

ADVENT LEADS TO CHRIST

A spiritual Advent leads to a spiritual Christmas!
A worldly Advent leads to a worldly Christmas!
Where are you being led? Who is leading you?

Prayers & Rituals for the ADVENT SEASON



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**JESUS IS COMING!
JESUS IS
ON HIS WAY!**

**DO WE KNOW
WHAT HIS COMING
MEANS?**

**DO WE KNOW
WHAT HIS COMING
DEMANDS OF US?**

**DO WE REALLY
WANT JESUS
TO COME?**

**OR ARE WE HAPPY
WITHOUT HIM?**

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1. THE PURPOSE & MEANING OF ADVENT

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THE “MISSING” COMING OF ADVENT

In the Liturgy, Holy Mother Church speaks of the two Comings or Advents of Christ. The First is the historical Coming of Christ in His Incarnation in Our Lady’s womb which led to His birth at Bethlehem. The Second Coming refers to Christ coming, not as a Child, but as a King and Judge at the end of the world.

Yet we can, spiritually, add another Coming of Christ, whereby He wants to come and dwell in our souls, day-in-day-out—and that is something He has been trying to achieve all the days of our lives, but this Coming is a coming that we have resisted all the days of our lives.

The truth is that we do not really want Christ to come into our daily lives—because He will “cramp our style” and demand changes that we are not prepared to make! Christ wants us to be saints—but we do not want to become saints—at least not just yet! There is too much fun still to be had before we are prepared to start giving it all up and start trudging the boring, painful, unwanted narrow path to Heaven and holiness!

If you find that hard to swallow, then here is what Our Lord foretold, to Mother Mariana de Jesus Torres (of Our Lady of Good Success fame), concerning our present day and age: *“The times will come,”* He told her, *“when doctrine will be commonly known among the learned and the ignorant. ... Many religious books will be written. But the practice of the virtues and of these doctrines will be found in only a few souls; for this reason, saints will become rare. And precisely for this reason, My priests and My religious will fall into a fatal indifference. Their coldness will extinguish the fire of divine love, afflicting My Loving Heart with these small thorns that you see.”*

Advent is, par excellence, the time of the Divine Maternity, the Motherhood of the Blessed Virgin, as she draws ever closer to giving birth to God's Greatest Gift for fallen human nature. During Advent, we should not lose focus of Our Lady, for without her there is no Christmas; without her, God will not be born into this world. It is here cooperation with God that has brought about the Incarnation—God becoming flesh, becoming man so as to save and redeem mankind.

But for mankind to be saved and redeemed, Christ our Savior has to be born into our souls. Nay, perhaps that one word will be passed over and looked upon as a routine phrase! Christ wants to be born in our souls, our hearts, our minds, our thoughts, our memories, our hopes, our conversations, our daydreams, our home life, our work life, our social life—in other words, everywhere, in everything, in every moment of our day and night!

That is what is meant by the first and greatest commandment: *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This is the first commandment"* (Mark 12:30).

There is no doubt whatsoever that, on the part of Jesus, He truly wants to come to us. He loves us beyond our comprehension and our wildest dreams. There is no problem on the part of Jesus. However, on our side, we have to ask the question: *"Do we really want Jesus to come to us?"* I mean really, not just theoretically and not just lip-service. Do we really and truly want Jesus in our lives?

To drive the point home more clearly and to avoid misconceptions, do we really and truly want Jesus to be our life? Notice the words "be our life", which is different to being "a part of our life." If we want Jesus to be "a part of our life", then we only partially want Him—for some that means on Sundays and prayer times only, for others a little more perhaps, but they place a limit on "how much of Jesus they can take." He

wants to be our whole life, not just a part of our life, and that is what is meant by the commandment to love God with our whole mind, heart, soul and strength.

Our Lady also wants Jesus to be our whole life, and she is willing to help give birth to Jesus in our life, so that He may grow and occupy and whole life, just as He did hers. St. Louis de Montfort says: *"God willed to commence and to complete His greatest works by the most holy Virgin ever since He created her—He will not change His conduct in the eternal ages; for He is God, and He changes not. It was only through Mary that God the Father gave His Only begotten to the world. Whatever sighs the patriarchs may have sent forth, whatever prayers the prophets and the saints of the Old Law may have offered up to obtain this treasure for full four thousand years, it was only Mary who merited it and found grace before God (Luke 1:30) by the force of her prayers and the eminence of her virtues. The world was unworthy, says St. Augustine, to receive the Son of God directly from the Father's hands. He gave Him to Mary in order that the world might receive Him through her. The Son of God became man for our salvation; but it was in Mary and by Mary"* (St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*).

"God the Son wishes to form Himself, and, so to speak, to incarnate Himself in His members every day, by His dear Mother ... We can apply to her more than St. Paul applied to himself the words: "I am in labor again with all the children of God, until Jesus Christ my Son be formed in them in the fullness of His age" (Cf. Galatians 4:19) ... St. Augustine, surpassing himself, and going beyond all I have yet said, affirms that all the predestinate, in order to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, are in this world hidden in the womb of the most holy Virgin, where they are guarded, nourished, brought up and made to grow by that good Mother until she has brought them forth to glory after death, which is properly the day of their birth, as the Church calls the death of the just. O mystery of grace, unknown to the reprobate, and but little known

even to the predestinate!” (St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*).

“God the Holy Ghost wishes to form elect for Himself in her and by her ... When Mary has struck her roots in a soul, she produces there marvels of grace, which she alone can produce, because she alone is the fruitful Virgin who never has had, and never will have, her equal in purity and in fruitfulness. Mary has produced, together with the Holy Ghost, the greatest thing which has been or ever will be—a God Man; and she will consequently produce the greatest saints that there will be in the end of time. The formation and the education of the great saints who shall come at the end of the world are reserved for her” (St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*).

“When the Holy Ghost, her Spouse, has found Mary in a soul, He flies there. He enters there in His fullness; He communicates Himself to that soul abundantly, and to the full extent to which it makes room for His spouse. Nay, one of the greatest reasons why the Holy Ghost does not now do startling wonders in our souls is because He does not find there a sufficiently great union with His faithful and inseparable spouse” (St. Louis de Montfort, *True Devotion to Mary*).

That is, in essence, the whole point of Advent. We could say that it is like a “spiritual pregnancy” during which God and Mary want to form an “spiritually embryonic” Jesus Christ within the “womb” of our soul, so that Christ can be truly born into our lives at Christmas.

Most people do not let this happen. They provoke what could be called a “spiritual miscarriage” by their worldly behavior and multitude of venial sins, or, worse still, bring about a “spiritual abortion” by their addiction to and refusal to quit mortal sin.

To put it another way, God has been trying to make every soul in this world “spiritually pregnant” with Christ, to make the “fruit of Mary’s womb” to be the “fruit of thy womb”—meaning the fruit of your soul. Yet very few souls accept

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this spiritual “incarnation” or “in-soul-ation” because the insulate themselves against such an “in-soul-ation” and Christ never really sees the light of day! What a great tragedy—like a spiritual miscarriage or spiritual abortion—repeated year after year after year! Is there a connection between this fact that so few souls truly accept Christ and the fact that so few souls are saved? There most certainly is! Will this Advent be another one in the long list of “comings and goings” of Christ? He comes each year, knocks on the door of the soul, and then has to go away, for there “is no room for Him in the ‘inn’ of our soul!”

Each year that fail to fully cooperate and merely give Him some heartless lip-service—*“This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me!”* (Matthew 15:8)—we thereby “waterproof” our souls against the grace of God. Each year we make it harder for grace to break through and truly transform our souls. We are too engrossed with the material side of life, especially in this current “Thanksgiving to Christmas” festive season, peppered with pre-Christmas office and school parties, pre-Christmas social planning, etc.

Bethlehem showed a similar inclination over 2,000 years ago. Christ came and went, and very few realized what had happened! Our Lord’s later prophecy concerning these blind folk would say: *“For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, And beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee: and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation”* (Luke 19:43-44).

Will that apply to also, one day? It won’t if we do something about it while we still have time! The Advent liturgy tells us: *“Now the hour for us to rise from sleep. For now our salvation is nearer than when we believed. Let us cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently—avoiding partying and drunkenness, immorality and impurities, arguments*

and envy! Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh!" (Romans 13:11-14). As St. Paul says: "We exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For He saith: 'In an accepted time have I heard thee; and in the day of salvation have I helped thee!' Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).

This Advent, once again, Our Lord will say to you: "Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me!" (Apocalypse 3:20).

