



# Every Moment Singing

## Advent and Christmas Reflections

Blessings! We pray for Peace and Joy this Advent and Christmas season. This is a wonderful, though oftentimes difficult time of year for us as the memories of loved ones who have completed their earthly life revisit us and our minds recline to the long lost days of our childhood when snowstorms dropped 60-inches of snow and schools closed for weeks - life was simpler, families were stronger and the world was safer.

Each year, during the season of Advent, we reflect on the mystery and wonder of the incarnation of God in Jesus. In many churches, devotionals are available that can help us along our daily journeys keeping our focus on this amazing gift. At St. Anthony's, we have been printing an Advent Reflections booklet that contains both the daily readings and a small reflection, poem or prayer that focuses specifically on the readings of the day or on the meaning of the season. This year, Jen and I actually had some extra time to sit down to reflect and write, contributing three brief reflections to the booklet. I've included each of the reflections in this newsletter. We hope they help you to reflect on the mystery and grace poured out during this season. ♪ SC

*Touching God* During the summer, we were blessed with an opportunity to visit one of our favorite places, Lake Placid, NY. Not very far from home, but just far enough to notice the "different" air of the Adirondack Mountains and get some needed rest (can you say 7AM wake up instead of 5AM?).

One morning, we decided to get out early and welcome the morning and the sunrise. It had rained the night before and the air had a crisp, moist feel to it. The fog and dismal look of the day made us question if we should go for our hike another day. Since we were already up, the possibility of going back to bed was out of the question, so we trekked up our moderate hike to the summit of Mt. Jo. This location is not one of the high peaks of the Adirondacks, but the view is magnificent (it is enjoyable because the air is not too thin to breathe and one's heart rate is not out of control leaving one to wonder if vertical is up or forward).

As we ascended the stony

mountain and helped each other over the larger rocks, we reached the summit and were able to watch the clouds lift. We took many pictures (one will be the cover of a future Christmas album if I ever get around to recording one) and sat for quite some time taking in this glorious

view. Then I started to think about how the clouds were touching the tops of the mountains, obscuring the view of their summits, but creating a beautiful image of God touching the tip of His finger to His creation.

He did that so long ago when He created all things from nothing. But He also did it in such a more magnificent yet understated and unappreciated (at least at the

time and under-appreciated nowadays) manner 2000 years ago. It's not hard to see how difficult it is for non-Christians to grasp that the Creator of everything would take the form of a person with the limitations and imperfections of a human nature and suffer as He did. But that is just what happened when God decided to touch us. He really touched us. Not figuratively, not in just a spiritual sense. But in a real, flesh and blood sense. Little fingers, little toes, eyes that couldn't focus at first and a mouth that needed to be fed. A little baby who needed to be nurtured and held. A little baby who could not make it on His own. A little baby who required love and in return became the embodiment of complete love.

Each Christmastime we get a chance to remember when God actually touched us.

We each have our own ways of touching God. The question is, 'Do we let Him touch us?'

He can. He has.  
He does. He will.  
We just need to let Him. ♪ SC

## Upcoming Performances

**Christmas Concert - December 21, 2003 - 6 until 7:30PM - St. Anthony of Padua Church, Chadwicks, NY. Admission is free. Call 315-797-6882 for details.**

Take a break from the shopping and hectic pace of the final days before Christmas and join us as we celebrate the birth of our Lord.

The performance will be an evening of reflection filled with music and readings giving us a chance to slow down and focus on the Divine Mystery.

# Christmas Traditions

Christmas can be so exciting for both children and adults - especially when those adults are "like children". Cultural and family traditions add so much to the celebrations around Christmastime, and any other time of the year for that matter. If one is able to carry on the traditions of their relatives and ancestors, one can actually feel a part of history and the continuing of family ideals and values. As we celebrate Christmas, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus with joyful expectation, we are doing the same thing as so many have done before...celebrating and anticipating the arrival of our Lord.

Besides family gatherings, each Christmas in the Clive home is filled with some traditions that we are continuing and others we have begun for ourselves.

