

“The Birth of Love” by Carole E. Gregory

As a child, I did not understand Advent,
days when my Grandmother Mary would fast.
No more sweet potatoes and greens.
I loved her, and joined her missing meals
and praying. My stomach growled.
“Christ is coming,” she would whisper.
“Wasn’t Christ already here?” my child’s mind asked.
Years passed like old calendar notes of what we once did
during past days of being hungry
for righteousness before Christmas.
Now in my heart, covered by 9/11 dust,
I recalled as Advent was coming,
all church doors were opened to all races and creeds,
saints and sinners and Psalm praisers and heretics
were like dancers at Mardi Gras in New Orleans.
Fears from the views of the jetliners
crashing into the Towers start fading,
and then some nights the nightmares of workers
jumping out of the Towers’ windows slowly returned.
Nightmares are at night
and some during the day
since America went to war in Afghanistan for 20 years,
and now, in 2023 December,
my second cousin’s married son
who has a wife and a new baby,
is being secretly deployed as a Marine to fight in the Ukraine.

We will say: *“Advent is here. Christ is coming,”*
and His great Love will cast out fears as we celebrate
Christmas season when we shall send cards and visit each other,
drinking hot apple cider and giving new sweaters
and books as presents,
Year after year of 9/11 days pass
with images of coffins and the red, white, and blue flags.
At that time, 2019 COVID death announcements closed our churches,
neighbor feared neighbor,
and undocumented immigrants’ bodies
were stacked up outside of a Queens hospital,
police in Los Angeles arrested young men
in the Pacific Ocean for surfing.
My history teacher loved Duke Ellington’s “Take the A Train,”
and he fought in World War II,
saying that Hitler banned Advent calendars.
As Advent approaches,
we hold on to the promises : the Rose of Sharon is coming:
Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God,
the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.
I feel a child’s joy.

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