"Not every one that saith to Me: 'Lord! Lord!' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but he that doth the will of My Father shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Many will say to me in that day: 'Lord, Lord, have not we prophesied in Thy Name, and cast out devils in Thy Name, and done many miracles in Thy Name?' And then will I profess unto them, 'I never knew you! Depart from Me!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Advent is a time of DOING, not just LEARNING, KNOWING and BELIEVING! "Faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. But some man will say: 'Thou hast Faith, and I have works!' Show me thy Faith without works; and I will show thee, by works, my Faith. Thou believest that there is one God. Thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? For even as the body without the spirit is dead; so also faith without works is dead!" (James 2:17-26). "So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Who is in Heaven!" (Matthew 5:16). What works shall we present to Him? Let us not fall into the category of the lukewarm, of whom God says: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold, nor hot. I would thou wert cold, or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold, nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth! Because thou sayest: 'I am rich, and made wealthy, and have need of nothing!'—and knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and

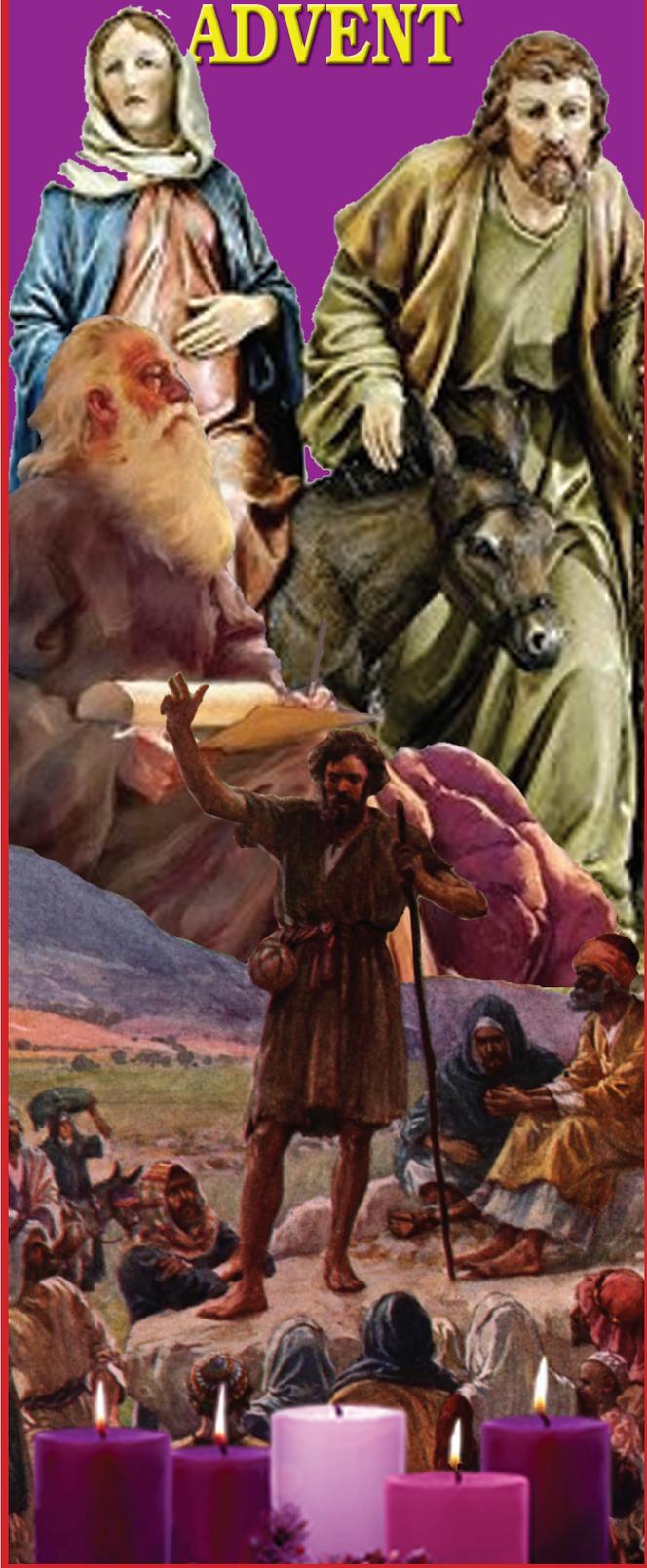
blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold fire tried, that thou mayest be made rich; and mayest be clothed in white garments, and that the shame of thy nakedness may not appear; and anoint thy eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see. Such as I love, I rebuke and chastise. Be zealous therefore, and do penance!" (Apocalypse 3:15-19).

This mystery of the coming, or Advent, of Jesus is at once simple and threefold. It is simple, for it is the one same Son of God that is coming; it is threefold, because He comes at three different times and in three different ways. "In the first coming," says St. Bernard, "He comes in the flesh and in weakness; in the second, He comes in spirit and in power; in the third, He comes in glory and in majesty; and the second coming is the means whereby we pass from the first to the third." (Fifth sermon for Advent).

This, then, is the mystery of Advent. Peter of Blois, in his third Sermon of Advent, adds:

"There are three comings of Our Lord; the first in the flesh, the second in the soul, the third at the judgment. The first coming is long since past. We are now in the second coming, provided that we are fit that He may thus come to us; for He has said that if we love Him, He will come unto us and will take up His abode with us. So that this second coming is full of uncertainty to us; for who, except the Spirit of God, knows them that are truly of God? As for the third coming, it is most certain that it will be, most uncertain when it will be; for nothing is more sure than death, and nothing less sure than the hour of death. When they shall say: "Peace and security!" says St. Paul, then shall sudden destruction come upon them and they shall not escape. The first coming was humble and hidden; the second is mysterious and full of love, the third will be majestic and terrible. In His first coming, Christ was judged by men unjustly; in His second, He makes us just by His grace; in His third, He will judge all things with justice. In His first, a lamb; in His last, a lion; in the one between the two, the tenderest of friends." (Advent Sermon).

Main Characters in the season of ADVENT



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2. THE MAIN CHARACTERS IN THE SEASON OF ADVENT

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A PERFECT BALANCE

Arguably—and there is always someone who will want to argue—there are four chief characters or personages for the Advent season. Those four persons—arguably—are represented by the four candles on the Advent wreath—three purple and one rose (pink). Arguably, again, you could say that the purple candles represent men and the rose or pink candle represents a woman. Who would those persons be?

Upon careful reflection, three chief male characters emerge from the Advent liturgy in the journey to Christmas—they are the prophets Isaias and St. John the Baptist, and the man chosen to be the foster-father for Christ—St. Joseph. The woman, of course, is Our Lady, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God.

Upon further reflection, we can see the perfect providential balance in the selection of these four great personages. The prophets represent both the Old Testament (Isaias) and the New Testament (St. John the Baptist). The prophets also represent, what we call in the Church, the Active Religious Orders, who go out and preach and work among the people. The other kind of Religious Order is the Contemplative Religious Order, such as the Carmelites, who lead a more secluded life, often staying within the walls of the monastery or convent. Our Lady and St. Joseph fall into this category—especially when compared to the role and “job description” of the two prophets—Isaias and St. John the Baptist.

St. Thomas Aquinas, comparing action and contemplation, says that contemplation is superior

to action. He then adds, however, that if contemplation leads to action, then the action perfects the contemplation by bringing, so to speak, theory into practice. Nevertheless, contemplation always remains the better of the two, as is seen and reflected by Our Lord's encounter with the sisters Martha and Mary.

"Now it came to pass as they went, that Jesus entered into a certain town: and a certain woman named Martha, received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood and said: 'Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her therefore, that she help me!' And the Lord answering, said to her: 'Martha! Martha! Thou art careful, and art troubled about many things! But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her!'" (Luke 10:38-42).

We may well be tempted to busy ourselves with many practical preparations for Christmas during this Advent seasons, but, in doing so, we may lose sight and understanding of the reason for the season. Contemplation is better than being busy, especially if the busy business has neglected any or all contemplation in the first place! Isaias and St. John the Baptist were not just busy prophets, but they were also very busy spiritually—busy with personal prayer and contemplation. Spiritually, you cannot give what you have not got—if you do not live a spiritual life yourself, you will be a mere tinkling cymbal or an empty hollow brass container.

Those who live and work in the world must be disciplined and strong in making time for contemplating God and things related to God, which is what Our Lord calls: *"the one thing necessary .. the best part!"* The busy bodies are often guilty of giving God too much "lip-service" and not enough "heart-service"—Our Lord, quoting one of our chief personages, Isaias, said: *"Well did Isaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me!'"* (Mark 7:6).

Not only was Mary Magdalen seemingly a contemplative—sitting at Our Lord's feet and drinking-in His words, but Holy Scripture, in two instances that were twelve years apart, indicates this same quality for Our Lady: *"But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart"* (Luke 2:19). *"And His mother kept all these words in her heart"* (Luke 2:51).

St. Joseph, too, is painted as being more contemplative by nature, even though he worked publicly as a carpenter. When he discovered that Our Lady was with child, *"Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: 'Joseph, son of David! Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost!'"* (Matthew 1:19-20). Nowhere in Holy Scripture do we have any words of St. Joseph recorded, but we do have this telling phrase above: *"... he thought on these things..."*—which is a contemplative act in its nature.

ISAIAS

Isaias is called "The Messianic Prophet" because makes many prophecies of the coming of the Messiah into the world. "Messias" means "the anointed one."

Isaias prophesied during the rule of four different kings of Juda. They were Ozias, Joatham, Achaz and Ezechias. Isaias was born in Jerusalem about 760 B.C. Micheas, Amos, and Osee were other prophets of God who lived during Isaias's lifetime.

Isaias lived and preached during a very important time in the world's history. During his lifetime, Assyria was the most powerful nation on earth. Babylon was beginning to grow in power.

While Isaias lived in Juda, Romulus and Remus were beginning the city of Rome. The Greek cities of Athens and Sparta were just being built. It was during Isaias's lifetime that the Northern

Kingdom, Israel, was taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.

He began prophesying about 740 B.C. During most of the time that Isaias preached to God's people, the nation of Juda was very prosperous. People forgot about God because they were so involved in the things of this world. The rich people lived in luxury and idleness. The poor suffered from lack of food and clothing. Many of the people were drunkards; the women were just as bad as the men. Government officials were corrupt. Even the prophets failed to do the job God had given them. Instead of rebuking sin and delivering God's message, they preached what the people wanted to hear.

He was not a great prophet because many listened to him and obeyed—most did not; but he was a great prophet because he courageously continued to give God's message even if people turned a deaf ear to him. Isaias was God's spokesman to Juda for well over fifty years, but not many would listen to him. King Mannases killed him, by sawing him in two.

ST. JOSEPH

If Isaias was called "The Messianic Prophet" because he makes many prophecies BEFORE the coming of the Messiah into the world, then we could call St. Joseph "The Messianic Foster-Father" for he would have to provide for, care, nurture and raise the Messiah, AFTER He had come into the world.

Just as Isaias had much to suffer for God's sake, so too did St. Joseph suffer much for God. Betrothed to Mary, he could not understand how she had become pregnant and his anxiety and turmoil of soul were a terrible suffering. He suffered rejection, door to door, in Bethlehem, unable to provide a lodging for his wife, Mary and the soon-to-be-born Jesus. After Jesus' birth, He was forced to leave his native country and flee from the murderous motives of King Herod, who wanted Jesus killed. He had to live in exile for many years in a strange country, Egypt, whose language he did not speak.