For instance, our children, like so many children, know about Santa Claus. Not the Santa Claus that society has made the primary focus and means to its materialism. But rather, the human side of Christmas, that human side that God embraced as He took on our form. The human side of love. The human side of selflessness. The human side of His presence in our everyday world. So, with our focus on our Lord's birth in the miracle of God's love, we also bring Santa Claus to life in the minds and imaginations of our children in two ways - reading letters written by Santa (odd how his initials are also SC) and reading from a book called, "The Truth About Christmas," written by "Santa Claus". The letters are written to each of our little ones and the whole family. They are filled with love and lessons, faith and the richness of family. Their eyes light up when Santa reveals a few little secrets of the past year that only we know about - "How did he know that?!" Kind of like the jolly old grandfather who knows the ways of wee little ones.

The book is wonderful as it is mysteriously written. "Santa" masterfully weaves in the true meaning of Christmas and purpose for himself. Chapter One begins this way...

*"I am Santa Claus. I am Santa Claus, and my origins are mysterious, especially to me. This I know, that I would not exist were it not for what happened on a wondrous clear night, under a wondrous bright star, some two thousand*

*years ago. Were it not for the birth of a Boy Child in a village called Bethlehem, some two thousand years ago, there would be no Christmas...and so, there would be no Santa Claus. The world would be a very different place had that Child not been born, and for sure there would be no Christmas.*

*I am Santa Claus, and it is my joy and privilege to encourage the spirit of Christmas. It is my joy and honor to nourish the magical meaning of Christmas for all kinds of people. I do it for those whose hearts tell them that the Boy Child born on that night so long ago was the Divine Mystery come as a human being to bring liberation, healing and mercy to a weary world.*

*You must understand that my message echoes the message of that Child born so long ago. Like him I stand for love, generosity, unselfishness, kindness, courage, and life. Like him, I want people to live together in peace. Unlike him, I am not the message itself; I am not the offspring of the Divine Mystery, only his unworthy servant. At the same time, I carry the magic and wonder of Christmas for those whose hearts incline them in other ways. My deep and jolly laughter, my very image, has no purpose but to remind people of the magic, wonder, mystery and love at the heart of the Christmas season. It is my task to remind everyone that Christmas is a time to think more of others than of yourself."*

The rest of the book is filled with traditions, stories and wonderful, magical ways of keeping Christmas alive and joyful amidst the relentless pace of this time of year.

We remember this Christmas my uncle Gene who died this year. He used to dress up as the jolly old Santa Claus for years in Ohio. It became such a wonderful part of his life. It was in this role, that this gruff and intimidating man could express a love for children and be given that opportunity to share in their imagination and life that would not be possible outside the red suit. If only we all could play roles like this and share in their joys and imaginations.

May God bless you all. May your Christmas be filled with family, giving, laughter, and tears of joy. May you always be filled with wonder and delight as love and life surround you. May you be filled with peace and love of our Lord Jesus this Christmas and always. ♪ SC

## Advent and Christmas Reflections (continued)

### Questions & Answers

*How does one express the depth of the questions that hang in the air*

*Unanswered?*

*Unasked?*

*Or just unspoken?*

*The fear of not doing enough, not being enough-*

*Why does it loom in my throat?*

*Who am I to know what's best?*

*Who am I to suggest?*

*Why can't I hear your whispers more clearly God?*

There are many times that I feel baffled by God's plan. There are little obstacles on my journey that frustrate and confuse me. "At least I'm trying," I argue

with God. "So many people seem utterly unconcerned with you—why are you making it hard on those of us who are trying to follow you?"

When I think of Mary, I am ashamed of my arrogant frustration. What could be more confusing than being told by an angel that you, an unwed, virgin mother, were chosen to conceive and raise the child of God? Mary's response is so inspiring to me. She accepts God's invitation to serve in this incomprehensible way without asking questions, without hesitation, but with steadfast faith and trust in God. She doesn't ask the angel to double-check or send a clearer sign; she knows and trusts that the angel speaks the truth—God's truth. Mary accepts the path of God—a

path that leads her to encounter unspeakable joy, incredible miracles, special honors. A path also that leads her to heart-wrenching pain as she experiences the death of her son. Through it all, she trusts God. Was it easy? Did she always see where she was going? Did she always understand why? Did she make the right choice?

