

# My Cup Is Half Full: Advent's meaning reveals God's Love for us



Mark Davis Pickup Photo: Facebook

The first snowfall of the season fell overnight. I suppose that children throughout the city awoke to the surprise and excitement of seeing snow on the ground. My grandchildren were no exception. They looked out the window and danced gleefully around the living room. My four-year-old granddaughter asked to hear Christmas music. Christmas music in October? Sure, why not!

She went and sat at the kitchen table and waited for breakfast as Hark the Herald Angels Sing played in the next room. A slight smile came across my granddaughter's face as she stared vaguely at the cereal box in front of her, hinting that her little grey memory cells were coming alive. It seemed that for a brief and fleeting moment my granddaughter was experiencing a sensation of pure divine joy.

Children can have profound and momentous spiritual experiences. From my own early childhood I remember joy that inexplicably welled up within me although I was too young to have much experience to trigger it.

Profound bliss came to me from out of the ages far beyond my experience.

These early spiritual experiences rivalled (and sometimes surpassed) anything I have undergone since. I suspect this is not unique to me; you may know this to be true too.

## **CHILD-LIKE JOY**

Advent uniquely calls us back to child-like joy. Inasmuch as we are capable of having faith, the immense meaning of Advent reveals God's love for the human race. To become spiritually child-like in purity of simple faith, it is possible to experience increasing awareness of the divine image of God planted within us. That image of God lies at the root of our spiritual DNA.

The Scriptures tell us that God is present with a child developing in the womb (Psalm 139.13-16). With the spark of life there is a divine presence of the Creator that lovingly watches over the created. This is the essence of joy washing over the moment of conception. This divine joy does not require sentience or even the least shred of awareness. It simply is.

The baby, still unformed, is bathed in God's love that supremely contradicts the best of human love – just as the warmth of the womb contradicts a cold world and the baby cries at the shock of birth.

Throughout each individual's life he or she will yearn for that unearthly love again. They are unable to identify or satisfy this longing for pure and perfect love. In his seminal book *Lift Up Your Heart*, the great Catholic theologian, Bishop Fulton Sheen, said:

## **HEART'S AGONY**

"The human heart is isolated and in agony: It has more love to give than any earth-bound object can receive – it clamours to be loved more lastingly and comprehendingly than by any human lover. But both longings – to love perfectly, to be loved perfectly – are mere vacuums in man; the most real part of his nature turns out to be a void."

The void is a longing for divine love. This innate yearning to give and receive perfect love sits at the deepest and most authentic part of man's being because it is intertwined with his soul dating back to his origins. Unfortunately, man's yearning for perfect love cannot be satiated because he feels cut off from it. Only God can fill the vacuum that Fulton Sheen wrote about, but sin separates man from God.

This is where Advent gives hope for a blessed reconciliation and reunion with the source of perfect love. The path from the manger leads to the cross. There could not have been a Calvary without a Bethlehem.

The joy of the heavenly chorus above the shepherds seems to contradict the horror and agony at Golgotha. But they are not contradictory. Both events are connected by God's love for humanity and his desire that the void in every person be filled by divine love.

## MIRACLE OF THE CROSS

Christ's sacrifice at Calvary reconciles humanity to God. The miracle of the cross is the only remedy for satisfying the isolated and lonely human heart.

The Passion, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the mechanism by which a perfect God has provided reconciliation with sinful humanity. Faith and Christ's Church are the vehicles by which it is delivered.

Do you want to love perfectly and be loved perfectly? It is only possible by drawing near to God and seeking to know Him through Christ. God is love (1 John 4.8). He is the essence of that perfect love you have inwardly desired all your life.

*Previously published in the Western Catholic Reporter*