

# 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

YEAR B



## WATCHING WITH HOPE

PRAYER JOURNAL

## OPENING PRAYER

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
my soul waits for the LORD  
more than watchmen for the morning,  
more than watchmen for the morning.

O Israel, hope in the LORD!  
For with the LORD there is mercy,  
and with him is plenteous redemption.

—Psalm 130:5–7(RSV)

# READINGS FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## FIRST READING

**-Isaiah 63:16b–17, 19b, 64:2–7**

**Y**ou, Lord, are our father, / our redeemer you are named forever. /  
Why do you let us wander, O LORD, from your ways, / and harden  
our hearts so that we fear you not? / Return for the sake of your servants,  
/ the tribes of your heritage. / Oh, that you would rend the heavens and  
come down, / with the mountains quaking before you, / while you wrought  
awesome deeds we could not hope for, / such as they had not heard of from  
of old. / No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you / doing  
such deeds for those who wait for him. / Would that you might meet us  
doing right, / that we were mindful of you in our ways! / Behold, you are  
angry, and we are sinful; / all of us have become like unclean people, / all our  
good deeds are like polluted rags; / we have all withered like leaves, / and our  
guilt carries us away like the wind. / There is none who calls upon your name,  
/ who rouses himself to cling to you; / for you have hidden your face from us  
/ and have delivered us up to our guilt. / Yet, O LORD, you are our father; / we  
are the clay and you the potter: / we are all the work of your hands.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

~Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19~

**R/ Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,  
from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.  
Rouse your power,  
and come to save us.

**R/**

Once again, O LORD of hosts,  
look down from heaven, and see;  
take care of this vine,  
and protect what your right hand has planted  
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

**R/**

May your help be with the man of your right hand,  
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.  
Then we will no more withdraw from you;  
give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

**R/**

## SECOND READING

~1 Corinthians 1:3-9~

**B**rothers and sisters: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## GOSPEL

~Mark 13:33-37~

**J**esus said to his disciples:  
“Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’”

## *Sunday*



### LECTIO DIVINA – SACRED READING OF SCRIPTURE

*Feel free to jot down your notes or reflections on the video in the space below.*

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### LECTIO DIVINA – MEDITATION

#### SMALL GROUP QUESTION #1

**In the first reading from Isaiah 63:17 we read, “Why do you let us wander, O Lord, from your ways, / and harden our hearts so that we fear you not?” In what ways do you wander from the Lord? How has your heart become hard?**

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**SMALL GROUP QUESTION #2**

**We do not know when Christ will come. How do you delay seeking Christ today? What distracts you from watching for him faithfully?**

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**LECTIO DIVINA – PRAYER & RESOLUTION**

**PRAYER**

Reflect on the word *watch*. Jesus uses it three times in today’s Gospel. Are you watching for anything in your life? What do you find yourself expectantly waiting for? How do you watch for Christ in your day-to-day life?

Take some time to reflect on a word or phrase that stands out to you from today’s Gospel. Reflect on it and apply it to your own life. For example, “You do not know when the time will come” (Mk 13:33). You could ask yourself, “What am I doing each day to seek out Christ? Have I put off prayer and pursuing a relationship with him, thinking that I can start tomorrow?”

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## RESOLUTION

St. Paul tells the people of Corinth, “God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9). How will you answer the call to fellowship with Christ this Advent? What is one practical way you will prepare the home of your heart for the coming of the Christ Child?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Therefore, since we are justified by faith,  
we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand,  
and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.  
More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings,  
knowing that suffering produces endurance,  
and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,  
and hope does not disappoint us,  
because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through  
the Holy Spirit  
who has been given to us.

—Romans 5:1–5(RSV)

***“Hope is the theological virtue  
by which we desire the kingdom of heaven  
and eternal life as our happiness,  
placing our trust in Christ’s promises  
and relying not on our own strength,  
but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit.”***

—CCC 1817

## Monday

In the Gospel reading, Jesus shares a parable to explain the necessity for our watchfulness. In it, he explains that he leaves his servants in charge, “each with his own work.” What work has God given to you? How have you been faithful to this call? How have you been distracted from it?

