

**First Week**  
**PREPARATION AND WAITING**

**Psalm 25:5 (NRSV)**

*Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.*

**Galatians 5:5 (NRSV)**

*For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope  
of righteousness.*

Advent is a time within the Christian calendar when we prepare ourselves and await the coming of Emmanuel, God with us. While reading the stories below of the Holy Spirit at work in the lives of others who waited and prepared, try to recall your own feelings of anticipation for the coming of the Christ child and the hope he represents.

Have there been other events in your life that required preparation and waiting? Maybe news about a job, a move to a different city, a wedding, or the birth of a child? Remembering those feelings, ask God to rekindle in your heart this Advent season a joyful anticipation of the great gift of the birth of Jesus.

***The Egg*, by Sister Theresa Merwin, MFIC, former UAC-CP professor**

In the late 1980s, I went to work with our sisters in northern Peru. In those days, the parishes sent horses out and we would travel on horseback, spending a few weeks in the rural *casaríos*, or provinces. My first week, I went out with Sister Carmela, a very dedicated Peruvian sister, who had worked for years in the area. A man named Manuel arrived in the morning with two horses to pick us up, then he

walked alongside as we rode the horses for the five hours it took to get to *Casarío Chumaya*, a rural section of the Sondor province.



When we arrived, we went into the house of the parish coordinator, a man named Fortunato, and sat down with him and two other men from the parish. Manuel stayed out back to give water to the horses. Fortunato's wife came from the kitchen with two hard-boiled eggs and a small piece of cheese on a little plate. I knew that I had to be careful with food to not get sick, but I recognized eggs!

Sr. Carmela had a small piece of cheese, and moved the plate of eggs closer to me, and said, “*Madre*, eat.” I was ravenous with hunger. I shelled the egg and ate it, and thought that I had hit bingo. Knowing there was a second egg still on the plate for me, I thought, “This is marvelous.” I tried to stay focused on the conversation about the activities in the parish, but my Spanish wasn’t very good. And I was thinking about that second egg.

I was already reaching for that second egg when Manuel came in and sat down with us at the table. Only by the grace of God, at the last second, it dawned on me that it might be nice to offer the egg to Manuel. He came all that way to get us, then walked the whole way back, and now he’s sitting at the table. If I’m ravenous, how must he

feel? So I took the plate, and in my halting Spanish, I offered it to Manuel.

He very graciously took the plate with the egg on it, took the egg from the plate, and began shelling it. When he was finished, he divided that one egg into four parts, and he reached with the palm of his hand over to Fortunato, then to the parish coordinator, then to the *asistente social*, and took the last piece for himself. And every one of them, simply, graciously, accepted that piece of egg, said *gracias*, and didn't miss a beat in the conversation.

I actually lost the power of speech. I wanted desperately for that floor to open up, so I could jump in and disappear. It didn't ever cross my mind to offer that first egg to somebody at that table – I had already wolfed it down. Never mind that this man, as hungry as I was, divided the single egg into four pieces.

I am so grateful that God used this simple act to remind me of how much I had to learn. It prepared my heart and mind to serve the people in this place.

### ***Life Long Lessons*, by Pamela Rocha, UAC-CP Graduate**

I was born into a very large family with parents who struggled to give their five children what they could. For that reason, my sisters and brother and I learned to share absolutely everything – from the clothes on our backs to the shoes on our feet. Everything that no longer fit the bigger siblings was passed down to the smaller ones. That was normal for me, and it prepared me somewhat for one specific time during college.

My second year at school, in 2003, there were major political problems in the country. (We now refer to this time as “The Gas War.”) The problems brought blockades, which in turn meant that food and other goods couldn't get through to Carmen Pampa. There was almost nothing to buy in the little food kiosks at the College.

We were 14 young women living together in my dormitory room at the time. I think we were all hungrier during that one week of heightened political tension than we were during our entire five years at school. We each took out our food reserves that we had stashed, and friends who were in the College's student-run food program brought food back to the dorm to share. We boiled water in our room and then, over

a little wooden box in the middle of the room, we placed what very little we had to eat, to share among friends as we sat together and laughed and told stories.



As a graduate, this is one of the lessons from my time at the College that I will carry with me for my whole life. Despite the fact that your friends at school aren't part of your family and come from very different places and have very different customs and cultures, there is great value in living together with people who are open to sharing everything they have with others, with the goal of coming together. I'm grateful for this lesson and the love that it represents.

**Questions for contemplation and discussion:**

- Have you had similar experiences of radical preparation and sharing in your life?
- How does God prepare us for His coming? What can we do as we prepare and wait?

**Prayer:** Heavenly Father, please help us to always be open to the ways you prepare us. Please also fill us with great anticipation as we prepare to celebrate the birth of your son Emmanuel, God with us, now and forever. Amen.