

God's womb of compassion (Psalm 25:1-10; Luke 21:25-36)

## **Advent must respond in some consequential way to the widening uncertainty of the living of our days.**

by [Willie Dwayne Francois III](#)

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This Advent, the decades-long campaign to micromanage women's bodies now features draconian state-level anti-abortion measures to intimidate healthcare providers and women.

These attacks stem almost exclusively from conservative Christian camps, particularly those that hide their White privilege, patriarchy, and supremacy behind evangelical grammar.

How do our masculinist and androcentric images of God foreclose the mandate to honor the autonomy and dignity of women? Advent asks us to re-imagine God beyond such exploitative and predatory images. As we journey toward Christmastide amid chronic instability, our calling to be fully human invites us to affirm the inbreaking God of justice as a mother.

The psalmist offers, "Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old." The original words used here for steadfast love, *hesed*, and mercy, *rechem*, are unbroken tropes throughout the Hebrew Bible. *Hesed* refers to the everpresent love of God uniquely bent in our direction. *Rechem* signals the concept of the womb. The psalmist evokes the vitality of God's "womb compassion," the eternal love that a mother possesses for children.

A mother represents a baby's initial relationship and orientation to the world. Maternal imagery and symbolism for God foreground the impact of mothers, which ripples into myriad facets of their offsprings' lives. Research indicates that mother love produces better human beings. It grows our brains, physical discipline, and emotional intelligence.

The anatomical imagery employed here makes for theological meaning-making. It allows us to overcome our skirmishes about our bodies and cast resolute images of God as a woman. The womb offers a baby a safe place to develop and grow into its life. It also occupies the space between the rectum and bladder. God's mercy develops and grows us between the mess and the waste of life.

What of hope when life proves so delicate and brittle? The apocalyptic tone of Jesus' urgent words in the Gospel passage gestures toward the sheer fragility of existence racked by mass inequality, unchecked corruption, and painful precarity. Advent must respond in some consequential way to the widening uncertainty of the living of our days. When trapped between the tension of what we do not like and that with which we cannot live, our mothering God re-members us, increases our wisdom, and effortfully rebirths us. In the womb of compassion, the violated and sinned against receive life-sustaining nutrients.

The cultural and political crises besieging our nation beg people of faith and conscience to declutter our theological knapsack of harmful images and to begin to honor the feminine strength of the divine. Mother God falls off the lips of people aching for compassionate reminders of our *somebodiness*. This Advent, maybe we can dare to speak of and to the Ancient of Days [as womanists prayed in San Francisco at a 2018 Beyonce Mass](#): Our Mother, / who is in heaven and within us, / we call upon your names."