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***“The unity of the lay faithful is of the greatest importance: indeed they must be sanctified in everyday professional and social life. Therefore, to respond to their vocation, the lay faithful must see their daily activities as an occasion to join themselves to God, fulfill his will, serve other people, and lead them to communion with God in Christ.”***

**—Christifideles Laici, 17**

## Tuesday

In today’s Gospel, Jesus warns us to be “watchful” and “alert.” What are you watching for this Advent season? Are you watchful for the upcoming sales and holiday celebrations, or for the coming of Christ? Where is your heart focused as you enter into this Advent season?

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***“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him.”***

**—1 Corinthians 2:9(RSV)**

## Wednesday

In the First Reading, Isaiah laments the brokenness of Israel and the world. Yet, as he does this, he pleads that God will come and set things right. How do you remain hopeful in the midst of the tribulations and darkness we face in the world? How can you cling to the hope of Christ's second coming rather than despair?

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*"By hope we desire, and with steadfast trust await from God,  
eternal life and the graces to merit it."*

—CCC 1843

## Thursday

In the First Reading, Isaiah exhorts us, "Would that we were mindful of you in our ways." How are you mindful of God as you go about your day? Commit to bringing him to mind consistently throughout your day today.

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***"Why are you cast down,  
O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God;  
for I shall again praise him, my help and my God."***

—Psalm 42:5–6 (RSV)



## Friday

In the Second Reading and Gospel, St. Paul and Jesus both exhort us to be “irreproachable” at the time of Christ’s coming and “on guard.” How can you strive to be a vigilant servant?

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*“We need the greater and lesser hopes that keep us going day by day.  
But these are not enough without the great hope,  
which must surpass everything else.  
This great hope can only be God,  
who encompasses the whole of reality  
and who can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain.”*  
—Spe Salvi, 31

## Saturday

Dr. Gray spoke of the four watches of the night as they followed Christ’s Passion in the breaking of the bread, the prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter’s denial of Jesus, and Jesus’s trial before Pilate. What obstacles have you experienced as you await Christ’s second coming? Commit to following Jesus’s example by praying and clinging to him in the Eucharist throughout these trials.

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*“In order to leave them a pledge of this love,  
in order never to depart from his own and to make them sharers in his Passover,  
he instituted the Eucharist  
as the memorial of his death and Resurrection,  
and commanded his apostles to celebrate it until his return.”*

—CCC 1337

# 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

YEAR B



A TIME  
OF PREPARATION

PRAYER JOURNAL

## OPENING PRAYER

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD!  
Lord, hear my voice!  
Let your ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplications!  
If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,  
Lord, who could stand?  
But there is forgiveness with you,  
that you may be feared.  
O Israel, hope in the LORD!  
For with the LORD there is mercy,  
and with him is plenteous redemption.

—Psalm 130:1–4, 7(RSV)

# READINGS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## FIRST READING

~Isaiah 40:1–5, 9–11~

**C**omfort, give comfort to my people, / says your God. / Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her / that her service is at an end, / her guilt is expiated; / indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD / double for all her sins.

A voice cries out: / In the desert prepare the way of the LORD! / Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! / Every valley shall be filled in, / every mountain and hill shall be made low; / the rugged land shall be made a plain, / the rough country, a broad valley. / Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, / and all people shall see it together; / for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Go up on to a high mountain, / Zion, herald of glad tidings; / cry out at the top of your voice, / Jerusalem, herald of good news! / Fear not to cry out / and say to the cities of Judah: / Here is your God! / Here comes with power / the Lord GOD, / who rules by his strong arm; / here is his reward with him, / his recompense before him. / Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; / in his arms he gathers the lambs, / carrying them in his bosom, / and leading the ewes with care.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

~Psalm 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14~

**R/ Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.**

I will hear what God proclaims;  
the LORD—for he proclaims peace to his people.  
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him,  
glory dwelling in our land.

**R/**

Kindness and truth shall meet;  
justice and peace shall kiss.  
Truth shall spring out of the earth,  
and justice shall look down from heaven.

**R/**

The LORD himself will give his benefits;  
our land shall yield its increase.  
Justice shall walk before him,  
and prepare the way of his steps.

**R/**

## SECOND READING

~2 Peter 3:8-14~

**D**o not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. The Lord does not delay his promise, as some regard “delay,” but he is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a mighty roar and the elements will be dissolved by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be found out.

