

**Surrounded by the coming winter's quiet and sometimes harsh cold beauty
we "look to God" as we have made our way
through the streets of neighborhoods far and near
where so many long for a new light in the dark world and wait for awesome deeds
of hospitality, justice and peace "such as they have not heard of from of old."**

**The cold winds of the chilly air inviting us
to long for the quiet warmth of a glowing fire
around which we wait, sometimes with a heavy heart,
for a word of hope and promise inviting us to "be strong and take heart."**

**We enter into a space filled with reminders of the earth's quiet winter beauty,
dormant yet mysteriously alive, touched by human hands
artfully shaping the winter mystery;**

**We gather, encircled by a quiet warming light, our expectation made visible,
like branches brought in from the cold,
filled with the hope of something new and unexpected.**

**Here in the midst of a cold and frozen world we wait and trust
that even in winter new life buds and the day longed for is near.
So still we can sing: In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, do not be afraid."**

**We gather with the work of human hands:
--the artist's rendering of advent's longing and beauty, woven threads
gracing our space again, weaving light and darkness, promise and hope;
woven, like the human family, diverse and distinct,
yet forming one pattern of beauty, movement hope and life.**

A simple lighted candle, winter's colors, branches and trees, dancing around us:

**The gifts of God's creation
waiting in winter's cold for the beginning of new life promised:
"O! that you would rend the heavens and come down"
and meet us, *"running forth to meet your Christ..."***

**We hope, waiting for God's word to be enfolded in our words,
prayer, song, work and life, home and family.**

**Is it true? Are we the clay, the work of God's hand,
the eternal artist, forming and shaping us again by the work of eternal hands?**

**Yet as we wait it is happening,
the whole human family—persons of every sort and type, race and religion,
culture and nation are being shaped in the beauty that surrounds us,
in the spirit and heart of each person here and in every person everywhere.
While many today seek to hide it, the true face of God is being revealed
in the wonderful and mysterious diversity of the human family,
each being the work of God's hand.**

**It is happening, even when the spirit of too many human persons seems to have
“withered like leaves and is being carried away like the wind.”
It is seen again in the dedication, love and generosity of so many in every place
and here in this community of faith.**

**It is happening because we, with many in so many places, remember the others,
those who in this advent time, are served through our “Giving Tree.”
We remember the ones who have found “no room at the inn,”
no welcome dwelling place for families, mothers, fathers, and children:
It is they for whom we seek to make room, to build for them a dwelling place
through Family Promise, Habitat for Humanity
and Missoula Interfaith Collaborative.**

This past year has been for many filled with challenges.

We are in a world where we live the question:

“Why, O Lord, do you let us wander from your ways?”

**We are perplexed and filled with a dangerous fear and an overwhelming grief
by the immense violence in so many places and in our own streets:**

The hardened heart of racism and prejudice

and words of “supremacy” have once again become the “polluted rags” of our time.

And too many want to send others away, close doors and build walls.

“Why O Lord, do you let us wander from your ways and harden our hearts?”

These struggles, and many others, can divide us or draw us together.

“Would, O Lord, that you might meet us doing right, mindful of you in our ways!”

or as we sang with the Psalmist

“God of hosts bring us back, let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.”

“Be watchful, be alert! You do not know when the time will come.”

We dare not forget that we all are the clay—clay of the good earth,

God is the potter and we and the whole human family

are all the work of God's hands!

We are still enriched in every way ...and not lacking in any spiritual gift!

What in the end shapes and forms us?
The conflicts, polluted rags and evil deeds,
or the Gospel and the abiding presence of Christ
sending us to be a voice crying in the wilderness,
an ear listening to the cries of the many?

*“Be watchful, be alert” lest guilt can carry us away like the wind. “
“Be watchful” that Christ, who is running to us, might meet us doing right!*

Stay alert, and in the midst of “*polluted rags*” and “*withered leaves*”
someone still moves among us, like a quiet lighted candle,
moving slowly through our gatherings, and through our world, rarely watched,
hardly noticed, or attended to, yet it becomes a simple quiet sign
in the midst of the wandering ways and hardened hearts.

We believe it is true, the light of Christ is the way
to see our way through the perplexing “wanderings” of times like these....
even through our own fears, struggles, sickness, or grief.

The words are true again, forever true even in winter’s cold darkness:
“Look to God, do not be afraid; lift up your voices, the Lord is near!”

The light shines in our living—*our living!*
We are surrounded with the wonder of God’s creation:
The artful work of human hands ---a vision and promise of advent,
a simple quiet light....glowing;
and behold, like the branches brought in from the cold,
we wait for new life—and expect it to begin!

*“Christ will keep us firm to the end
irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
God is faithful, and by God we were called to communion with Jesus Christ,”*
WHO IS RUNNING TO MEET US DOING RIGHT.



Blessed
Trinity
CATHOLIC
COMMUNITY

“What is say to you, I say to all, Watch!