

Taking Our Hearts to the Lord



Gospel Reflection Booklet

Diocese of Achonry
Diocese of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
Archdiocese of Armagh
Diocese of Clonfert
Diocese of Elphin
Diocese of Kerry
Diocese of Killala
Diocese of Kilmore
Diocese of Limerick
Diocese of Ossory
Archdiocese of Tuam
Diocese of Waterford & Lismore

**Resource
For
Advent Prayer Groups
2012**

Week 1



Acknowledgements

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Reader 1

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke
(Luke 21:25-28, 34-36)

Jesus said to his disciples: *“There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars. on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; people dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.”*

“Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living person on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive, all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

Our hearts, our hidden centres, the place of decision deep within us that only the Spirit of God can fathom, the place of truth where we choose life or death, our places of covenant with God (CCC # 2563), are easily wounded and upset. The ugly and nasty side of life, misunderstandings and communication difficulties frequently leave more than a trace of bitterness, resentment and unhappiness. With this comes fear, anger, anxiety and pain and with the pain, choices: Shall I give as good as I get? What measures will I take not to be so vulnerable next time?

One of the related temptations is to adopt a position of self-reliance, as if God neither exists or cares. In fact a core element of the challenge is to recognise that God cares deeply. Our hearts, as our places of communion with Him, are very precious in His eyes.

As we begin our Advent journey Christ urges us to be attentive to our hearts (Stay awake) and to turn to Him in prayer. He likens prayer to protective medicine, desiring that each of us share in His joy, now and when He shall return in glory.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit ...

Silence

Leader

I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

Group returns to page 20 of Advent booklet

Week 2



Reader 1

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke: (Lk 3:1-6)

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight.

Every valley will be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low,
winding ways will be straightened
and rough roads made smooth.

And all humankind shall see the salvation of God.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

How beautiful the word “salvation”. It draws together all the good and the happiness that God intends for us. To speak of salvation is to speak of God’s loving attentiveness, his grace, his forgiveness, his adoption of each of us as a beloved child, his sharing of his divine life with us for all eternity.

How easily we can turn from this salvation. Without some element of discipline we are disposed to a distasteful restlessness that takes us down many a spiritual and emotional cul-de-sac.

Does God give up or cease to pursue us? Never. To every generation the words “Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight” are proclaimed. We are reminded to examine our lives in light of the salvation we seek, to recognise Christ’s presence in every aspect of our existence – the suffering and pain, all the anxiety and hopelessness, all the joy and peace.

Too often we mistakenly seek God’s word in an out-of-the ordinary experience. This Advent may the Holy Spirit guide us in seeing how He is lovingly speaking in the small events of each and every day, making smooth the rough road.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit

Silence

Leader

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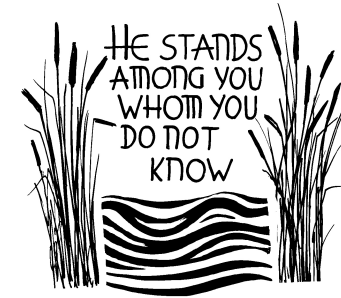
Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

Group returns to page 28 of Advent booklet

Week 3



Reader 1

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke: (Lk 3:10-18)

When all the people asked John, “What must we do?” he answered, “If anyone has two coats he must share with the person who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same”. There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said, “Master, what must we do?” He said to them, “Exact no more than your rate.” Some soldiers asked him in their turn, “What about us? What must we do?” He said to them, “No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!”

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, “I baptize you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear the threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.” As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

In her book *White Wings and Barricades* Sr. Rosalie Rendu DC recounts a memorable dream. In the dream she found herself standing before God's judgement seat. He received her with great severity and was about to pronounce her sentence to perdition when suddenly she was surrounded by a large throng of people carrying old shoes, hats and clothing. They showed these to God and said, "She gave us all these things!" Then God looked at her and said, "Because you gave all these clothes in My Name, I open heaven to you.

Enter, for all eternity!"

Has the time come to have another look in the hotpress, to see what we can do without? Do the Christmas festivities need to be a lavish affair or could we do with less and make a donation to charity in His Name? Perhaps we could identify a person to whom we could gift some time over the coming week ... via a kind letter if a visit or phone call is not possible?

Each of us has been baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Can we express our thanks through kind deeds, deeds that will inspire joy and gratitude in the hearts of the recipients?

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit ...

Silence

Leader

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Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

Group returns to page 35 of Advent booklet

Week 4



Reader 1

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke: (1:39-45)

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

To recall this encounter between expectant mothers is to recall a time when Mary was present to God and God present to her in a very special way. For Mary, the incarnation - the Word of God taking on human flesh - literally changed everything ... her womb, her body, her outlook, her heart, her relationships and her life's journey. She even felt drawn to journey to the hill country of Judea, to support her elderly and vulnerable cousin in her pregnancy.

Our salvation, all the good and the happiness that God intends for us, like Elizabeth's, is closely linked with the fruitfulness of Mary's openness to God's will. In Mary's presence Elizabeth experiences profound joy, consolation and support. Despite their difficulties both women exude a joyful faith that celebrates their participation in the miracle of life and salvation history.

Are we joyful at the prospect of celebrating the birth of Jesus? Will we need to be coaxed to sing Happy Birthday in our hearts before the Tabernacle on Christmas day? If we are, could we give expression to our joy by visiting or receiving a visitor with all the love that Mary and Elizabeth received each other? With the coming of the Christ-child may we recognise that there is nothing stronger than the love we have for each other. This too is God-in-our-midst.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit ...

Silence

Leader

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Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

Group returns to page 44 of Advent booklet

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