I imagine that Mary, like all of us, had her moments of doubt and fear. But her story reminds me to trust God even when the path seems mysterious and uncertain. For each time I imitate Mary, each time I trust God, each time I humbly say yes—despite my questions and fears—God transforms my lowly offering into greater things than I could ever have imagined.

# Advent and Christmas Reflections (continued)

*Jesus the Gift* How much do we actually know about Jesus' life? In two of the Gospels (Luke and Matthew), we read the stories of the birth of Jesus in detail. Then we have tiny bit about Jesus' family finding him in the temple after frantically searching for him (imagine their heartache and relief). Then, all of a sudden, He is fully-grown, about to begin His public ministry at a wedding. There is much missing in those years in between, but we know he grew up like the rest of us, or else what would be the point of Jesus having a human nature. One can conclude much about his childhood and adolescence from what we know of who Jesus was in His adult life.

He was probably a normal 2 year old when He was 2. He was probably a normal 4 year old. He was probably a normal 8, 10, 13, 16, 21 year old with all the feelings, confusions, disappointments and joys of a human being. The thing that sets Him apart is the fact that He is God. But, that did not eliminate the need for Mom and Dad (human dad that is), to raise Him with a deep respect, honor, love and affection for God and His word, a love and respect for others and His parents. He was raised to know what was truly important in the everyday. Can you imagine what the world would be like if we could all teach our children through

those trying years what is truly important, and have them actually "get it"?

How amazing would it be to watch your child become a servant of others, helping, touching, reaching, loving the poor, the rich (who often need just as much forgiveness and compassion as the poor), the imprisoned, the racially different, the Catholic, the non-Catholic, the non-Christian, the atheist, the sinner (dare we include ourselves?), the hurt, the grieving, the lonely, etc...?

As our babies absorb the sounds, sights and smells of Christmas, I pray that we take advantage of God's gift of time and use the opportunity to open up the life of our baby Savior to these little ones. We can make the story of God's love come to life in their minds, hearts and souls. What a gift we can give them. What a gift we can give back to the greatest gift giver. This baby Jesus will be not only a baby whose birth we celebrate with gifts and trees and lights, but also THE baby born to die for us all, giving His gift of love on that branchless tree as the Light of the World hung as the only ornament. This baby, who changed the world through His love and opened up heaven so we may enjoy eternity in the presence of our God. ♪ SC

## Performance Reviews – My thoughts

### November 15, 2003 - Oneida Correctional Facility, Rome, NY

Having performed at Mohawk Correctional Facility a few years ago, I was excited when Toni Belmont asked me to sing at the Oneida Correctional Facility as part of a weekend REC (Residents Encounter Christ) program in the protective custody dorm of the prison. I am so humbled to have been able to 'visit Him when He was imprisoned'. A small group of men (and five presenters) gathered for a day long (6 hours) retreat where we shared our love for Christ and allowed the Spirit to do the rest. The program was part of the Syracuse Diocesan Prison Ministry.

These guys have done some pretty rough things in their lives to end up where they are. Fortunately, I do not know what any one of them did. This allows me to see Jesus in each one of them. It is easier to see Him in them when the only signs of "roughness" are the tattoos or green outfits. Had I known about their crimes, I would have found it much more difficult to be a witness of Christ's love as my human weaknesses would have pushed me to judgements and I would have closed myself to them.

These guys spend most of the day in their bunks, except quick meals and one hour outdoors inside a cage (it is really a cage). There isn't cable or HBO or those things that people speak so nonchalantly about. The food stinks - the hot dogs we ate were the same the guys ate - like something animals would find revolting. And yet each of these guys needs and desires one thing - love. Jesus' love that is difficult, though not impossible, to experience from reading Scripture. The love that speaks to the hearts of these guys, the love that leads to conversion, the love that can take the broken hearted criminal unworthy of any love (at least in their minds) and heal all wounds allowing them to be new men. The love that can only be seen and felt and experienced through us. We are Jesus to these guys. We may be the only ones in their entire lives (some 16 years, some 72 years) that have expressed a love, imperfect as it is, for them. We may be the only ones who have ever reached out with nothing more than the love our God gave us to share with the world. We may be the only ones who ever "showed" them, not just "told" them about God's love.

