

# Advent Prayer 2002

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*Transcription of the prepared text*

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In the serene beauty of this sacred space  
let us be still, be attentive, fully conscious, fully aware –  
aware of our lives in this world in crisis, in this season of holy symbol,  
quite overwhelmed by frenetic activity.

Let us meditate on the wonder, miracle, joy and glory of life –  
its mystery, its facile balance, our hopes, our dreams, our fears.  
Let us be open to the Mystery of Being –  
the Mystery we name God.

O God,  
we confess that there is that within us  
that wonders about the way you run the cosmos.  
We would do it quite differently,  
especially at those moments when things unravel,  
when some crisis arises on the world scene,  
when some evil is perpetrated, some injustice goes unrequited,  
some tragedy so painful, some suffering so undeserved comes close to us.

We cry out but our voice is drowned out in the gale;  
we try to keep hope alive, to keep trusting,  
but the deep darkness leaves us numb.  
We raise our voice if not our fist;  
our “whys” pour forth in a torrent of anguish.

We would nominate for Supreme Ruler one who would unleash power,  
destroy the wrong and establish the right.  
We want a strong God because we feel so insecure, so frightened –  
frightened that our health will fail,  
frightened that a child will meet with an accident,  
frightened that a loved one will be torn from us,  
frightened that our dreams won’t come true...

Then it is that we wish you were the Lord God Almighty,  
in total control,  
in complete charge of every detail of our lives  
and we would appreciate some sign that you are there – in charge.

Yet, O God, we really know that is not the way it is –  
no blinding power, no show of force.  
We sing, “What child is this...”  
and “Why lies he in such mean estate?”  
The poet glimpsed your way –  
“They all were looking for a King  
To slay their foes and lift them high;  
Thou cam’st, a little baby thing,  
That made a woman cry.”  
You are with us in weakness rather than power.

How strange that is –  
unsettling, unsatisfying –  
until we come to realize that  
only thus are you with us with our freedom intact;  
only thus can our humanity in your image be real.

Sometimes we forget that and think of the traditional God Almighty  
out there – in charge.  
Then, when you don’t move in with heavy hand and fix things,  
we are troubled.  
We are tempted to think you don’t care.  
Or, we wonder if some guilt we carry blocks your rescuing effort.  
Sometimes we even wonder if you are there at all;  
if perhaps we are not simply alone in the universe.

But, then we hear the story again –  
a child in a manger –  
one whom multitudes followed,  
alone praying in agony in a garden,  
finally hanging on a Roman cross,  
crying into the darkness, “My God, my God, why...”

Then, at least sometimes, a light breaks through –  
the god of almighty power to rearrange the world  
is not the God we can really believe in –  
not power, but presence;  
not coercion, but persuasion;  
not control, but grace;  
not guarantee, but vulnerability.

Ah, dear God,  
such is the mystery.  
We never live easily with that;  
we never really hear that word once for all;  
we need to learn it again and again –  
in our weakness, we cry.  
In our weakness, our hearts are open;  
in our weakness, grace happens  
and you are God with us.

In a child,  
in a crucified one –  
there you are.  
In the embrace of another's wordless presence,  
there you are.

Not power to crush our will,  
but love that breaks our hearts of stone—  
that is Christmas;  
that is the final truth.  
We can live with that;  
with that we can live.

Hear our prayers, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.