

TUESDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

Living as God's Beloved

The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession. ... because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors ...

Deuteronomy 7:6, 8

*We have to dare to reclaim the truth that we are God's chosen ones, even when our world does not choose us. ... The great spiritual battle begins—and never ends—with the reclaiming of our chosenness. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, 42)*

To be chosen is to be loved, treasured and valued. In Christ we are God's chosen ones, we are God's beloved. Will we, in turn, choose God? St. John wrote, "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). If we choose God, it is because God first chose us. If we love God, it is because God first loved us. Everything we do is a response to God's love and care for us—even the breaths we take are a result of God's creative love.

As the days of Christmas draw near, may we bask in this reality as we would bask in the warm sunshine of a quiet afternoon. We are chosen. We are loved.

When we have accepted this awesome reality, how will we respond?

God, I believe that you love me. May I be changed by this truth and know it in my heart this Christmas. Amen.

WEDNESDAY, THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

The Heart of God

For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

*Now I see that, even though we are still struggling in this world, we are already one with you as you intercede for us with your Father. Where your heart is there we are, children of your heavenly Father. ... Your heart is our permanent home, our resting place, our refuge and our hope. (Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Heart Speaks to Heart*, 50)*

As Christmas approaches, we want to know more about this Christ who is to be born. Who is he, and what does his life mean for us? This treasured verse from Isaiah, interpreted by Christians in light of Christ, gives us much to ponder.

Wonderful Counselor—Jesus will be with us as a guide, a teacher, an intercessor and a friend. *Mighty God*—Jesus is the full revelation of God, the eternal Word of God living among us. *Everlasting Father*—Jesus will open us up to a full relationship with his Father, knocking down all obstacles that stand between us and God. *Prince of Peace*—Jesus' mission is ultimately one of peace and reconciliation—between God and human beings, between all people of goodwill.

The heart of Jesus reflects the very heart of God: intimacy, divinity, relationship and peace.

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, make my heart like yours. May I reflect your ways in my thoughts, actions and relationships. Amen.