Since everything is to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be, conducting yourselves in holiness and devotion, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved in flames and the elements melted by fire. But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, since you await these things, be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace.

## GOSPEL

~Mark 1:1-8~

**T**he beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: / *Behold! I am sending my messenger ahead of you; / he will prepare your way. / A voice of one crying out in the desert: / “Prepare the way of the Lord, / make straight his paths.”* / John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

# Sunday



## LECTIO DIVINA – SACRED READING OF SCRIPTURE

*Feel free to jot down your notes or reflections on the video in the space below.*

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## LECTIO DIVINA – MEDITATION

### **SMALL GROUP QUESTION #1**

**We all have things in our life we are proud of and ashamed of. In today’s Second Reading, Peter explains how all things will be revealed at the end of time. This is a sobering idea. All things will be unveiled. If we realize that everything we did and said would be public knowledge at the end of time, how would we live our lives differently?**

**How do you conduct yourself each day? What areas of your life do you live with devotion to Our Lord? What areas of your life need correcting?**

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## **SMALL GROUP QUESTION #2**

**In the video reflection, Jules explains how John the Baptist is a model for us because he is preparing his own heart and the hearts of others for Jesus. How do you follow his example in your day-to-day life? How can you better live out the evangelical charism of John the Baptist?**

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## **LECTIO DIVINA – PRAYER & RESOLUTION**

### **PRAYER**

Picture a desert—barren, dry, and hot. It’s not a place we would choose to spend a significant amount of time. So why does John the Baptist meet people in the desert? It is in the desert, in the place that we are most deprived of distraction and faced with our needs, that we are able to see that we need something more—someone more. It is in the desert that we are most apt to open our hearts to God—to repent. Reflect on the word “repentance.” What do you need to repent of in your own life? Where do you need to receive forgiveness in your life? Where do you need to grant forgiveness to another in your life?

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## RESOLUTION

We pray each Sunday in the Our Father: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” Make a firm resolution to extend forgiveness this week to someone you need to reconcile with. Allow the healing of forgiveness to make straight a pathway in your heart for the Lord.

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Our Father, who art in Heaven,  
hallowed be thy name.  
Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done,  
on earth as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread  
and forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
Amen.

***“Forgiveness is above all a personal choice,  
a decision of the heart  
to go against the natural instinct  
to pay back evil with evil.”***

**—Pope St. John Paul II,  
Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace, 8**



## Monday

In the First Reading, Isaiah says, “A voice cries out: / In the desert, prepare the way of the LORD!” (Isaiah 40:3). In what way are you experiencing life as a desert right now? How can you use this time “in the desert” to prepare your heart for Christ? How is he drawing you to himself?

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***“One who is in desolation must strive to persevere in patience, which is contrary to the vexations that have come upon him. He should consider, also, that consolation will soon return, and strive diligently against the desolation.”***

**—St. Ignatius of Loyola,  
The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, 130**

## Tuesday

In the Gospel, Mark recalls the words of Isaiah to “make straight his paths” (Mark 1:3). What areas of your life need “straightening” on the pathway to Christ? Focus on one today.

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***“Holiness does not consist in never having erred or sinned. Holiness increases the capacity for conversion, for repentance, for willingness to start again and, especially, for reconciliation and forgiveness.”***

**—Pope Benedict XVI, The Apostles, 157**

## Wednesday

Peter exhorts us, “Be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace” (2 Peter 3:14). Where do you need Christ’s peace in your life? Make a commitment to go to Confession this Advent season. Put the time and day in your calendar today.

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*Peace I leave with you;  
my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you.  
Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*  
—John 14:27

## Thursday

In Responsorial Psalm 85:11, we read, “Kindness and truth shall meet.” Do you share the truth of the need for repentance kindly and lovingly with those around you—whether family, friends, co-workers, or strangers? Who in your life may need to hear this message today? How will you share it with them? As you reach out to them, keep in mind the words from Isaiah 40:1–2: “Comfort, give comfort to my people, / says your God. / Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her / that her service is at an end, / her guilt is expiated.”