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God had entrusted the child Jesus to his care and he lost Him for a period of three days. What terrible anguish and suffering Joseph must have suffered during that time! This shows us that following Jesus means that we will find plenty of suffering on our plate: "*When thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation*" (Ecclesiasticus 2:1).

Joseph endured all these tests and temptations calmly, humbly and with a great supernatural spirit; seeing all his trials as coming from the hand of God Himself. Whereas we learn a lot from the words of Isaias, Joseph speaks to us, through his silence, by his great actions.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

The Angel Gabriel prophesied to St. Zachary that he would have a son, who "*shall be great before the Lord; and shall drink no wine nor strong drink: and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people*" (Luke 1:15-17). St. John the Baptist, though he was the son of a priest and could have grown up to live the comfortable life of a priest, spent much of his life in the desert, away from the world, doing penance, praying and preaching.

Jesus Himself praised John, saying to the crowds: "*What went ye out into the desert to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that have expensive clothing and live delicately, are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see? A prophet? Yea, I say to you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written: 'Behold I send My angel before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee.'* For I say to you: Amongst those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist" (Luke 7:24-28).

**“For the Son of man
is come to seek
and to save
that which was lost!”**

(Luke 19:10; Matthew 18:11).

**I HAVE COME
TO CALL
SINNERS TO
PENANCE!**

(Luke 5:32)



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3. DAILY ADVENT EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

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PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST

- ▶ Is the season of Advent high on my list of priorities, or is among the “*I’ll get to it if I can!*” list of things?
- ▶ Am I actually preparing things for the Advent season or am I in a “*I’ll just wing-it!*” mode?
- ▶ Do I have a clear written set of daily goals with regard to what prayers I will say—what readings will be made—what penances will be done—what family activities will be organized—what extra spiritual exercises will be undertaken—and when will all these things be done?
- ▶ Am I afraid to convince and recruit others in these Advent activities? Have I succumbed to human respect by being afraid of what others will say or think?
- ▶ Am I making excuses such as “*I do not have enough time!*” or “*The Church doesn’t say that you HAVE to do these things!*”
- ▶ Am I procrastinating about getting off to a fervent start, and telling myself that it is prudent not to overdo things? Lukewarmness conjures up many appealing arguments.
- ▶ Do I get disheartened and discouraged by a lack of cooperation and enthusiasm from others? God will not judge you on success, but on effort.
- ▶ Do I become irritable, angry, sarcastic, caustic or sulky if things do not go as I hoped they would? Pride is often the culprit in such cases.
- ▶ Am I more concerned about getting spiritual exercises done rather than focusing on how well they are done? Do I rush through things to appease others, or to get back to doing “more interesting things”?

A BRIEF GENERAL EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Based on the Ten Commandments

For a more detailed Examination of Conscience go to:

<http://devotiontoourlady.com/confession-of-sins.html>

I. "I am the Lord, thy God, thou shalt not have strange gods before Me"

Have I sinned against Religion by seriously believing in New Age, Scientology, Astrology, Horoscopes, Fortune-telling, Ouija Board, Casting Spells, Superstition or engaging in the Occult?

Did I endanger my Catholic Faith or cause scandal by associating with anti-Catholic groups & associations (e.g., the Freemasons)? Have fame, fortune, money, career, pleasure, etc. replaced God as my highest priority? Have I neglected my daily prayers?

II. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain

Have I committed blasphemy by using the name of God and Jesus Christ to swear rather than to praise?

Have I committed sacrilege by showing disrespect to holy objects (crucifix, rosary) or contempt for religious persons (bishop, priests, deacons, women religious) or for sacred places (in Church).

Have I committed sacrilege by going to Holy Communion in the state of mortal sin without first going to confession e.g., after missing Mass on Sunday or a Holy Day?

Did I violate the one-hour fast before Communion? Did I break the laws of fast and abstinence during Lent? Did I neglect my Easter duty to receive Holy Communion at least once?

Have I neglected to support the Church and the poor by sharing my time, talent and treasure?

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III. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day

Did I miss Mass on any Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation? (Bad weather and being sick do not count)

Have I shown disrespect by leaving Mass early, not paying attention or not joining in the prayers?

Did I do unnecessary work or major shopping on Sunday which could have been done the day before?

Have I been stingy in my support for the Church? Do I give of my time & talent?

IV. Honor thy Father and Mother

Parents: Have I set a bad example for my children by casually missing Mass, neglecting prayer, or ignore my responsibility to provide a Catholic education by either sending my children to parochial school or to C.C.D. (Religious Education Program)?

Do I show little or no interest in my children's faith and practice of it? Have I showed disrespect for those in authority, government or church? Have I not expressed my moral values to them?

Children: Have I been disobedient and/or disrespectful to my parents or guardians?

Did I neglect to help them with household chores? Have I caused them unnecessary worry and anxiety by my attitude, behavior, moods, etc.?

V. Thou shalt not kill

Did I consent, recommend, advise, approve, support or have an abortion? Did I realize that there is an excommunication for anyone who procures an abortion?

Did I actively or passively cooperate with an act of euthanasia whereby ordinary means were stopped or means taken to directly end the life of an elderly or sick person?

Have I committed an act of violence or abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or verbal)?

Have I endangered the lives of others by reckless driving or by driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol?

Do I show contempt for my body by neglecting to take care of my own health?

Have I been mean or unjust to anyone?

Have I held a grudge or sought revenge against someone who wronged me?

Do I point out others' faults and mistakes while ignoring my own?

Do I complain more than I compliment?

Am I ungrateful for what other people do for me?

Do I tear people down rather than praise or encourage them?

Am I prejudiced against people because of their color, language or ethnic-religious background?

**VI. Thou shalt not commit adultery
&**

**IX. Thou shalt not covet
thy neighbor's wife.**

Did I have any sex before or outside of marriage?

Do I view pornographic material (magazines, videos, internet, hot-lines)?

Have I gone to massage parlors or adult book stores?

Did I commit the sins of masturbation and/or artificial contraception?

Have I not avoided the occasions of sin (persons or places) which would tempt me to be unfaithful to my spouse or to my own chastity?

Do I encourage and entertain impure thoughts and desires?

Do I tell or listen to dirty jokes?

Have I committed fornication or adultery?

VII. Thou shalt not steal

&

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

Have I stolen any object, committed any shoplifting or cheated anyone of their money?

Did I knowingly deceive someone in business or commit fraud?

Have I shown disrespect or even contempt for other people's property?

Have I done any acts of vandalism? Am I greedy or envious of another's goods?

Do I let financial and material concerns or the desire for comfort override my duty to God, to Church, to my family or my own spiritual well-being?

**VIII. Thou shalt not bear false witness
against thy neighbor.**

Have I told a lie in order to deceive someone?

Have I told the truth with the purpose and intention of ruining someone's reputation (sin of detraction)?

Have I told a lie or spread rumors which may ruin someone's reputation (sin of calumny or slander)?

Did I commit perjury by false swearing an oath on the Bible?

Am I curious or a busybody, prying into other people's matters?

Do I listen to or even spread gossip and secrets about others?

Do I love to hear bad news about my enemies?

ADVENT PRAYERS

“We ought always to
pray and not to faint”

(Luke 18:1)

“Pray without ceasing!”

(1 Thessalonians 5:17)



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4. ADVENT SEASON PRAYERS

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O God, Who gladdens us by the annual expectation of our Redemption, grant that we, who now receive with joy Your only-begotten Son as our Redeemer, may behold Him without fear when He comes as our judge, even the same Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

* * *

Stir up our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the ways of Your Only begotten-Son, that we may attain to serve You with purified minds, through His advent. Who with You lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, world without end. Amen.

* * *

O Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sake descended from the throne of glory to this world of pain and sorrow; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. Make our hearts a fit habitation for You. Beautify and fill us with all spiritual graces, and possess us wholly by Your power. Give us grace to prepare for Your coming with deep humility, to receive You with burning love, and to hold fast to You with a firm faith; that we may never leave nor forsake You. Who lives and reigns, world without end. Amen

* * *

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which Your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life im-

mortal; through Him who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

VARIOUS COLLECTS OR PRAYERS FROM THE LITURGY

Father, in the wilderness of the Jordan You sent a messenger to prepare people's hearts for the coming of Your Son. Help me to hear his words and repent of my sins, so that I may clearly see the way to walk, the truth to speak, and the life to live for Him, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

* * *

All-powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good that Christ may find in us an eager welcome at His coming and call us to His side in the Kingdom of Heaven, where He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

* * *

Father in Heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of Your love and our minds are searching for the light of Your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Savior and give us the strength to grow in love, that the dawn of His coming may find us rejoicing in His presence and welcoming the light of His truth. We ask this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

* * *

God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy, so that we may share His wisdom and become one with Him when He comes in glory, for He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

* * *

Father in Heaven, the day draws near when the glory of Your Son will make radiant the night of the waiting world. May the lure of greed not impede us from the joy which moves the hearts

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of those who seek Him. May the darkness not blind us to the vision of wisdom which fills the minds of those who find Him. We ask this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

* * *

Lord God, may we, your people, who look forward to the birth of Christ, experience the joy of salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving. We ask this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

* * *

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ever faithful to Your promises and ever close to Your Church: the Earth rejoices in hope of the Savior's coming and looks forward with longing to his return at the end of time. Prepare our hearts and remove the sadness that hinders us from feeling the joy and hope which His presence will bestow. We ask this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

* * *

Lord, fill our hearts with Your love, and as You revealed to us by an angel the coming of Your Son as man, so lead us through His suffering and death to the glory of His resurrection, for He lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

* * *

Father, all-powerful God, Your eternal Word took flesh on our Earth, when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of Your divine plan and will. Lift our minds, in watchful hope, to hear the voice which announces His glory and open our minds to receive the Holy Spirit Who prepares us for His coming. We ask this in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

THE SEVEN PENITENTIAL PSALMS

Every other verse is italicized to help those who are saying the psalms in two choirs, alternating verses.

