

Advent Retreat 2020

Gathering Music

Welcome to our Advent retreat. You might want a notebook or clean sheets of paper for journaling or drawing. Let's take a moment to centre ourselves, with a prayer...

O God as we enter this advent journey, keep the shadows from us, and inspire a new light within us. Keep fear without, and justice within. Keep chaos without, and creativity within. Keep despair without, and hope within. Come, O Advent God, and reveal in us your promise, we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

I want to begin with some of the imagery of the season, to pray through some of the Art that tells the story of Jesus' birth. Many of us from RPUC are missing Encarna, with its quiet, and its candlelighting and the amazing visual art that helps us look at the season from many different angles.



Mother and Child

by J. Kirk Richards

<https://www.latterdayhome.com/.../j-kirk-richards-art...>

Here is one image of Mary and Jesus, the one we are using in our advent advertising. Just absorb it for a moment, and if a word or a thought pops into mind, write it down, doodle it or draw an image that reflects that feeling or thought.

I call this image Madonna and the Angles (which looks like a typo for angels but was quite intentional.) I was struck by how sharp and hard the lines of the actual painting are – and yet the look between Mary and Jesus is so tender, and gentle, and soft...

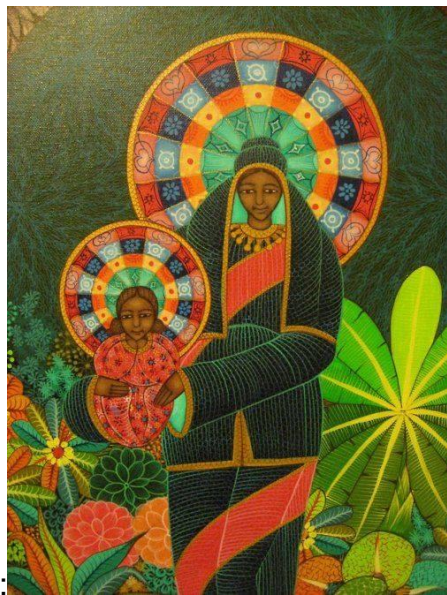
What does that contrast evoke in you? What does it say about the first Christmas story? What does it say about YOUR story? How things are sometimes hard or sharp, but somehow give birth to incredible tenderness and love?

The use of art for prayer is often called: Visio Divina, which means that what we see is holy, or finding something holy in what we see.

It usually follows five simple steps:

- (1) preparation and clearing your mind,
- (2) looking at an image,
- (3) a time of meditation,
- (4) response – either by journaling or creating your own art,
- (5) finally, prayer.

So take a moment to clear your mind of that last Madonna, and here is a new one – from a Haitian artist



Haitian Madonna and Child

by Ismael Saincilus.

<https://iartx.com/ismael-saincilus.html>

Look at the image and let your senses stay with the very first thing that you see. Keep your attention on that one part of the image that first catches your eye. Try to keep your eyes from wandering to other parts of the picture. Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so.

Now, let your eyes gaze at the whole image, where does your eye go next? Take your time and look or listen or hold every part of the artwork. experience it all. Reflect on the image for a minute or so.

Then consider the following questions: What does this image stir up in you, bring forth in you? Does it help you identify something you long for? Something or someone you are concerned about? Something you are grateful for? If so, let these thoughts become words or images in you. Write them down or doodle or draw them if that is how you want to express it.

Now I invite you to clear your mind again



Indigenous Mother and Child

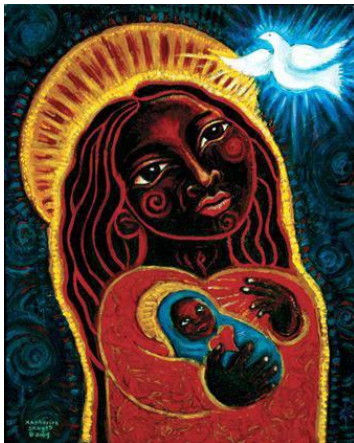
by Fr. John Giuliani

Here is another image – where does your eye land? Just let it stay there – what word comes to mind?

Now take in the whole image – what comes to your heart or thoughts? Again, take a moment to write or draw if you wish...

Now clear your mind again...