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***“The greatest kindness one can render to any man  
consists in leading him from error to truth.”***

**—St. Thomas Aquinas**

## Friday

Peter explains to us in the Second Reading the Lord's great patience: "He is patient with you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). How have you experienced God's patience as you seek to prepare your heart to meet him? To whom do you need to extend patience and mercy?

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*"The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in mercy."  
—Psalm 103:8 (RSV)*

## Saturday

In Sunday's Gospel, John the Baptist showed us profound humility in his exclamation, "I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals" (Mark 1:7). Jesus speaks often of the need for humility. Recall his parable of the man who takes the seat of honor at a wedding, only to be told to sit elsewhere (Luke 14:7-14). Where do you need to cast aside your pride and follow John's example?

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***"When pride  
comes, then comes  
disgrace; but with  
the humble  
is wisdom."  
—Proverbs 11:2(RSV)***

# 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

✧ YEAR B ✧



JOY PREPARES  
OUR HEARTS

PRAYER JOURNAL

## OPENING PRAYER

### THE ANGELUS

V. The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:

R. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee;  
blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit  
of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God,  
pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.  
Amen.

V. Behold the handmaid of the Lord:

R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary . . .

V. (genuflect) And the Word was made Flesh:

R. And dwelt among us.

Hail Mary . . .

V. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God,

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech thee, O Lord,

thy grace into our hearts;

that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, thy Son,

was made known by the message of an angel,

may by his Passion and Cross

be brought to the glory of his Resurrection,

through the same Christ Our Lord.

Amen.

# READINGS FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## FIRST READING

~Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11~

**T**he spirit of the Lord God is upon me, / because the LORD has anointed me; / he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, / to heal the brokenhearted, / to proclaim liberty to the captives / and release to the prisoners, / to announce a year of favor from the LORD / and a day of vindication by our God.

I rejoice heartily in the LORD, / in my God is the joy of my soul; / for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation / and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, / like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, / like a bride bedecked with her jewels. / As the earth brings forth its plants, / and a garden makes its growth spring up, / so will the Lord GOD make justice and praise / spring up before all the nations.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

~Psalm 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14~

**R/. My soul rejoices in my God.**

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord;  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked upon his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:

**R/**

the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.  
He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.

**R/**

He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.  
He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,

**R/**

## SECOND READING

~1 Thessalonians 5:16-24~

**B**rothers and sisters: Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophetic utterances. Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful, and he will also accomplish it.

## GOSPEL

~John 1:6-8, 19-28~

**A** man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light.

And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" he admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said:

"I am the voice of one crying out in the desert,  
'make straight the way of the Lord,'  
as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked

him, “Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie.” This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

## Sunday



### LECTIO DIVINA – SACRED READING OF SCRIPTURE

*Feel free to jot down your notes or reflections on the video in the space below.*

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### LECTIO DIVINA – MEDITATION

#### SMALL GROUP QUESTION #1

**In his homily for Gaudete Sunday in 2014, Pope Francis taught that to have joy a Christian must do three things: pray, give thanks, and share the Good News. And St. Thomas Aquinas, the “angelic doctor,” defines joy as a fruit of the Holy Spirit that flows immediately from charity, or love of God.**

**What do you think is the relationship between prayer and joy? Between joy and thanksgiving? Are prayer and thanksgiving necessary for joy? How can you pray more and be more thankful?**

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## **SMALL GROUP QUESTION #2**

**Now let's focus on Pope Francis's last point. To receive joy, we must give joy. How can you take John the Baptist as your model to reflect Christ in someone's life? How can you prepare the way for the Lord in the lives of the people around you?**

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## **LECTIO DIVINA – PRAYER & RESOLUTION**

### **PRAYER**

Now, let us ponder these moments of rejoicing in the Scriptures today. The mysterious thing about these figures is that they are able to rejoice in the midst of darkness and before the fulfillment of God's promises. Isaiah, along with all of Israel, was still awaiting the Messiah. Mary was anticipating the birth of the Messiah to bring about the salvation of her people as the angel had promised. John the Baptist was preparing the way for the Messiah to come. St. Paul, who wrote his letter to the Philippians from prison, was awaiting the return of the Savior in the second coming, just as we are today. But each anticipated the coming good and believed so deeply that God would fulfill his promises, that they experienced the joy of the promise before it was ever fulfilled. What are the dark areas of your life where you can follow their example? How can you proclaim, "I rejoice in the Lord always!" even in the midst of suffering?