PSALM 6

O Lord, do not reprove me in Thy wrath, nor in Thy anger chastise me.

Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am weak, heal me, Lord, for my body is in torment.

And my soul is greatly troubled, but Thou, O Lord, how long?

Turn to me, O Lord, and deliver my soul; save me on account of Thy mercy.

For who amongst the dead remembers Thee, who of the dead will tell of Thee?

I have suffered and wept, every night have I washed my bed and drenched my blanket with my tears

My eyes are filled with grief, I have grown feeble in the midst of my enemies.

Leave me, all you who do evil, for the Lord has heard the sound of my weeping.

The Lord has heard my appeal, the Lord has accepted my prayer.

May my enemies be put to shame and come to ruin. May they be turned away and be swiftly put to shame.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 31

Blessed is he whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord hath not imputed sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Because I was silent my bones wasted away, as I cried out all day.

For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: I am twisted in my affliction whilst the thorn is fastened upon me.

I have acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my guilt I have not concealed.

I said "I will confess my injustice against myself to the Lord:" and Thou hast forgiven the wickedness of my sin.

For this shall every one that is holy pray to Thee in due time.

Though in a flood of many waters, they shall not reach him.

Thou art my refuge, from the tribulation which surrounds me: my joy, deliver me from those surrounding me.

I will give thee understanding, and I will instruct thee in the way in which thou shalt walk: I will fix my eyes upon thee.

Do not become like the horse and the mule, who have no understanding.

With bit and bridle bind them fast, else they will not come near to thee.

Many are the sorrows of the sinner, but mercy shall surround him that hopeth in the Lord.

Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye just, and glory, all ye of righteous heart.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 37

O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy furor; nor chastise me in Thy wrath.

For thy arrows are fastened in me: and Thy hand hath descended upon me.

There is no health in my flesh in the face of Thy wrath: there is no peace for my bones in the face of my sins.

For my iniquities are gone over my head: and are a heavy burden too heavy to bear.

My wounds are putrid and corrupt, in the face of my foolishness.

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PSALM 50

I am miserable and am bowed down: all the day long I walked in sadness.

For my insides are filled with mocking; and there is no health in my flesh.

Greatly am I afflicted and humbled: I roared with the groaning of my heart.

Lord, before Thee are all my desires, and my groaning is not hidden from Thee.

My heart is troubled, my strength hath left me, and the light of my eyes themselves is not with me.

My friends and my neighbors have drawn near me and stood against me.

And those who were near me stood afar: They laid snares, those who sought my soul.

And they that sought evil for me said wicked things, all day long they planned deceitful things.

But I, as a deaf man, heard not: and as a dumb man not opening his mouth.

And I became like one that heareth not: and that hath no reproofs in his mouth.

For in Thee, O Lord, have I hoped: Thou wilt hear me, O Lord my God.

For I said, "May my enemies never rejoice over me: when my feet stumble, they speak great things against me."

For I am ready for the whip: and my sorrow is continually before me.

For I will declare my iniquity: and I will be sorry for my sin.

But my enemies live, and are stronger than I, and they that hate me wrongfully multiply.

They that render evil for good, have humiliated me, because I followed goodness.

Forsake me not, O Lord, my God, depart not from me.

Hasten unto my help, O Lord, God of my salvation.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy great mercy;

And according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies: blot out my iniquity.

Wash me from my iniquity; and cleanse me of my sin.

For I acknowledge my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.

Against Thee alone have I sinned and done evil in Thy sight; that Thou mayest be justified in Thy sentence and mayest overcome when judged.

For behold, I was conceived in sin, and in sin my mother conceived me;

For behold, Thou hast loved truth, and the uncertain and hidden things of Thy wisdom Thou hast shown me.

Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed, Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow.

Thou shalt make me hear of joy and gladness, and the bones Thou hath crushed shall rejoice.

Turn away Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Cast me not from Thy presence, and take not Thy holy spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and strengthen me with Thy spirit.

I will teach the unjust Thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted to Thee.

Deliver me from blood guilt, O God, the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall extol Thy justice.

Thou shalt open my lips, O Lord, and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.

For if Thou didst desire sacrifice, I would have indeed given it, with a burnt offering Thou art not pleased.

A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit, a contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou shalt not despise.

Deal favorably, O Lord, in Thy good will with Sion that the walls of Jerusalem may be built up.

Then shalt Thou accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations and whole burnt offerings, then shall they lay calves upon Thy altar.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 101

Hear, O Lord, my prayer: and let my cry come to Thee.

Hide not Thy face from me: in the day of my distress, incline Thy ear to me.

On the day I call upon Thee, hear me speedily.

For my days have vanished like smoke, and my bones burn like dry wood in a fire.

My heart is dried up and withered like grass: and so I have forgotten to eat my bread.

Because of my groaning, my bones cleave to my flesh.

I am like a pelican in the desert: I am like a night owl among the ruins.

I kept awake, and am like a lone sparrow on the housetop.

All day my enemies reviled me: in their rage against me they made a curse of me.

For I eat ashes like bread, and mingle my drink with tears.

Because of Thy anger and indignation: having lifted me up, Thou hast then cast me down.

My days are like a lengthening shadow, and I have withered like grass.

But thou, O Lord, endurest for ever: and Thy memorial for generations and generations.

Thou shalt arise and have mercy on Sion, for it is time to be merciful, for the appointed time has come.

For her stones have pleased Thy servants: and her dust moves them to pity.

All the Gentiles shall fear Thy name, O Lord,

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and all the kings of the earth Thy glory.

For the Lord hath built up Sion: and He shall be seen in His glory.

He hath regarded the prayer of the humble: and he hath not despised their prayer.

Let these things be written for the next generation: and the people that shall be created will praise the Lord:

For he hath looked down from his sanctuary on high: from heaven the Lord hath looked upon the earth,

That he might hear the groans of those imprisoned that he might release the children of the dead:

That they may declare the name of the Lord in Sion: and His praise in Jerusalem;

When the people assemble together, and kings, that they may serve the Lord.

He hath broken my strength in the way, He hath cut short my days.

I shall say: "My God take me not away in the midst of my days: Thy years are for generations and generations.

In the beginning, O Lord, Thou foundedst the earth: and the heavens are the works of thy hands.

They shall perish but Thou shalt remain: and all of them shall grow old like a garment:

And like clothing Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed.

But Thou art always the same, and Thy years have no end.

The children of Thy servants shall abide and their offspring shall be established in Thy presence.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 129

Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord: Lord hear my voice.

Let Thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.

If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

But there is forgiveness with Thee: because of Thy law I wait for Thee, O Lord.

My soul waiteth on His word: my soul hopeth in the Lord.

From the morning watch even until night let Israel hope in the Lord:

For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plentiful redemption.

And He shall redeem Israel, from all their iniquities.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 142

Hear, O Lord, my prayer, give ear to my supplication in Thy truth: hear me in Thy justice.

And enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for no one living shall be justified in Thy sight.

For the enemy hath persecuted my soul: he hath ground my life into the earth.

He hath made me dwell in darkness as the dead of old.

And my spirit is in anguish within me: my heart within me is troubled.

I remembered the days of old, I meditated on all Thy works: upon the works of Thy hands I pondered.

I stretched forth my hands to Thee: my soul is as earth without water unto Thee.

Hear me speedily, O Lord: my spirit hath fainted away.

Turn not away Thy face from me, lest I be like those that go down into the pit.

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Cause me to hear Thy mercy in the morning; for in Thee have I hoped.

Make the way known to me, wherein I should walk: for I have lifted up my soul to Thee.

Deliver me from my enemies, O Lord, to Thee have I fled.

Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.

Thy good spirit shall lead me into the right land:

For Thy name's sake, O Lord, Thou wilt give me life in Thy justice.

Thou shalt bring my soul out of trouble.

And in Thy mercy Thou wilt destroy my enemies.

And Thou wilt cut off all that afflict my soul: for I am Thy servant.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

MORNING PRAYERS



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5. MORNING PRAYERS

from devotiontoourlady.com

BASED ON THE DIVINE OFFICE OF THE CHURCH

LEADER: During Advent, Christians, on awaking in the morning, should unite themselves with the Church, who, in her Office of Matins, says to us these solemn words, *“Come, let us adore the King our Lord, who is to come!”* which choirs of religious, men and women, throughout centuries, have been chanting during the deep silence of the nights of Advent.

Therefore, let us profoundly adore this great King, whose coming is so near at hand: and with this idea deeply impressed upon your mind, giving God the first fruits of your day, perform the first acts of religion, both interior and exterior, with which you should begin the day. The time for morning prayer being come, use the following method, which is formed upon the very prayers of the Church:

Make the Sign of the Cross as you say:

LEADER: O God ✠ come to our aid.

ALL: O Lord, make haste to help us.

Then pray some of the Advent Antiphons which anticipate the coming of Christ:

ALL: Come, let us adore the King our Lord, who is to come!

LEADER: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh into thee!

ALL: O Sion; fear not, for thy salvation cometh quickly. Alleluia!

LEADER: Behold, a great Prophet shall arise!

ALL: And He shall build up a new Jerusalem. Alleluia!

LEADER: Behold, there cometh the King of the Most High!

ALL: With great power, to save the nations!
Alleluia!

LEADER: Behold, the Lord shall come, and all His saints with Him!

ALL: And it shall come to pass, in that day, that the light shall be great! Alleluia!

LEADER: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

ALL: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

ALL: Come, let us adore the King our Lord, who is to come!

First, praise and adoration of the most Holy Trinity:

LEADER: Let us bless the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

ALL: Let us praise Him and extol Him above all for ever.

