

Expecting during Advent

By [Laura Kelly Fanucci](#)

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Four times I've been pregnant during Advent. [The first time](#). [The second time](#). [The third time](#). Now the fourth time.

Four times I've teared up at all the hymns about waiting for a child. Four times I've connected with the stories of annunciation and visitation in a tender and touching way. I know many mothers have shared the wonder of this experience, to be expecting when the whole world seems to be expectant, too.

But this time around? **I'm learning about the darker side. The vulnerability and uncertainty and mystery of what that first Advent must have meant.**

I'm in the midst of my most uncertain pregnancy yet: I'm expecting twins. Double the babies. Double the exhaustion. Double the anxiety. I do not know what will come or how this story will end. I have to lean into trust and faith every single day.

Honestly, I hate it.

I'm not supposed to say that, of course. People like certainty with Big News. They want to hear that I am excited, that I'm feeling great, that everything is going well with the babies.

It's the same with Advent, isn't it? We like our liturgical seasons sweet and sparkling. (No wonder Lent is such a long slog.) Give us the growing excitement of Advent calendars and Christmas countdowns. Whisper to us of angels' songs and wise men's gifts, and we thrill at the prospect.

Incarnation is lovely, isn't it? **Only it's terrifying, too.**

God-with-us? Shatters every neat category that lets us make sense of the world. The most powerful born as the most poor? Now we start to squirm.

A virgin gets pregnant. From our far side of the story, it seems a magical twist to a fairy tale. Only for Mary, the marginalized girl from Nazareth, poor and alone with a

baffling voice in her ear, it must have been the ultimate undoing of everything she hoped and planned for her life.

Everything she understood about the way the world—and God—worked. Torn apart and turned inside out. Suddenly the rest of her life loomed differently.

**Incarnation is messy business.** Any time we dare to follow in its footsteps, to bring something new or good or holy or beautiful into the world, against all odds—we are stepping into dangerous territory. Illusions of safety and certainty and comfort are simply that: mirages to which we cling to make the vulnerability of living more bearable.

And yet if all of us are called to be God-bearers in our own small, sinful, stumbling ways—to look to the [Theotokos](#) herself and wonder at how she did it, poor brave strong young woman that she was—then there is no other way to be in this dark world, other than to wake each morning, to breathe deeply into Spirit and hope, and to pray for the strength to do whatever hard and holy work we are called to do.

Life is not ultimately about what we want or what we plan. It is about how we face what life brings to us. I suppose I shall have to keep learning this lesson over and over. I suppose we all do.

Lately I've been thinking that I don't know the first thing about what Advent means. What it means to wait, to want, to wonder at the coming of Christ himself. I'm awash in the mystery and magnitude and mess of how incarnation changes everything.

Maybe the more trips I take around the sun—certainly the more times I find myself expecting during this strange season of expectation—I realize how little I know. How vast God's mysteries must be.

How tender and terrifying it is to celebrate a season of unknowing.

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