

MONDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

## In the Divine Embrace

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,  
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

Luke 1:68

*Conversion brings with it the relaxation which lets you breathe again and puts you at rest in the embrace of a forgiving God. The experience results in a calm and simple joy. For then you can say: "I don't know the answer, and I can't do this thing, but I don't have to know it, and I don't have to be able to do it."*  
(Henri J. M. Nouwen, *With Open Hands*, 85)

Faith invites us to do the hardest thing we will ever do: surrender. Conversion toward God, toward Christ, means that we have entrusted ourselves to the Other—to the One who has created us, saved us and wants eternal joy for and with us. Why wouldn't we surrender ourselves to this embrace?

Surrender means letting go of our control—our plans, our opinions, our way. It means opening our minds to the plans and ways of another. It means trusting that we need God and that God is there. We no longer have to plan each step or insist on our way. Now we can let God breathe, speak, plan and act in us.

We are not alone. God is with us. Surrender is peace.

Jesus, Redeemer, I surrender to you. I give myself to your will for me and my life. As I anticipate your coming, I am at peace in your embrace. You will take care of me. Amen.

TUESDAY, THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

## Seeking Gentleness

For you shall go out in joy,  
and be led back in peace;  
the mountains and the hills before you  
shall burst into song,  
and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Isaiah 55:12

*Every time I overcame the fear of my own wounds and the wounds of those around me and dared to touch them gently, joy and peace came to me in ways I never dreamed of.* (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Heart Speaks to Heart*, 54)

Our experience of the world around us is not always gentle. Some days, by the time evening comes, we may feel a bit bruised or even broken. We have a God who understands this feeling. We have a Savior who has experienced this too. All the gentleness that we yearn for is available to us in his presence with us, a soothing balm for whatever wounds we bear or see in those around us.

The Christ Child in the humble manger is a sign of this divine gentleness, a sign that God yearns to be with us as much as we yearn to be with him. Christmas reminds us that this world can be gentle by the grace of God-with-us.

Lord Jesus, we yearn for a gentler world. Stay with us so we may experience your gentleness and share it with others. Renew our joy and peace in your presence. Amen.