LEADER: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

ALL: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Then, praise to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ:

LEADER: We adore thee, O Christ, and we bless thee;

ALL: Because Thou art coming to redeem the world by Thy holy cross.

Thirdly, invocation of the Holy Ghost:

LEADER: Come, O Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of thy faithful,

ALL: And enkindle within them the fire of thy love.

OPENING HYMN (said by all)

What shall I, frail man, be pleading?
Who for me be interceding,
When the just are mercy needing?

King of Majesty tremendous,
Who dost free salvation send us,
Fount of pity, then befriend us!

Think, kind Jesu! – my salvation
Caused Thy wondrous Incarnation;
Leave me not to reprobation.

Faint and weary, Thou hast sought me,
On the Cross of suffering bought me.
Shall such grace be vainly brought me?

Righteous Judge, for sin's pollution
Grant Thy gift of absolution,
Ere the day of retribution.

Guilty, now I pour my moaning,
All my shame with anguish owning;
Spare, O God, Thy suppliant groaning!

O God of majesty
Nourishing light of the Trinity
Join us with the blessed. Amen.

ANTIPHONS AND PSALMS

Here is a compendium of the most striking verses from the Book of Psalms. Holy Mother has built her Divine Office around the 150 Psalms. The Psalms are prayers composed by the Holy Ghost and are extremely powerful and instructive prayers. This is merely a small sampling. Pick up your Bible and read more of them if you so wish. You will not be disappointed. Each verse will be referenced. For example, [50:4] means Psalm 50, Verse 4.

If there are several persons praying together, you can alternate the verses between two choirs or two groups. The verse is said by one group, the next verse is said by the other group, and so on. All the psalms end with "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, etc."

Traditionally, at the Church's Morning Prayers (called "Lauds" and "Prime") there are five Psalms said at Lauds and three psalms are

said at Prime. Below you will find much more than three psalms, but they will not be the entire psalm, only a few short extracts from it. You could say them all if you have the time and the inclination to do so, or you could pick and choose and rotate from night to night. You are free to do as you wish.

PSALM 5

[5:2] Give ear, O Lord, to my words, understand my cry.

[5:3] Hearken to the voice of my prayer, O my King and my God.

[5:4] For to Thee will I pray, O Lord! In the morning thou shalt hear my voice.

[5:5] In the morning I will stand before thee, and will see, because Thou art not a God that willest iniquity.

[5:6] Neither shall the wicked dwell near Thee: nor shall the unjust abide before Thy eyes.

[5:7] Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity! Thou wilt destroy all that speak a lie. The bloody and the deceitful man the Lord will abhor.

[5:8] But as for me, in the multitude of thy mercy, I will come into Thy house! I will worship towards thy holy temple, in thy fear.

[5:9] Conduct me, O Lord, in Thy justice, because of my enemies, direct my way in Thy sight.

[5:10] For there is no truth in their mouth; their heart is vain.

[5:11a] Their throat is an open sepulcher! They dealt deceitfully with their tongues! Judge them, O God!

[5:11b] Let them fall from their devices: according to the multitude of their wickedness cast them out: for they have provoked Thee, O Lord.

[5:12] But let all them be glad that hope in Thee! They shall rejoice for ever, and Thou shalt dwell in them. And all they that love Thy Name shall glory in Thee:

[5:13] For Thou wilt bless the just. O Lord, Thou hast crowned us, as with a shield of Thy good will.

PSALM 11 & 13

[11:2] Save me, O Lord, for there is now no saint: truths are decayed from among the children of men.

[11:3] They have spoken vain things everyone to his neighbor: with deceitful lips, and with a double heart have they spoken.

[11:4] May the Lord destroy all deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things.

[11:5] Who have said: "We will magnify our tongue! Our lips are our own! Who is Lord over us?"

[13:1] The fool hath said in his heart: "There is no God!" They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good, no not one.

[13:2] The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God.

[13:3a] They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doth good, no not one.

[13:3b] Their throat is an open sepulcher: with their tongues they acted deceitfully; the poison of asps is under their lips.

[13:3c] Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness; their feet are swift to shed blood.

[13:3d] Destruction and unhappiness in their ways: and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.

[13:4] Shall not all they know that work iniquity, who devour my people as they eat bread?

[13:5] They have not called upon the Lord: there have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 23

[23:3] Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in His holy place?

[23:4] *The innocent in hands, and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor.*

[23:5] He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Savior.

[23:6] *This is the generation of them that seek Him, of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob.*

[23:7] Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in.

[23:8] *Who is this King of Glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle.*

[23:9] Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in.

[23:10] *Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory.*

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 33

[33:2] I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be always in my mouth.

[33:3] *In the Lord shall my soul be praised: let the meek hear and rejoice.*

[33:4] O magnify the Lord with me; and let us extol His Name together.

[33:5] *I sought the Lord, and He heard me; and He delivered me from all my troubles.*

[33:6] Come ye to Him and be enlightened: and your faces shall not be confounded.

[33:7] *This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him: and saved him out of all his troubles.*

[33:8] The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him: and shall deliver them.

[33:9] *O taste, and see that the Lord is sweet: blessed is the man that hopeth in Him.*

[33:10] Fear the Lord, all ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him.

[33:11] *The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good.*

[33:12] Come, children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.

[33:13] *Who is the man that desireth life: who loveth to see good days?*

[33:14] Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

[33:15] *Turn away from evil and do good: seek after peace and pursue it.*

[33:16] The eyes of the Lord are upon the just: and His ears unto their prayers.

[33:17] *But the countenance of the Lord is against them that do evil things: to cut off the remembrance of them from the Earth.*

[33:18] The just cried, and the Lord heard them: and delivered them out of all their troubles.

[33:19] *The Lord is near unto them that are of a contrite heart: and He will save the humble of spirit.*

[33:20] Many are the afflictions of the just; but out of them all will the Lord deliver them.

[33:21] *The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken.*

[33:22] The death of the wicked is very evil: and they that hate the just shall be guilty.

[33:23] *The Lord will redeem the souls of His servants: and none of them that trust in Him shall offend.*

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 41

[41:2] As the hart pants after the fountains of water; so my soul pants after Thee, O God.

[41:3] *My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?*

[41:4] My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: "Where is thy God?"

[41:5] These things I remembered, and poured out my soul in me: for I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God: With the voice of joy and praise; the noise of one feasting.

[41:6] Why art thou sad, O my soul? And why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him: the salvation of my countenance and my God.

[41:7] My soul is troubled within myself: therefore will I remember Thee from the land of Jordan and Hermoniim, from the little hill.

[41:8] Deep calls on deep, at the noise of thy flood-gates. All thy heights and thy billows have passed over me.

[41:9] In the daytime the Lord hath commanded his mercy; and a canticle to him in the night. With me is prayer to the God of my life.

[41:10] I will say to God: Thou art my support. Why hast Thou forgotten me? And why go I mourning, whilst my enemy afflicts me?

[41:11] Whilst my bones are broken, my enemies who trouble me have reproached me; whilst they say to me day all day: "Where is thy God?"

[41:12] Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why dost thou disquiet me? Hope thou in God, for I will still give praise to Him: the salvation of my countenance, and my God.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 52

[52:1] The fool said in his heart: "There is no God!"

[52:2] They are corrupted, and become abominable in iniquities: there is none that doth good.

[52:3] God looked down from heaven on the children of men: to see if there were any that did understand, or did seek God.

[52:4] All have gone aside, they are become unprofitable together, there is none that doth good, no not one.

[52:5] Shall not all the workers of iniquity know, who eat up my people as they eat bread?

[52:6] They have not called upon God: there have they trembled for fear, where there was no fear. For God hath scattered the bones of them that please men: they have been confounded, because God hath despised them.

[52:7] Who will give out of Sion the salvation of Israel? When God shall bring back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 53

[53:3] Save me, O God, by Thy name, and judge me in Thy strength.

[53:4] O God, hear my prayer! Give ear to the words of my mouth!

[53:5] For strangers have risen up against me; and the mighty have sought after my soul: and they have not set God before their eyes.

[53:6] For behold God is my helper: and the Lord is the protector of my soul.

[53:7] Turn back the evils upon my enemies; and cut them off in thy truth.

[53:8] I will freely sacrifice to Thee, and will give praise, O God, to Thy name: because it is good.

[53:9] For Thou hast delivered me out of all trouble: and my eye hath looked down upon my enemies.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

LEADER: Let us sincerely recite the Lord's Prayer, asking of God, the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to grant that His Holy Name may be glorified on Earth by sending His Son, who will establish the kingdom of God in souls and na-

tions, and that our heavenly Father be pleased to give us this Savior, Who is our daily Bread of Life and Who will obtain for us the forgiveness of our sins; and finally, that He may deliver us from sin, which is the greatest evil in this world.

THE OUR FATHER

LEADER: Our Father ...

ALL: Who art in Heaven, hallowed by 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.

LEADER: Let us now pray the angelical salutation to Mary, who is, in these days which precede the Nativity, so truly full of grace, since she carried, in her chaste womb, Him Who is the Author of all grace. The Lord, the fruit of her womb, is with her; so that, even before His birth at Christmas, we may already give her the sublime and unshared title of Mother of God.

THE HAIL MARY

LEADER: Hail Mary ...

ALL: 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.

LEADER: Let us now, with sincere Faith, recite the Creed, the Symbol of our Faith; and as we pronounce the words, "*Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost*", let us reverently dwell upon them with special attention, adoring the Savior, Who is as yet concealed in Mary's womb.

THE SYMBOL OF FAITH—THE CREED

LEADER: I believe in God ...

ALL: The Father almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy

Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

LEADER: Let us humbly stir-up within ourselves sentiments of penance, by the remembrance of the sins we have committed. Let us produce thoughts of gratitude to the Lamb of God, Who is coming in order to save us; and feelings of fear concerning the Last Day of the Last Judgment, when He will come in justice to settle accounts with everyone. For this purpose, let us say with the Church the following hymn, taken from the Office of Lauds for Advent.