Let us particularly reflect on Mary's words in the Magnificat. Take a word or phrase that strikes you and reflect for a moment on what it means to you personally. For example, you might have been drawn to the words, "He has filled the hungry with good things." Where in your heart do you feel you have a hunger, possibly emotional or spiritual hunger? How do you think the Lord wants to fill this hunger?

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**RESOLUTION:**

In a homily for Gaudete Sunday in 2002, St. John Paul II said, “In the face of the inevitable difficulties of life, the uncertainties and fears for the future, the temptation to give in to despair and disappointment, the Word of God always proclaims again the ‘glad tidings’ of salvation: the Son of God comes to heal ‘the wounds of the broken-hearted.’” Ask God where he wants to pour his mercy into your life. How can repentance actually prepare your heart to receive joy? What practical thing can you do this week to let Jesus heal the wounds of your broken heart?

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**CLOSING PRAYER**

Father, you are so good and deserving of all of our love.  
 You love us and have a plan for us.  
 You long to bring light into our darkness,  
 to heal our wounds, and free us from sin.  
 You are working even now to pour your merciful love into our hearts.  
 Jesus came and told us that he told us about you so that “our joy may be complete.” Help us to learn to repent and open our hearts to your mercy so that we can be filled with the joy you have promised us.  
 We offer up to you our needs and concerns.

Father, help us to learn  
 to anticipate the good things you have in store for us.  
 As a pregnant woman awaits her child,  
 help us to await your coming with joy.  
 Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to “heal the brokenhearted.”  
 Heal us, O Lord, and bring us to everlasting life with you.  
 Amen.

*“See my children; the treasure of a Christian is not on the earth, it is in Heaven.  
 Well, our thoughts ought to be where our treasure is.  
 Man has a beautiful occupation, that of praying and loving.  
 You pray, you love—that is the happiness of man upon the earth.  
 Prayer is nothing else than union with God.”*

—St. John Vianney

## Monday

Reread both the First Reading and the Responsorial Psalm. How can we begin to say, “My God is the joy of my soul,” along with Isaiah and Mary?

Pope St. John Paul II once said, “Faith is our source of joy. We believe in a God who created us so that we might enjoy human happiness—in some measure on earth, in its fullness in heaven.”

How does knowing that we are sons and daughters of God give us true joy? How can you help yourself remember this truth throughout your day?

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***“When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”***

***it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”***

**—Romans 8:15b–17 (RSV)**

## Tuesday

Today, return to the Responsorial Psalm, and get to know Our Lady better. In prayer, ponder the words of the Magnificat and ask her what it means to rejoice in the Lord. Especially ponder the phrase, “for he has remembered his promise of mercy.” Do you trust that God is real and good and that he will remember “his promise of mercy” in your life? Journal your thoughts, and ask Mary to intercede on your behalf to pray that the Lord will fill you with her faith.

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***“A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love. She gives most who gives with joy.”***

**—St. Teresa of Calcutta**

## Wednesday

Reread the First Reading from Isaiah. Reflect on the relation of this reading to the mission of Christ. When we are baptized, we are baptized into Jesus himself, and thus inherit this mission to “bring glad tidings to the poor.”

Today, pray this reading aloud in the first person. Meditate about what it means that you have been sent to bring the glad tidings to all. Do you believe that you share in Jesus’s mission so personally and intimately?

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*“Christian, remember your dignity, and now that you share in God’s one nature, do not return by sin to your former base condition.*

*Bear in mind who is your head and of whose body you are a member.*

*Do not forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of God’s kingdom.”*

—St. Leo the Great

## Thursday

Reread last Sunday’s Second Reading from 1 Thessalonians. St. Paul tells us many times that we ought to always be rejoicing, but there are many “thieves of joy” in our world. It is not always obvious sorrow or despair that robs us; sometimes more hidden distractions can keep us from thinking about God and the truly good things in life. This can be especially true during Christmastime, when the complicated details can become particularly stressful and distract us from the simple joy God wants to give us.

