volume of daily meditations, some of today's most esteemed writers on the spiritual life offer a tapestry of reflection, Scripture, prayer, and history.

Contributors include Beth Bevis, Scott Cairns, Emilie Griffin, Richard John Neuhaus, Kathleen Norris, Eugene Peterson, and Luci Shaw.

"The birth of Jesus, kept fresh in our imaginations and prayers in song and story, keeps our feet on solid ground and responsive to every nuance of obedience and praise evoked by the life all around us."

-Eugene Peterson, from the Introduction

Contributor Bio

Editor **Greg Pennoyer** is president of The Humanitas Group, which manages creative endeavors designed to enrich our understanding of what it means to be human. He is cofounder of the Centre for Cultural Renewal, member of the Board of Directors for Image Journal, and co-editor with Gregory Wolfe of *God for Us: Rediscovering the Meaning of Lent and Easter*.

Gregory Wolfe founded *Image* journal, and is now the editor of Slant Books.

Quotes

"Every year the holiday season comes earlier. Coffee cups, mall Santas, ornaments, Christmas music and grocery-store-eggnog all proclaim the yuletide cheer as the retail industrial complex screams, 'Happy Holidays!' The Christian tradition has its own way of preparing for the holidays: Advent. More than just a time for marking the shopping days before Christmas, Advent is about preparing your heart to enter fully into the mystery of God's coming to us in the Incarnation of Christ. If you are familiar with any of these authors, you know how deeply they have reflected on the spiritual life and the wealth of insights they have for waiting and watching well. This is really a beautiful book and one of my holiday favorites."

—James Matichuk, thoughtsprayersandsongs.com