HYMN : EN CLARA VOX REDARGUIT (All pray together)

Hark, a joyful voice is calling
And each dim and winding way
Of the ancient Temple filling
Dreams, depart! For it is day.

Christ is coming! From thy bed
Earth-bound soul, awake and spring
With the sun, new risen, to shed
Health on human suffering

Behold! To grant a pardon free,
Comes a willing Lamb from Heaven;
Sad and tearful, hasten we,
One and all, to be forgiven.

When once again He comes in light,
Filling earth with fear and woe;
Lord! Be Thou our loving Might,
From our guilt and ghostly foe.

To the Father and the Son,
And the Spirit, Who in Heaven,
Ever witness, Three in One,
Praise on earth be ever given.

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ALTERNATIVE TRANSLATION

Hark! A herald voice is calling
Through the shadows of the night
Cast away the dreams of darkness
Christ descends with heavenly light.

Wakened by the solemn warning,
Let the earthbound soul arise;
Christ, her sun, all sloth dispelling,
Shines upon the morning skies.

Behold the Lamb, so long expected,
Comes with pardon down from Heaven;
Let us haste, with tears of sorrow,
One and all to be forgiven;

So, when next He comes with glory,
And His Judgment Day draws near,
Faithful He may find His servants,
Watching till their Lord appear.

Honor, glory, might, and blessing
To the Father and the Son,
With the everlasting Spirit,
While eternal ages run.

LEADER: Here, let us pause for a few moments and recall to mind our greatest sins and resolve to avoid such sins in the future and resolve to do suitable penance for them. Then we will make together a humble confession of our sins, reciting the general formula made use of by the Church. *(Pause for a short while)*

THE CONFITEOR

LEADER: I confess ...

ALL: To almighty God, to Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed: through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech Blessed Mary ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

LEADER: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

ADVENT RITUAL from devotiontoourlady.com

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ALL: May the almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon, absolution, and remission of our sins. Amen.

This is the proper place for making your daily meditation. During Advent, its principal object ought to be the removing from ourselves those hindrances, which would oppose Jesus' coming and reigning within us.

The love of sensual pleasures, avarice, and pride, that triple concupiscence, which St. John so strongly condemns in his first Epistle, must be withstood, or else our preparation for Christmas is useless.

And as the chief thing in every prayer or meditation is to turn our thoughts to Jesus Christ, we must, during Advent, contemplate Him in the womb of Mary, where He remains hidden, giving us, by this His state of abasement, a most telling lesson of devotedness to His Father's glory, of obedience to the divine decrees, and of humility; but, at the same time, He gives us a most powerful proof of the greatness of His love of us.

This thought will naturally suggest to us a variety of motives and resolutions for breaking those ties which keep us from a virtuous life. But should they not produce sufficient impression on us, we must then consider Jesus as our Judge, in the dread magnificence of His majesty, and all the severity of His inevitable vengeance.

The next part of your morning prayer must be to ask of God, grace to avoid every kind of sin during the day you are just beginning. Say, then, with the Church, whose prayers must always be preferred to all others.

LEADER: Our help is in the Name of the Lord

ALL: Who made Heaven and Earth

LEADER: O Lord hear our prayer

ALL: And let our cry come unto Thee.

LEADER: Let us pray: Almighty Lord and God, Who hast brought us to the beginning of this day, let Thy powerful grace so conduct us through it,

that we may not fall into any sin, but that all our thoughts, words, and actions may be regulated according to the rules of Thy heavenly justice, and tend to the observance of Thy holy law. Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER: Let us now beg the divine assistance for the actions of our day, that we may do them well and holily for the glory of God.

LEADER: Incline unto our aid, O God.

ALL: O Lord, make haste to help us.

LEADER: Incline unto my aid, O God.

ALL: O Lord, make haste to help us.

LEADER: Incline unto my aid, O God.

ALL: O Lord, make haste to help us.

LEADER: Let us pray: Lord God, and King of Heaven and earth, be pleased this day to rule and sanctify, to direct and govern our souls and bodies, our senses, words, and actions in conformity to thy law, and strict obedience to Thy commands; that by the help of Thy grace, O Savior of the world, we may be fenced and freed from all evils. Who livest and reignest for ever and ever.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER: Let us unite our prayers to those of our Holy Mother the Church, which, both in the Divine Office and during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered throughout the world, prays for the coming of Jesus Christ.

LEADER: O Lord God of hosts, come and deliver us from all evil.

ALL: Show Thy face, and we shall be saved.

LEADER: Show us, O Lord, Thy mercy.

ALL: And grant us the Savior, whom we expect from Thee.

LEADER: The Lord shall rise upon thee, O Jerusalem.

ALL: And His glory shall be seen upon thee.

(First Week of Advent)

ALL: Exert, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy power and come; that by Thy protection we may be freed from the imminent dangers of our sins, and be saved by thy mercy; Who livest and reignest, God, world without end. Amen.

(Second Week of Advent)

ALL: Stir up, O Lord, our hearts to prepare the ways of Thy only-begotten Son: that by His coming we may be enabled to serve Thee with pure minds; who livest and reignest God, world without end. Amen.

(Third Week of Advent)

ALL: Bend thine ear, O Lord, we beseech Thee, to our prayers, and enlighten the darkness of our minds by the grace of Thy visitation; Who livest and reignest, God, world without end. Amen.

(Fourth Week of Advent)

ALL: Exert, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy power and come; and help us by thy great might; that by the assistance of thy grace, thy indulgent mercy may hasten what is delayed by our sins; Who livest and reignest, God, world without end. Amen.

It would be well to add the special prayer which the Church says, during Advent, in honor of the blessed Mother of God.

LEADER: Let us pray. O God, Who wast pleased that thy Word, when the angel delivered his message, should take flesh in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary; give ear to our humble petitions, and grant that we, who believe her to be truly the Mother of God, may be helped by her prayers. Through the same Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

To finish the morning prayers, it is recommended that you pray together the Angelus.

NIGHT PRAYERS

“And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and he passed the whole night in the prayer of God”
(Luke 6:12).

“When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret: and thy Father, Who seeth in secret, will repay thee”
(Matthew 6:6)



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6. NIGHT PRAYERS

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BASED ON THE DIVINE OFFICE OF THE CHURCH

Make the Sign of the Cross as you say:

LEADER: O God ✠ come to our aid.

ALL: O Lord, make haste to help us.

Then pray some of the Advent Antiphons which anticipate the coming of Christ:

ALL: Come, let us adore the King our Lord, who is to come!

LEADER: Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh into thee!

ALL: O Sion; fear not, for thy salvation cometh quickly. Alleluia!

LEADER: Behold, a great Prophet shall arise!

ALL: And He shall build up a new Jerusalem. Alleluia!

LEADER: Behold, there cometh the King of the Most High!

ALL: With great power, to save the nations! Alleluia!

LEADER: Behold, the Lord shall come, and all His saints with Him!

ALL: And it shall come to pass, in that day, that the light shall be great! Alleluia!

LEADER: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

ALL: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

ALL: Come, let us adore the King our Lord, who is to come!

First, praise and adoration of the most Holy Trinity:

LEADER: Let us bless the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

ALL: Let us praise Him and extol Him above all for ever.

LEADER: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

ALL: As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Then, praise our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ:

LEADER: We adore thee, O Christ, and we bless thee;

ALL: Because Thou art coming to redeem the world by Thy holy cross.

Thirdly, invocation of the Holy Ghost:

LEADER: Come, O Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of thy faithful,

ALL: And enkindle within them the fire of thy love.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

LEADER: Enlighten our minds that we know our sins..

ALL: And grant our hearts true sorrow for them.

Then make the examination of conscience, going over in your mind all the faults you may have committed during the day; think how unworthy sin makes us of the merciful visit of our Savior, and make a firm resolution to avoid sin for the future, to do penance for it, and to avoid the occasions which might lead you into it.

The examination of conscience concluded, recite the Confiteor (the "I confess") with heartfelt contrition, and then give expression to your sorrow by the following act, which we have taken from the Cardinal St. Robert Bellarmine's Catechism:

THE CONFITEOR

LEADER: I confess ...

ALL: To almighty God, to Blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the Archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to all the saints, that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed: through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech Blessed Mary ever Virgin, blessed Michael the Archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and all the saints, to pray to the Lord our God for me.

LEADER: May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

ALL: May the almighty and merciful Lord grant us pardon, absolution, and remission of our sins. Amen.

OPENING HYMN

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry
Announces that the Lord is nigh;
Come then and hearken, for he brings
Glad tidings from the King of kings.

Then cleansed be every Christian breast,
And furnished for so great a guest!
Yea, let us each his heart prepare
For Christ to come and enter there.

For thou art our salvation, Lord,
Our refuge and our great reward;
Without thy grace our souls must fade,
And wither like a flower decayed.

Stretch forth thine hand, to heal our sore,
And make us rise to fall no more;
Once more upon thy people shine,
And fill the world with love divine.

All praise, eternal Son, to thee,
Whose Advent sets thy people free,
Whom, with the Father, we adore,
And Holy Ghost, for evermore.

ANTIPHONS AND PSALMS

Here is a compendium of the most striking verses from the Book of Psalms. Holy Mother has built her Divine Office around the 150 Psalms. The Psalms are prayers composed by the Holy Ghost and are extremely powerful and instructive prayers. This is merely a small sampling. Pick up your Bible and read more of them if you so wish. You will not be disappointed. Each verse will be referenced. For example, [50:4] means Psalm 50, Verse 4.

If there are several persons praying together, you can alternate the verses between two choirs or two groups. The verse is said by one group, the next verse is said by the other group, and so on. All the psalms end with "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, etc."

Traditionally, at the Church's Night Prayers (called "Compline") only three psalms are said. Below you will find much more than three psalms, but they will not be the entire psalm, only a few short extracts from it. You could say them all if you have the time and the inclination to do so, or you could pick and choose and rotate from night to night. You are free to do as you wish.

