

“Sr. Genevieve’s storytelling and personal reflections illuminate unexpected nuggets of wisdom found in the living Word. As I read this book, I knew I was reading the words of a wise woman of prayer! This is a book I will turn to again and again for inspiration.”

—Becky Eldredge, author of *The Inner Chapel* and
Busy Lives & Restless Souls

“Sr. Genevieve Glen invites us to read with her in the lamplight, to be enlightened by a ‘small, warm, and friendly flame,’ which is the divine Presence. She uses poetry, history, and her own life experience to give us a new way of looking at familiar biblical stories and personalities. What shines out under this lamplight is Sr. Genevieve’s prayerful reflection from many years of living with the word of God.”

—Jerome Kodell, OSB, former abbot of Subiaco Abbey,
Subiaco, Arkansas

“Sr. Genevieve Glen, OSB, offers us a book penned with lyrical language that invites compelling inquiry. I’ve read books that leave me with a felt connection to the writer. This book is the first one that left me with the impression that the author actually knows me, the reader.”

—Mary Margaret Funk, OSB, Our Lady of Grace
Monastery, Beech Grove, Indiana

By Lamplight

A Book of Biblical Reflections

Genevieve Glen, OSB

A Give Us This Day Book



LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota

www.litpress.org

A *Give Us This Day* Book
published by Liturgical Press

Cover design by Amy Marc

Cover art courtesy of Getty Images

Versions of many of these essays originally appeared in *Give Us This Day* (Collegetville, MN: Liturgical Press), www.giveusthisday.org. Used with permission.

With the exception of psalms, all Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Unless otherwise noted, the translation of the psalms are from *The Ecumenical Grail Psalter* © 2015, Conception Abbey/The Grail, admin. by GIA Publications, Inc., www.giamusic.com. All rights reserved.

Excerpts from the English translation of a Non-Biblical Reading from *The Liturgy of the Hours* © 1973, 1974, 1975, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL); excerpts from the English translation of *The Roman Missal* © 2010, ICEL. All rights reserved.

© 2021 by Genevieve Glen, OSB

Published by Liturgical Press, Collegetville, Minnesota. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever, except brief quotations in reviews, without written permission of Liturgical Press, Saint John's Abbey, PO Box 7500, Collegetville, MN 56321-7500. Printed in the United States of America.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Glen, Genevieve, author.

Title: By lamplight : a book of biblical reflections / Genevieve Glen, OSB.

Description: Collegetville, Minnesota : Liturgical Press, [2021] | Includes bibliographical references. | Summary: "Reflections on familiar images of Word and Light, from Nazareth to Emmaus, Psalms to Beatitudes, Advent to Pentecost, through characters, stories, and prayers"— Provided by publisher.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021025714 (print) | LCCN 2021025715 (ebook) | ISBN 9780814666104 (paperback) | ISBN 9780814666364 (epub) | ISBN 9780814666364 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Meditations. | Catholic Church—Doctrines—Meditations.

Classification: LCC BX2182.3 G54 2021 (print) | LCC BX2182.3 (ebook) | DDC 242—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021025714>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021025715>

Acknowledgments

This book would never have happened without the encouragement and inspiration of Abbess Maria-Michael, OSB, and the nuns of my Benedictine community, the Abbey of St. Walburga. And it would never have reached print without the patient encouragement and editorial skill of Peter Dwyer, director of Liturgical Press, and Mary Stommes, editor of *Give Us This Day*, both long-valued friends, and the newfound gem of an editor, Amy Ekeh, director of Little Rock Scripture Study, and without the dedication and skill of the staff of Liturgical Press.

Contents

Introduction: Reading by Lamplight 11

PASSAGES AND PEOPLE

Open the Door 14

The Measure of Love 16

Stay at Home 18

Blessed Are They Who Mourn 20

God's Vocabulary 23

Jesus' Not-So-Hidden Years 25

Landscapes of Hope 29

The Gift of a Stone 33

Sheep and Goats: Taking Another Look 37

Anna 40

Good News 43

Who? 46

Way Will Open 49

The Folly of Solomon 53

Us and Them 57

Here I Am . . . But Who Are You? 61

Voice and Word 63

Surely Not I, Lord? 65

A Different Desert 68

Suffer Many Tribulations? 70

8 *By Lamplight*

Honey from the Rock 72

PRAYERS AND PSALMS

Seat of Wisdom 78

Psalm 63: Prayer Before the Blessed Sacrament 80

Holy Door 82

Confiteor: We Confess 84

Prayer for the Preparation of the Bread 86

The Eucharistic Doxology: A Prepositional Spirituality 89

Star of the Sea 91

ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

Look to the Light: The First Sunday of Advent 96

Psalm 46: An Advent Prayer for Quiet 98

St. Joseph and the Puritans 100

Come, Lord Jesus 104

Glory to God in the Highest 106

Psalm 1: A Baptismal Prayer for a New Year and a New Start 109

LENT AND EASTER

Ash Wednesday: Opening Prayer 112

On Not Wanting to Wake Up 114

On Becoming a Blessing 117

The Wisdom of the Moths 121

Strength for the Cross 124

The Donkey's Story: Palm Sunday 127

Behold the Lamb of God: Holy Thursday 131

Tasting Dust: Good Friday 133

The Silence of the Word: Holy Saturday 135

The Easter Journey to Emmaus 138

Resurrection Step by Step 141

Easter Unseen 145

The Divine Mercy: What Mary Knew 148

References 151

Introduction: Reading by Lamplight

Abraham Lincoln became my hero when I was nine years old—not, alas, because of the Gettysburg Address or the Emancipation Proclamation, but because I was chosen to act the role in a class play in honor of Lincoln’s birthday. The choice was not made because of my thespian talents. It was because I was the tallest kid in the class.

