

ADVENT 2

The Kingdom by R. S. Thomas

It's a long way off but inside it
There are quite different things going on:
Festivals at which the poor man
Is king and the consumptive is
Healed; mirrors in which the blind look
At themselves and love looks at them
Back; and industry is for mending
The bent bones and the minds fractured
By life. It's a long way off, but to get
There takes no time and admission
Is free, if you purge yourself
Of desire, and present yourself with
Your need only and the simple offering
Of your faith, green as a leaf.

The Archangel Uriel: a detail from *The Madonna of the Rocks*

(Leonardo da Vinci) c 1508. This is from the National Gallery version of the work. This angel has a hand placed on the back of the infant Jesus and is introducing him to John the Baptist as a young child. It has the most peaceful and loving expression on its face.



(Uriel, the angel of wisdom and truth is described in the Apocrypha, and is supposed to have rescued John the Baptist from the massacre of the Holy Innocents. The picture from which this detail is taken depicts the family reunion in Egypt.....)