

1st Sunday of Advent

Reflection By Br. Jack Ventura, SM

The Advent season is not a time of repentance and sacrifice, but rather a season of sacred waiting, holy anticipation, and preparation for the fulfillment of God's promise. Advent also invites us to acquire an expectant heart for the coming of Christ — not just in the manger, but in the margins. This expectant heart reframes sacred waiting through the unique lens of LGBTQ+ experiences. Advent begins with a stirring invitation: "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord." Isaiah's vision is one of movement — of people streaming toward God's mountain, drawn by a promise of peace and belonging. For the LGBTQ+ community, this image is both hopeful and healing. It reminds us that we are not on the outside looking in. We are part of the procession, part of the promise, part of the people God calls to walk in the light.

But for many LGBTQ+ people, the spiritual journey has already been one of watchfulness — waiting for welcome, longing for dignity, hoping the Church will see them not as problems to solve but as gifts to receive. St. Paul's words in Romans — "The night is advanced, the day is at hand" — becomes a call to claim our belovedness to step into the day, and to trust that God's dawn includes us.

Who is better to guide us in this waiting than the Blessed Virgin Mary? She is the heart of Advent — the one who waited in faith, who said yes even when the path ahead was uncertain and carried Christ in her body. She teaches us that waiting is not passive. It is active, courageous, and deeply relational. Mary's expectant heart beats in rhythm with every LGBTQ+ person who has dared to hope, who has held onto faith in the face of rejection, who has believed that love wins. Mary becomes a companion in the spiritual wilderness — someone who knows what it means to be misunderstood, to carry a truth that others may not yet recognize, to hold joy and sorrow all in the same breath.

As we journey through Advent, we are to recognize that the incarnation — God dwelling among us — happens in everyone, in every story, in every longing for belonging, not as outsiders to the story of salvation, but as beloved participants in it. Hence, we are called, like Mary, to make space for Christ in our hearts and in our communities, not just in our wombs, but in the world. Her expectant heart allowed her to say yes to a radical inclusion. That means making space for all people: LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, the elderly, the young, the disenfranchised. It means trusting that God is already at work in their lives, speaking through their stories and dwelling in their expectant hearts.

The most radical acts of faith often begin in quiet places. Ultimately, An Expectant Heart is not just about LGBTQ+ inclusion. It is about Advent itself — about waiting for a God who surprises us by showing up in unexpected places. It is about preparing our hearts to receive Christ in the lives of those we have too often overlooked. And it is about becoming the kind of community where every person can say, "I am home," in the house of the God of Jacob.

About the Author: Br. Jack is a native of New York City and currently serves as the Director of Mission Integration at Chaminade-Madonna College Preparatory in Hollywood, FL. He has an MBA from Iona College, NY, a master's degree in Applied Spirituality from the University of San Francisco, and a master's degree in Pastoral Ministry from Loyola University in New Orleans. Br. Jack has served in various ministries for the SM Province, including vocations, formation, and provincial administration. Recently, Br. Jack presented a concurrent session at the 2024 MSJC Imago Dei assembly titled Living Our Marianist Charism: Embracing the LGBTQ+ Community and was a co-speaker at the 2025 MSJC LGBTQ+ Retreat in Chicago where the theme was Be Not Afraid: A Sacred Gathering with Mary of Welcome, Hope, and Belonging.