As you pray, ask the Lord to reveal to you what is stealing the joy from your life. What are the distractions that seem small, but keep you from rejoicing always? What actions can you take to find freedom from these things so that you can receive the joy that the Lord is offering you in this season?

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***“You are unhappy? Think: there must be an obstacle between God and me. You will seldom be wrong.”***

—St. Josemaria Escriva

# Friday

In the Gospel from last Sunday, the Jews ask John the Baptist, “Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?”

In your prayer today, put yourself in the place of John the Baptist. How would you respond to those questions if someone asked them to you today? Would you be able to say along with John the Baptist that you are not the Christ, but one who prepares the way for the Lord?

As you pray with these words from the Gospel, ask the Lord to tell you who you are to him. Journal your experience.

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*“He was the Forerunner, a simple witness,  
totally subordinate to the One he proclaimed; a voice in the wilderness,  
as in our day too, in the wilderness of the great cities of this world,  
of the great absence of God, we need voices that simply announce to us ‘God exists.  
He is always near, even if he seems absent.’”*

—Pope Benedict XVI

# Saturday

Reread Isaiah 61:1–2, 10–11, particularly the phrase, “to announce a year of favor from the LORD.” Recall that this is a biblical reference to the Jubilee Year. In Jewish culture this was a year that came every fifty years, when slaves and prisoners were freed, debts were forgiven, and mercy overflowed, as we see described in Leviticus 25:8–13.

Identify yourself as a slave and a prisoner to sin and death. Then, imagine Jesus setting you free. Imagine the Lord loving you in your darkest sins and your deepest wounds.

What are some of the dark places in your life that you are afraid to share with God? How can you open yourself to his infinite mercy?

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*“He never tires of forgiving, but  
at times we get tired of asking  
for forgiveness. Let us never tire,  
let us never tire! He is the loving  
Father who always pardons, who  
has that heart of mercy for us all.”*

—Pope Francis, Angelus  
Address, March 17, 2013

# 4<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

YEAR B



## CHILDLIKE FAITH

PRAYER JOURNAL

## OPENING PRAYER

As we delve into this last week of Advent, we will focus on Mary. Let's start by invoking her intercession as we pray together:

Hail Mary, full of grace.  
The Lord is with thee.  
Blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.  
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,  
now and at the hour of our death.  
Amen.

# READINGS FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## FIRST READING

~2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16~

**W**hen King David was settled in his palace, and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!" Nathan answered the king, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you." But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said: "Go, tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Should you build me a house to dwell in?'" "It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also

reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.”

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM

~Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29~

**R/ Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.**

The promises of the LORD I will sing forever;  
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness.  
For you have said, “My kindness is established forever”;  
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness.

**R/**

“I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to David my servant:  
forever will I confirm your posterity  
and establish your throne for all generations.”

**R/**

“He shall say of me, ‘You are my father,  
my God, the Rock, my savior.’  
Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him,  
and my covenant with him stands firm.”

**R/**



## SECOND READING

~Romans 16:25–27~

**B**rothers and sisters: To him who can strengthen you, according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith, to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ be glory forever and ever. Amen.

## GOSPEL

~Luke 1:26–28~

**T**he angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

## Sunday



### LECTIO DIVINA – SACRED READING OF SCRIPTURE

*Feel free to jot down your notes or reflections on the video in the space below.*

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### LECTIO DIVINA – MEDITATION

#### SMALL GROUP QUESTION #1

**The primary themes of today’s readings are hope and joy. The psalm especially proclaims the goodness of the Lord. As we enter into this last week of the Advent season, are joy and hope reigning in your heart? Have you lost track of the joyful anticipation for Christ’s coming as the “busy” week approaches?**

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#### SMALL GROUP QUESTION #2

**Today, we read about Mary being surprised by God and submitting to his plan for her life. How has God surprised you? Have you welcomed this surprise with faith in his plan or clung to your own way?**

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## LECTIO DIVINA – PRAYER & RESOLUTION

### **PRAYER**

Mary’s acceptance and trust in God is remarkable. When the angel announces that she will be the Mother of God, she is rightly confused. She may have wondered what it meant that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. At that time, a woman caught in adultery was stoned to death. She must have been afraid of the possible consequences. Mary could have responded any number of ways. However, she chose to respond with grace and acceptance, completely dependent on God, as she surrenders her body and life to him. Take some time to place yourself in Mary’s shoes today. Imagine what you are doing when the angel appears. What goes through your mind and heart as he speaks the words to you? What is your response?

