



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

Daily Devotion at Zion + November 28, 2021 AD + [Advent Season](#)

Being Truly Human, Part One: Naked

Advent and Christmas are all about being human.

Being human is a good thing. Not only did God create us human, but He also *became* human. He took on our flesh through the Virgin Mary so that He might raise our flesh from the dead. Even now, He feeds that very flesh to His Church, the same flesh fashioned in the Virgin's womb and raised from the dead, promising that by this risen human flesh we commune with God.

Do we need better proof that God has created, redeemed, and even now sanctifies our human life?

Yet we poor sinners are rarely at home in our skin. We seek to be more than flesh—we seek to be God. That attempt to be God is the heart of being a sinner. So for every Advent, the Church joins God in traveling the opposite direction. With Jesus, we seek nothing more than to be human, the men and women God created us to be, with our feet firmly planted on this good earth.

This first part (as strange as it may sound) is learning to be *naked* again. “Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:25). Being naked is not about having your clothes off; it's about being bare in your soul, at home in your skin, and honest to God. Read on to learn more!

About the Cover Art

This painting comes from the Sisters of the Mississippi Abbey, and portrays an imagined scene of the Virgin Mary, pregnant, comforting Eve. Why does Eve need comfort? She did not heed the Word of the Lord and has fallen into sin, bearing all of her children into death, though they were destined for life. Yet now Mary, who accepted God's Word, bears a Child destined for death who will rise up into life, life for Eve and all her children. Notice how Eve presses a hand to touch her descendant growing in Mary's swollen womb. She reaches for what it is put in your hand every Sunday, the Body of Christ our Savior.

The First Joy of Being Human

“She gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths” (Luke 2:7).

Our God was born naked. He didn't come with a suit of armor. He came as an endangered infant, in deep need of a mother and father. Though He is the Creator of Life, He put His life at the mercy of Mary and Joseph. When He was crucified, it happened again: the baby wrapped in cloths was stripped. “They divided His garments among them” (Matt. 27:35). Our mighty Lord put Himself in the hands of others once again.

In that tender humanity, we meet true Life. Put your hand on your beating heart; feel your stomach growl; pinch your skin. Life has been *given* to you, and you only live by *receiving* life from beyond yourself. A startling truth! But also a freeing one. For does it not fill you with joy? God must love you, to give you such life. In your very need, He's inviting you to trust Him, to live by faith, and to be filled with thanksgiving! (Turn the page!)

Daily Readings for the Week of Advent 1 (November 28)

S Amos 1:1-5, 13—2:8
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11
Luke 21:5-19

Th Amos 4:6-13
2 Peter 3:11-18
Matthew 21:33-46

M Amos 2:6-16
2 Peter 1:1-11
Matthew 21:1-11

F Amos 5:1-17
Jude 1-16
Matthew 22:1-14

T Amos 3:1-11
2 Peter 1:12-21
Matthew 21:12-22

Sa Amos 5:18-27
Jude 17-25
Matthew 22:15-22

W Amos 3:12—4:5
2 Peter 3:1-10
Matthew 21:23-32

These readings correspond to pages 3-38 in Volume III of For All the Saints.

Being Naked, Being Human: Giving Thanks

Do you want thanksgiving to be as sweet as the food on your table?

God has many ways that He leads His people to give thanks. For the hard-hearted, He may strike them with the fear of loss. A close call on the road, an encounter with someone suffering terrible things, a story of someone just like you, losing all that he possesses—it can strike the self-satisfied soul with a sudden awareness of its fragility and prompt a measure of gratitude: “Wow! When I met that really poor person, and saw all he suffered, I went home and gave thanks for what I had!”

God also can command thanksgiving. “For all this we gladly thank and praise, serve and obey Him,” chants the Small Catechism. By reminding us of our blessings and their true source, God can raise up thanksgiving from a sense of obligation. “Ok. Before we eat, we really *should* pause, and everyone say what they’re thankful for.” *Family groans around the table*. “Now, don’t groan! It’s the least we can do!”

Then there is the third way God plants thanksgiving in our hearts and on our lips: He overwhelms us with the beauty of His generosity by reacquainting us with our true nakedness (as described on page 3). By becoming flesh and putting Himself at the mercy of others, He shows us how all of human life depends on His providence and mercy, from the first fission of life in the womb to our final breath and the new world of resurrection. Where does such knowledge lead but to thanksgiving?

In the devotional task of thanksgiving, you exercise your humanity. You awaken to the joy of being a child of Adam and Eve, acquainted with your Maker and His blessings, all of life becoming a paradise to you once more as you see it with the eyes of gratitude. We come into the world with nothing, and so do we leave, and yet in the bare, naked life is the fullness of divine love and generosity, overflowing!