One of the speakers made a point to tell the guys that, yes, they are a number in prison, but that is the only way the State can keep track of everyone. Despite the number, each of them has a name. And by that name will Jesus call them. With that name are they who they really are. They are not a number. We too often feel like just a number, but Jesus knows our name and calls our name. I now know some of these guys' names, and will remember them. I thank God for the wonderful opportunity to share with these guys and be present to them at this time in their life. ♪ SC

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If you know of any venues (e.g. churches, coffeehouses, events), please pass the word along that I am currently booking through 2004. Feel free to give out my number or website - [www.seanclive.com](http://www.seanclive.com) - for more information about me and this ministry.  
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# New Online Look



Our online presence has changed recently. I've redesigned the website at [www.seanclive.com](http://www.seanclive.com) to fit a little more closely with my personality and the mission of this ministry. It is actually quite exciting to create the visual side of things in addition to the audio side.

Please feel free to check out our new look, download pictures, send feedback, listen to music, order albums, etc...

I hope you enjoy your browsing. 🎵 SC

## Christmas Picks – My Recommendations

The following is a list of my current picks that I believe everyone should have in their library or cupboard or whatever for Christmas.

- **Christmas Music** - *Christmas Portrait* (Carpenters) — *A Capella Christmas* (GLAD) — *See Amid The Winter's Snow* (Kevin Keil) — *The Promise* (Michael Card) — *December* (George Winston) — *Another Kind Of Christmas* (Various) — *Christmas In The Aire* (Mannheim Steamroller) — *Winter Grace* (Jeanne Cotter / David Haas) — *Many Snows* (Jeanne Cotter)
- **Books** - *The Birth of Jesus in the Gospel according to Luke* — *The Birth of Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew* — *The Truth About Christmas* (Santa Claus) — *One Incredible Moment* (Max Lucado)
- **Food** - Turkey Joints (candy coated chocolate and nut candy) — Italian Christmas cookies (like Jen's Grandma used to make) — Gingerbread men and women — Peppermint Bark (melted and then hardened white chocolate chips mixed with crushed starlight mints) — Ham with Killibeg's Sauce (Sour Cream, Horseradish and Mustard)
- **Movies** - Any of the 1960s and 1970s claymation-type movies (e.g. *The Little Drummer Boy*, *'Twas The Night Before Christmas*, *Nesstor The Long-Eared Donkey*, *Jack Frost*, *Frosty The Snowman*, *Rudolph*, etc...) — *It's A Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra) — *Wiggly, Wiggly Christmas* (The Wiggles) — *The Santa Clause & The Santa Clause 2* — *Little House On The Prairie Christmas Special*
- **Experiences** - Walking on a starlit, crisp night under the stars — Daily readings that bring to life the first Christmas — Sharing the stories of yesterday with family — Remembering loved ones — Experiencing Christmas anew with children — Loving your spouse, neighbor, community, poor, lonely, priests / religious / other clergy — Encountering your Spouse at a Marriage Encounter Weekend — Encountering Christ at Daily Mass — Experiencing and Participating in Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day services — Praying — Crying — Laughing — Rejoicing — Doing — Imagining — Being

## Christmas Gift – My Recommendation

We still have a ton of copies of *Tuning Up* available for adoption to a nice family or person.

They make great gifts (*at least I think they do*). Order soon for Christmas delivery.

Pick one up at: Utica Catholic Bookstore • Shiloh Christian Bookstore - Boonville, NY •

Morgan's Tru-Value Hardware - Waterville, NY • Life Discovery Christian Bookstore - Whitesboro, NY

Order Online at [www.indieheaven.com](http://www.indieheaven.com) • [www.catholicmusicnetwork.com](http://www.catholicmusicnetwork.com)

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