



Advent

“Do Not Be Afraid!”

During these challenging times, when there seems to be so much uncertainty, isolation and anxiety, there are four words from Sacred Scripture, that if we reflect on them and ponder Who speaks these words to our heart, we can experience a great deal of calm, peace and security. Those words are “Do Not Be Afraid!”

During the Season of Advent, we hear two Scriptures in which these words are expressed to both Mary and Joseph. In the first passage, the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she will be the Mother of the Savior and the angel encouraged her to not be afraid.

“In the sixth month, the 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 Mary was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 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 call His name, Jesus” (Luke 1: 26-31).*

In the second passage, an angel came to Joseph in a dream and explained that Mary had conceived a Child through the

power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, he should not be afraid to take his wife into His home.

*“Now this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with Child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, **do not be afraid** to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this Child has been conceived in her. She will bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:18-21).*

How can the words “do not be afraid” bring us peace? God obviously knows that we deal with an ongoing problem of fear and worry. To help us with this difficulty, the phrase “do not be afraid” is found in the Bible 365 times. That’s a daily reminder from God that we need to live every day with our focus on Him and trust Him. Jesus loves us unconditionally and desires a relationship with each one of us. As we deepen our friendship with Jesus through a daily commitment to converse with Him, we will

come to trust Him more.

Jesus only wants what is best for us. He will protect us and calm the storms in our minds and hearts. All Jesus asks is that we turn our eyes from our fears to Him. This does not mean that life will be perfect, without trials and struggles. But it *does* mean that we can face life’s difficulties with peace and calm, and even deep interior joy as Jesus is with us at every moment, even if we don’t recognize it.

We should have no fear because God loves us and died for us and wants us to be with Him. The power of what Jesus accomplished through His death on the Cross and Resurrection is greater than any difficulty, suffering, problem, evil or fear that we may face. This is why we have hope in Him.

In preparation for the celebration of Christmas, let us break away from busy-ness and spend quiet time each day with Jesus, the Prince of Peace. He knows our worries, and speaks to our heart: *“Peace I leave with you; My own peace I give to you... Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid” (John 14:27).*

May you experience a truly joyous celebration of the birth of our Savior on Christmas!

By Ann Lankford



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