PSALM 1

[1:1] Blessed is the man who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the chair of pestilence.

[1:2] But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night.

[1:3] He shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit, in due season. His leaf shall not fall off: and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.

[1:4] Not so the wicked, not so: but like the dust, which the wind driveth from the face of the earth.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 2

[2:1] Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things?

[2:2] The kings of the Earth stood up, and the princes met together, against the Lord and against His Christ.

[2:3] Let us break their bonds asunder: and let us cast away their yoke from us.

[2:4] He that dwelleth in Heaven shall laugh at them: and the Lord shall deride them.

[2:5] Then shall He speak to them in His anger, and trouble them in His rage.

[2:9] Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

[2:10] O ye kings, understand: receive instruction, you that judge the earth.

[2:11] Serve ye the Lord with fear: and rejoice unto Him with trembling.

[2:12] Embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

PSALM 3

[3:2] Why, O Lord, are they multiplied that afflict me? Many are they who rise up against me.

[3:3] Many say to my soul: There is no salvation for him in his God.

[3:4] But thou, O Lord art my protector, my glory, and the lifter up of my head.

[3:5] I have cried to the Lord with my voice: and he hath heard me from his holy hill.

[3:6] I have slept and taken my rest: and I have risen up, because the Lord hath protected me.

[3:7] I will not fear thousands of the people, surrounding me: arise, O Lord; save me, O my God.

[3:8] For thou hast struck all them who are my adversaries without cause: thou hast broken the teeth of sinners.

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[3:9] Salvation is of the Lord: and thy blessing is upon thy people.

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

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

HYMN : CREATOR ALME SIDERUM

Bright Builder of the heavenly poles,
Eternal light of faithful souls,
Jesus, Redeemer of mankind,
Our humble prayers vouchsafe to mind.

Who, lest the fraud of Hell's black king
Should all men to destruction bring,
Didst, by an act of generous love,
The fainting world's physician prove.

Who, that Thou might'st our ransom pay
And wash the stains of sin away,
Wouldst from a Virgin's womb proceed
And on the Cross a Victim bleed.

Whose glorious power, Whose saving Name
No sooner any voice can frame,
But Heaven and Earth and Hell agree
To honor them with trembling knee.

Thee, Christ, who at the latter day
Shalt be our Judge, we humbly pray
Such arms of heavenly grace to send
As may Thy Church from foes defend.

Be glory given and honor done
To God the Father and the Son
And to the Holy Ghost on high.
From age to age eternally.

After this hymn, say the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed.

THE OUR FATHER

Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed by 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.

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Then address the angelical salutation to Mary, who is, in these days which precede the Nativity, so truly full of grace, since she has, in her chaste womb, Him Who is the Author of all grace. The Lord, the fruit of her womb, is with her; and we may already give her the sublime and unshared title of Mother of God.

THE HAIL MARY

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.

After this, recite the Symbol of Faith; and as you pronounce the words, "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost", dwell on them with special attention, adoring the Savior, Who is as yet concealed in Mary's womb.

THE SYMBOL OF FAITH—THE CREED

I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into Hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, where He is seated at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

You may then add the acts of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

ACT OF FAITH

O my God, I firmly believe whatsoever the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church requires me to believe: I believe it because Thou hast revealed it to her, Thou who art the very truth.

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ACT OF HOPE

O my God, knowing Thy almighty power, and Thy infinite goodness and mercy, I hope in Thee that, by the merits of the Passion and death of our Savior Jesus Christ, Thou wilt grant me eternal life, which Thou hast promised to all such as shall do the works of a good Christian; and these I resolve to do with the help of Thy grace.

ACT OF CHARITY

O my God, I love Thee with my whole heart and above all things, because Thou art the sovereign Good: I would rather lose all things than offend Thee. For Thy love also, I love, and desire to love, my neighbor as myself.

Then say to our Blessed Lady, in honor of the ineffable dignity of her maternity, the following anthem.

ANTHEM OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN Alma Redemptoris Mater (said by all)

Mother of Christ, hear thou thy people's cry
Star of the deep and Portal of the sky!
Mother of Him Who thee from nothing made.
Sinking we strive and call to thee for aid:
O, by what joy which Gabriel brought to thee,
Thou Virgin first and last, let us thy mercy see.

ALTERNATIVE TRANSLATION

ALL: Sweet Mother of our Redeemer,
Gate whereby we enter Heaven,
And Star of the seas
Help us, we fall; yet do we long to rise.
Nature looked upon thee with admiration,
When thou didst give birth to thy divine Creator,
Thyself remaining, before and a pure Virgin.
Gabriel spoke his Hail to thee;
We sinners crave thy pity.

LEADER: The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

ALL: And she conceived of the Holy Ghost.

LEADER: 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.

ALL: Amen.

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7. THE ANGELUS

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V. The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.
R. And she conceived of the Holy Ghost.
HAIL MARY....etc.

V. Behold the Handmaid of the Lord.
R. Be it done unto me according to thy word.
HAIL MARY....etc.

R. And the Word was made flesh.
V. And dwelt amongst us.
HAIL MARY....etc.

R. Pray for us O holy Mother of God.
V. That we may be made worthy of the
promises of Christ.

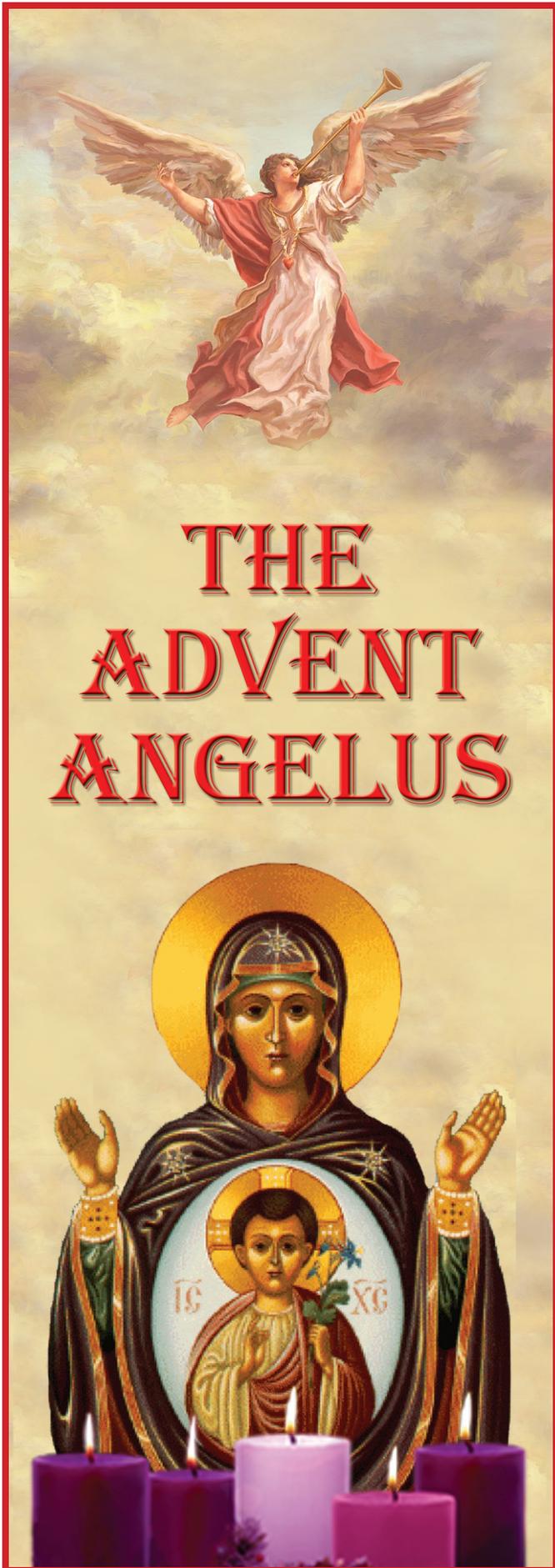
Let us pray. Pour forth, we beseech Thee O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may, by His Passion and Cross, be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord. **R.** Amen.

REFLECTION

The Angelus prayer is a perfect prayer for the Advent season because it draws our minds and hearts to contemplate the mystery of the incarnation. Our prayer of the Angelus allows us to rejoice with Mary who found favor with God to become the Mother of our savior.

In the forthcoming weeks of Advent, rejoice with Mary and anticipate the Church's liturgical action by praying the Angelus each day, whether it is three times or just once a day.

Consider praying the Angelus before each meal. If you dedicate yourself to this prayer during the Advent season, I hope and pray that you will celebrate Christmas in a new and profound way.



THE ROSARY

Meditations on the Advent Theme

**“But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart.”
(Luke 2:19)**



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8. YOUR ADVENT ROSARY

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The Church teaches that meditation upon the mysteries of the Rosary is the “soul” of the Rosary, while the vocal prayers of the Rosary—the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory Be—are the “body” of the Rosary. Our Lady herself has said that it is the meditation of the mysteries that really enhances the power of the Rosary.

Sr. Lucia of Fatima also tells us the following revelation by Our Lady concerning the Rosary:

“Prayer and sacrifice are the two means to save the world. As for the Holy Rosary, Father, in these last times in which we are living, the Blessed Virgin has given a new efficacy to the praying of the Holy Rosary. This in such a way that there is no problem that cannot be resolved by praying the Rosary, no matter how difficult it is — be it temporal or above all spiritual — in the spiritual life of each of us, or the lives of our families, be they our families in the world or Religious Communities, or even in the lives of peoples and nations. I repeat, there is no problem, as difficult as it may be, that we cannot resolve at this time by praying the Holy Rosary. With the Holy Rosary we will save ourselves, sanctify ourselves, console Our Lord and obtain the salvation of many souls.”