All I remember about this dramatic debut was the paper stovepipe hat and the fake beard and the protests of the boys who, I am happy to report, soon outgrew me. But by that time my family had moved to a colder climate and into a house with a real fireplace. Always an avid reader, I discovered the joy of lying on the floor in front of a good fire, reading a book. When my father protested about eyestrain, I called upon Lincoln’s example for vindication. While boning up to play the role, I had learned that, being poor, Lincoln read by the fire at night because he had to work during the day. This did not stop him from becoming president, giving the Gettysburg Address, or issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. So I continued to read by the fire.

Many years later I lived in Houston for some time. NASA’s mission control was only a few miles down the road, and all eyes were on space. One night, by some quirk of an unusually cooperative atmosphere, the skies above us, typically masked by city lights, were carpeted with stars. I went outside to see. As I looked at all that faraway white beauty, I was suddenly struck by fear and loneliness. There I was, a tiny, insignificant speck of humanity, totally overwhelmed by that vast, impersonal glory, starlit but untenanted—or so it seemed. Unseen mercy supplied a line from the book of Revelation: “The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of

God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb” (21:23). And the Lamb was a person I knew and loved. My loneliness and disorientation slipped away. That immense white field of lights was funneled down to a single light by which I could see and walk unafraid.

Lamplight, I came to realize, was firelight when Revelation was written. With a lamp, one could take comfort in reading by a small, warm, and friendly flame. And this flame was the Presence who is “the light of the world” (John 8:12), God’s burning love made flesh. A line from the Psalms has been my guide ever since: “Your word is a lamp for my feet, / and a light for my path” (119:105). It is the light by which I have read the passages that have inspired the reflections in this book.

Reading is never a solitary act, even when no one else can be seen in the room. I am deeply grateful to all those, visible and invisible, who have held the lamp for me down the years so that I could read more clearly. And to Abraham Lincoln, who first taught me that however dark the night may be, you can always read by the light of the fire.



**Passages and
People**



Open the Door

Come, let us walk in the light of the LORD.

—*Isaiah 2:5*

When I wake up in the early morning dark, the door of my room is outlined faintly in light from the hall. Out there are morning coffee, notes about the day on the white board on the way to the coffee pot, information about what liturgy we're celebrating today, and, of course, the rest of my community. Out there are the good things that go a long way toward making me who I am.

"Come," says the prophet Isaiah. In other words, we have to leave where we are and go somewhere else. He's inviting us to get up from whatever darkness we might be inhabiting right now and go out there, to the house of God, from which flows the one essential light: the light of the Lord. Without that light, we risk wandering around in the dark all day, even when kitchen lights, office lights, warehouse lights, school lights, and a plethora of other lights shine around us everywhere we go. Of course, we know something Isaiah could only hope for: the essential light is not a bulb flipped on by a switch, but Jesus Christ, a person, "the light of the world" (John 8:12). For us, he is the light that leads us through and beyond every dark place. We don't always see or recognize him among all those other bright and familiar lights. But God has given us a book of instructions to help us recognize which light is which and to guide us to the one that will lead us even through the ultimate darkness of

death. We know this book as the Bible: “Your word is a lamp for my feet, / and a light for my path” (Ps 119:105).

Of course, this path lets us go in two directions: out and in. The prophet invites us to go out—to leave where we are and go somewhere we aren’t yet. But the path on which the Word of God sets our feet can also take us *in*. We live in Christ, the Light, so we can expect to find that light in the depths of our lives, the depths of our minds and hearts. However, “in” may be the last place we want to go to seek it. When we turn inward, we may have to face the dark places of our own hearts. We all have them, and we don’t usually want to go there. But if we do, we may see a door outlined in light. And we may hear someone knocking at it, and a voice saying, “Here I am! I stand at the door knocking! Let me in so we can sit down together for a while!” (see Rev 3:20). And when we open the door, we will find that Christ is there, in our deepest center, flooding our interior darkness with light. That flood of light banishes the darkness, warms the cold places, and gives us the energy to embrace life as it comes to us today.

Come. Take up the invitation. Dare to walk out of the dark—whether it’s loneliness, emptiness, fear, anger, or some other misery. Open the door that is in you. The Light that you meet there can be blinding. You may find yourself disoriented for a bit, but just stay for a while on the threshold till the eyes of your heart adjust. Then go wherever the Light shines. You might be surprised by where the path leads.