



Relationship with GOD

More than Just SUNDAY

Preparing for Christmas, for Busy People

The second part of Advent takes us into the events of Jesus' coming to be our Savior. Jesus took on human flesh, born as a baby in Bethlehem. It is truly amazing that God became one of us to keep His promise.

Letting It Become Personal: In our longing and anticipation, we can get to know Jesus better through His relatives who prepare the way for His coming. We can see the hesitation and questioning of Zachary and Elizabeth, then Mary and Joseph. They all make great acts of faith to believe, to trust, that the promise made by God to Adam and Eve after the Original Sin as well as all the promises throughout the Old Testament would be fulfilled. We can use the background times of the third week of Advent to let our faith become personal, as we express our faith, our trust in Jesus' coming to us this year. The Readings and prayers at Mass offer us hope to believe that the coming of Jesus into our world is all about our personal liberation from whatever captivity we are in, whatever darkness or discouragement envelops us. ***"Lord, Jesus, I trust that you can bring your Light into my life, that you can give me hope as you free me and fill me with your peace. Thank you for letting me prepare for your coming this year. Come, Lord Jesus, come."***

Let us put down our guard enough to allow these four weeks to help us feel God's love as we reflect on His coming into this world and into our hearts. If we do that, then grace will break through our distractions and defenses and Advent will awaken in us. If possible, begin by praying a simple prayer: "Come, Lord Jesus, Come and touch my heart. Come and be with me during Advent. Let your Word make me defense-less before your love."

The Final Days of Advent – Getting to the Manger: So often the final days before Christmas become a blur of activity. Hopefully, we have set aside a few minutes each day to focus our reflection and conversation with God the Father and with Jesus. Even though these days may be hectic, we can choose to be attuned right up to Christmas. One way to do that is to stay focused on the manger. It is the central piece of this incredible Story and it is loaded with meaning, consolation and fruit for us. The richest of the Advent experiences are here – in letting ourselves imagine the Holy Family of Joseph and Mary arriving in Bethlehem for the census, having nowhere to stay. A special transformation begins to happen when we start to imagine that stable where our Savior was born.

Read the following Bible passage slowly.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled...And all went to be enrolled, each to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And while they were there, the time came for her to be delivered. And she gave birth to her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. And in that region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and they were filled with fear. The angel said to them, "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come

to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:1-11)

The Scripture passage is the antidote to some of the excesses of Christmas preparations – maybe too much eating and drinking, too much noise and glitz, celebrations which are quite a few degrees off center. It is there in the stable, in its humble feeding trough that we will find the fulfillment of our longing and hope. In that poverty and humility, our Savior, our Light and Peace, reveals to us the "Good News" He came to bring to each person:

- God knows and loves you personally; He created you for a relationship with Him.
- That relationship is damaged by sin but restored by Jesus Christ.
- Jesus calls you to respond, to make Him the center of your life.

Christmas Joy: Christmas will be totally different, after this kind of deep Advent journey. We can't help but experience real joy for having prepared to be renewed in the gift of life that comes to us through Jesus.

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