### **RESOLUTION**

We are all called to answer God with a resounding “yes” as he reveals his plan for our lives. What do you need to surrender to him? What is holding you back? How will you offer the baby Jesus the gift of your “yes” this Christmas?

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Let us close with the Magnificat.

### THE MAGNIFICAT.

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.  
He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.  
He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children forever.

—Luke 1:46–55 (Liturgy of the Hours)

*“Mary, who in the freedom of her ‘fiat’  
and her presence at the foot of the cross,  
offered to the world, Jesus, the Liberator,  
help us to find him in the Sacrament of the altar.”*

—Pope St. John Paul II

## Monday

The angel tells Mary to “not be afraid.” What are you afraid of right now? Allow the angel to speak words of courage to you too. How can you entrust your fear of the unknown to the Lord’s plan for you?

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*“A Catholic is a person who has plucked up courage to face the incredible and inconceivable idea that something else may be wiser than he is.”*

—G.K. Chesterton,  
*The Well and the Shallows*

## Tuesday

As we read through Sunday’s Responsorial Psalm, we are struck by the Lord’s everlasting faithfulness. He promised a covenant to David and prosperity to his name, and fourteen generations later the Son of God, born in the house of David, came to fulfill that covenant. Reflect on your faith journey. How has the Lord been faithful to you? Thank him for his steadfast love today.

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*“Abandon yourself into the hands of Mary.  
She will take care of you.”*

—St. Pio of Pietrelcina

## Wednesday

In the First Reading, God tells David: “I will give you rest from all your enemies.” What enemy in your life do you need rest from? Is there a temptation or sin you are struggling with? Ask God for his help and for rest from this demon in your life. Pray the Guardian Angel prayer each time this temptation arises today.

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*Angel of God, my guardian dear,  
to whom God's love commits me here.  
Ever this day, be at my side;  
to light and to guard, to rule and to guide. Amen.*

## Thursday

In Sunday's Second Reading, Paul tells the Corinthians that Jesus is the one who can strengthen them through the Gospel message. As this Advent season comes to a close, take some quiet moments to rejoice in the message of the Gospel. Allow it to give you the strength and energy that you need to live out this Christmas season joyfully.

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*“The Gospel message summed up:  
1) God loves you and has a plan for your life.  
2) Sin separates us from God, but not God's love for us.  
3) Jesus Christ's life, passion, death, and resurrection redeemed us from sin and restores God's plan, allowing us to become adopted sons and daughters of God.  
4) Turn away from sin, turn to Jesus Christ, and join God's Church, in the Holy Spirit.”*

—Edmund Mitchell,  
*“What is the Basic Gospel Message?”* September 26, 2016

## Friday

Take some time today to reflect on the words of Bishop Robert Barron on Mary's fiat or "yes" at the Annunciation: "The greatest of the Advent figures makes her appearance in the Gospel for today. Mary the mother of God is the new Eve, the one who, through her expectation and obedience, undid the sin of Eve and Adam. They tried to seize God's gifts; Mary accepted them as grace." Do you try to "seize" gifts from God? What do you grasp at? How can you better receive his gifts rather than trying to take them for yourself?

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*"Be devoted to Mary Most Holy: Frequently call on her. Never was it known that anyone trustingly had recourse to her was not promptly heard."*

—St. John Bosco

## Saturday

The Blessed Mother is a model for all of us, but often times, we forget her. Jesus gave us the gift of his mother as one of his very last actions before he died. Have you taken Mary for your mother? What kind of relationship do you have with her? What kind of relationship do you want to have with her? Commit to praying a decade of the Rosary today. Offer it to Jesus with the intention of growing your relationship with Mary.

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*"O faithful Virgin, make me in all things so perfect a disciple, imitator, and slave of the Incarnate Wisdom, Jesus Christ thy Son, that I may attain, by thine intercession and by thine example, to the fullness of His age on earth and of His glory in Heaven."*

—St. Louis de Montfort,  
*Total Consecration Prayer*



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