Another image



Erzulie Dantor, Voodoo Madonna and Child

By Katherine Skaggs

<https://katherineskaggs.com/product->

Is there something your eye falls on right away? What does it evoke in you? When you let your eye wander and see it as part of the whole, what changes, or deepens? Respond with what comes to mind for you.

Take a moment to clear it away



Across the River from the Capital

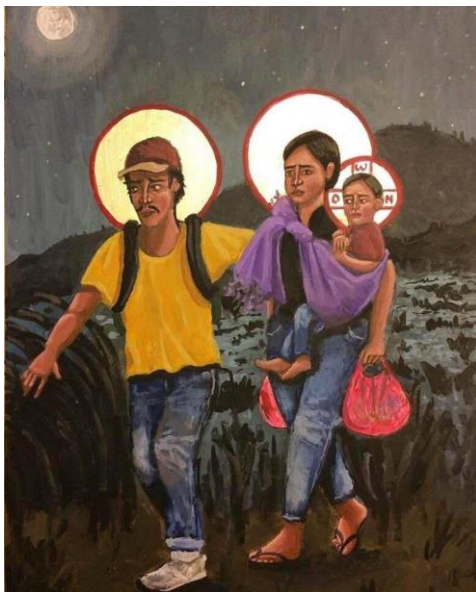
By William Kurelek

A Northern Nativity

Here is one that is close to home – what do you see? Can you see yourself in the painting? Are you up close or at a distance? Watchful like Mary, or asleep like Joseph. This is a painting by William Kurelek – a Canadian artist, who like artists all over the world, seems to be asking – what if Jesus was born in MY world? Would I be ready? Would I welcome him, or his parents? Would I even see him?

Lorna's notes...

Clear that away as we look at another image. Sometimes art is not about what is pretty or perfect or something that appeals, sometimes art is uncomfortable, and has a political edge to it,...



Holy Family

by Kelly Latimore

<https://kellylatimoreicons.com/gallery/>

Are there words you would like to share? Where does your eye fall?

One of the amazing things about scripture is how the biblical writers painted a picture with their words and metaphors. Many of them were real word artists. Here are words from the prophecy, the “word painting”, of Isaiah, chapter 61, where we are painted a beautiful advent image of hope.

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,^[a]

² to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty

instead of ashes,

the oil of joy

instead of mourning,

and a garment of praise

instead of a spirit of despair.

They will be called oaks of righteousness,

a planting of the LORD

for the display of his splendor.

⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins

and restore the places long devastated;

they will renew the ruined cities

that have been devastated for generations.

¹⁰ I delight greatly in the LORD;

my soul rejoices in my God.

For he has clothed me with garments of salvation

and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,

as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,

and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹ For as the soil makes the sprout come up

and a garden causes seeds to grow,

so the Sovereign LORD will make righteousness

and praise spring up before all nations.

Advent is a season of something new unfolding in our midst, and asking ourselves how
will we keep watch? How will we prepare?

We close with prayer

We give you thanks, Loving God, for the gifts of this day and this season:
For the changing of calendars, for the start of a new year
For the lengthening of nights, for the warmth amidst the cold
For the refocusing on your hopes and expectations for us and for the world
And most of all, we thank you, for coming in the vulnerable yet hope-filled gift of Jesus Christ.

We pray for our world, for the brokenness and beauty of your creation:
For the blooming of a rose, the blossoming of the earth hidden amidst the winter
For the partners calling us to pay attention to climate change, to care for the integrity of creation
For the people marked as “other” by principalities, by what the world expects
For the people and places today who hold onto your hope
amidst the fear and violence that surrounds them.

We pray for those sick and suffering, in body, in mind, and in spirit:
For people discounted by the world’s expectations
For folks with heavy hearts of grief and sadness
For families that are struggling to make ends meet this season
For those we name in our hearts ...
And for those you only know the names of ...

Hopeful, persistent, and protesting God,
Lead us into this season to uncover your hope
Lead us into this season to discover your kingdom-on-earth anew
Lead us into this season to welcome our vulnerable, beautiful, and holy Messiah, Jesus Christ.
It is in his name we pray, saying,

Our Father/Mother, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever, Amen.