Scripture: *"Come, Thou long-expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free; from our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee."*

Devotion:

As we rehearse Mary McDonald's arrangement of "Joy of Every Longing Heart," we are singing through the deep anticipation of Advent. Charles Wesley's classic words remind us that Jesus didn't just arrive in history—He enters directly into our real lives today.

Notice how the piece balances urgency and assurance. We open with a cry for freedom and rest: *"From our fears and sins release us; let us find our rest in Thee"*. Then, as the music builds through the echoes of "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" and moves toward its powerful climax, we proclaim His ultimate purpose—He is born a Child and yet a King, reigning in our hearts and raising us by His grace.

When we prepare this cantata, it is easy to focus strictly on the mechanics—the energetic tempo, the dynamic shifts from *mp* to *ff*, and holding our harmony parts cleanly. But remember that your voices are carrying a profound prayer for everyone who will hear this piece. Many sitting in the pews this Christmas will walk in carrying heavy burdens, deep fears, and tired spirits.

As we sing *"Joy of every longing heart"* today, let's allow that truth to settle into our own hearts first. May our preparation tonight be more than just a musical practice; may it be an offering of praise to the One who releases our fears, grants us true rest, and brings eternal joy.

Prayer: *Lord, thank You for being our strength, our consolation, and the joy of our longing hearts. As we lift our voices to rehearse this music, shape our hearts to reflect Your love. Use our worship to bring Your peace and freedom to all who will hear it this Christmas season. In Jesus' name, Amen.*