There is no commandment or written law that says that we must ALWAYS meditate FIVE or more DIFFERENT mysteries of the Rosary each day. St. Francis de Sales gives the following advice as regards prayer and meditation, that we would be wise to heed:

“Do not hurry along and say many things, but try to speak from your heart. A single Our Father said with feeling has greater value than many said quickly and hurriedly....However, if you have the gift of mental prayer, you should al-

ways give it first place. Afterwards, if you cannot say your vocal prayers because of your many duties or some other reason, don't be disturbed on that account. During vocal prayer, if you find your heart drawn and invited to interior or mental prayer, don't refuse to take it up. Let your mind turn very gently in that direction and don't be concerned at not finishing the vocal prayers you intended to say. The mental prayer you substitute for them is more pleasing to God and more profitable for your soul." (Introduction to the Devout Life, Part 2, chap.1).

Elsewhere, St. Francis speaks of the bee as an example of how we should meditate. He says that the bee settles on one single flower and remains on that flower until it has collected all the nectar, pollen, and propolis that is available—only then does it move to another flower. Similarly, with the Rosary mysteries—especially in special seasons such as Advent, Christmas and Lent—it would be good to imitate the bee and remain upon those ‘flowers’ that are linked to those seasons, drawing-out more and more each day from the endless and infinite teachings, examples and lessons that can be found in just one single mystery of the Rosary!

For this reason, these Advent Rosary pages will focus only upon the three mysteries that lead up to the birth of Our Lord at Bethlehem—the Annunciation, the Visitation and the Nativity. These mysteries will be entered into in great depth, which should at least give us the opportunity to go far beyond our usual superficial Catholicity!

Therefore, despite what will be presented below, you can do as you please. Focus on just one single mystery—such as the Annunciation—or focus on just one tiny aspect of a mystery—such as the words spoken by the Archangel Gabriel at the Annunciation, or Mary's words. This is what St. Augustine calls “the freedom of the children of God”—love God and do what you want!

There are also many books that can help you focus on these three mysteries—use them as you wish and see fit. The main thing is to break out of our “Routine” or “Superficial” Catholicity,

whereby we just go through the motions without any real love or fervor being present in what we do. As Our Lord complained: “This people honoreth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me!” (Matthew 15:8).

Each mystery, as laid out below, will have a reading that deals with the mystery. For those who do not have the time to meditate (and that is a dangerous and inconsiderate attitude), there is a list of 10 Scriptural verses—one for each of the 10 Hail Marys in the mystery, to be read out aloud before praying the Hail Mary. Here is that list, followed by the readings and a written meditation. You could, throughout these 22 days of Advent (it is shorter this year, the shortest possible length), take just a paragraph or two for each day's meditation and study and think about it in great depth, mulling it over in your mind all day long!

THE ANNUNCIATION

SCRIPTURAL ROSARY VERSES

(Read the appropriate verse before starting each Hail Mary)

1. And in the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth.
2. He was sent to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.
3. And the Angel being come in, said unto her: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women!”
4. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.
5. And the Angel said to her: “Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God!”
6. “Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus.”

7. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end."

8. And Mary said to the Angel: "How shall this be done, because I know not man?"

9. And the Angel answering, said to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

10. And Mary said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word!" And the Angel departed from her.

READING FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE

"In the sixth month, the Angel Gabriel was sent from God, into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man, whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.' Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be.

"And the angel said to her: 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son; and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father; and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end.'

"And Mary said to the angel: 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' And the angel answering, said to her: 'The Holy Ghost shall

come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: Because no word shall be impossible with God.' And Mary said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word!' And the angel departed from her" (Luke 1:26-38).

WRITTEN MEDITATION

SOWERS OF THE SEED IN THE SEWERS OF THE WORLD

A Time of Missions

This very first mystery of the Rosary is, in a certain sense, the end of things! Not the end in the sense that all is finished, but "the end" in the sense of "the goal" or "the purpose" that God had in mind. God created Mary for the purpose of Mary being the Mother of God's only-begotten Son.

That was to be her mission—to be the Mother of God and the channel through which God would physically enter the physical world. Not that God needed anything or anybody to come into this world, but God usually chooses to work through and with what God has created. Since God made the world and all things in it—human beings included—then God will use His creation, like a craftsman uses the tools that he has made, to help and further His work.

Jesus Christ could have entered this world in the same way as He left this world at His Ascension into Heaven—He could have done so with His own powers, without the intervention or medium of anyone else. However, Jesus chose Mary as the 'vehicle' by which He would come into this world, and Mary is the 'vehicle' by which Jesus wants us to go to Him. Hence the phrase "To Jesus through Mary"!

Do Good and Avoid Evil

That brings up the next point, of “Why did Jesus come into the world?” Well, of course, He came for the sake of our souls—as He Himself said: “the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He also said: “I came not to call the just, but sinners to penance” (Luke 5:32). He commanded us: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like to it: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:30-31).

This is His message in a nutshell—to leave sin behind and start loving and serving God with all our heart! Holy Scripture also puts it into a nutshell: “Decline from evil and do good!” (Psalm 36:27); “Turn away from evil and do good!” (Psalm 33:15), and St. Peter echoes this saying, “Let him decline from evil, and do good!” (1 Peter 3:11).

Even Our Lady’s messages, over the last 200 hundred years, are basically saying the same thing: God is already offended too much; sinners are falling into Hell in large numbers; they must stop sinning and do penance; but they won’t leave sin unless good people do good things, such as offering prayers and sacrifices, so that those sinners get the graces they need to stop sinning and start loving God as He deserves.

Just as very few people listened to Jesus’ message around 2,000 years ago, so, too, most people are not listening to Mary’s message today—she herself complains to Lucia of Fatima of that very thing, saying that even the good people are not listening to her message; instead, they go on doing the good that they want to do and ignore the good that Heaven wants them to do! This attitude is what made Jesus say: “The Son of man, when He cometh [at the end of time], shall He find, think you, Faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8).

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Speaking of the “end-times” Jesus says: “Many false prophets shall rise, and shall seduce many. And because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold. But he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved” (Matthew 24:11-13).

Our Lady, the Queen of Prophets, has warned us of these false prophets—she has also said that Russia would spread her errors throughout the world and that even Rome itself would lose the Faith and become the seat of the Antichrist. Yet the world does not want to listen, it buries its head in the sand, or rather, it buries its head in materialism, entertainment, parties and games, pleasures and treasures, and ignores the warnings of Heaven.

God or Mammon

“For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting” (Galatians 6:8). Our Lord warned us: “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13). We cannot serve God and the pleasures and treasures of this world! “Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

This is essentially what Our Lord argues against the materialistic Jews of His time, and which is still true for the hordes of materialistic people today, ourselves included: “If God were your Father, you would indeed love Me ... You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do ... You are from beneath, I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you, that you shall die in your sins. For if you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sin.” ... When He spoke these things, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews, who believed Him: ‘If you

continue in My word, you shall be My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!” (John 8:42; 8:23-24; 8:30-32, 44).

God does not hate the world, otherwise Jesus would not have come to try and save the world! “For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting” (John 3:16). But the world did not want to listen, it did not want to believe; and that is why most souls die in that hardened state of mind, refusing to change their lives, refusing to love God with all their mind, heart, soul and strength; they give that love primarily to the world and still expect to be saved by God—but they are mistaken and they are lost for eternity!

Make Jesus and Mary Known

Just as the Archangel Gabriel comes to Mary, to make known to her God’s desire and offer—that she become the Mother of God, in order to bring God into this world—so too does God make known to us His desire for us to imitate Mary, in order to bring Jesus back into a world that has rejected Him. As St. Thérèse of Lisieux (whom Pope St. Pius X called the ideal model of a saint for the modern world), once said: “Jesus is so little loved because He is so little known!” We cannot love what we do not know. Yet God also wishes to establish, in the world, devotion to the Sorrowful and Immaculate of Mary—as Our Lady revealed at Fatima. Mary is also so little loved, because she is so little known. As the Venerable Father Frederick Faber writes:

“Mary is not half enough preached. Devotion to her is low and thin and poor... Hence it is that Jesus is not loved, that heretics are not converted, that the Church is not exalted; that souls, which might be saints, wither and dwindle; that the Sacraments are not rightly frequented, nor souls enthusiastically evangelized. Jesus is obscured because Mary is kept in the background. Thousands of souls perish because Mary is withheld from them. It is the miserable, unworthy shadow, which we call our devotion

to the Blessed Virgin, that is the cause of all these wants and blights, these evils and omissions and declines. Yet, if we are to believe the revelations of the saints, God is pressing for a greater, a wider, a stronger, quite another devotion to His Blessed Mother.” (Fr. Faber, Preface to his translation of St. Louis de Montfort’s book True Devotion to Mary).

What is our attitude? “You don’t understand! I’d like to do something, but I am too busy! ... Spouse, children, work, and a hundred other things!” We see the same lame excuses in Our Lord’s parable about the Banquet Invitations: “A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him: ‘I have bought a farm, and I must needs go out and see it! I pray thee, hold me excused!’ And another said: ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them! I pray thee, hold me excused!’ And another said: ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come!’ ... And the Lord said to the servant: ‘I say unto you, that none of those men that were invited, shall taste of my supper!’” (Luke 14:16-24).

Jesus saw the same attitude in Martha, the sister of Mary Magdalen. “Martha was busy about much serving. Who stood and said: ‘Lord, hast thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me!’ And the Lord, answering, said to her: ‘Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things! But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her!’” (Luke 10:40-42).

We should always find time to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of Him and learn about Him, and likewise concerning His Blessed Mother. Then we should make Jesus and Mary known and loved in our own little world in which we live and work: “Going therefore, teach ye all nations... Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

Your Annunciation, Your Mission

The Archangel gave Mary a message and a mission! We too have been given a message and a mission! We are the sowers of the seed in the sewer of the world! God wishes to establish devotion to the Sorrowful and Immaculate Heart of Mary (with all that necessarily comes from this: such as the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart, etc.).

We have to do all that we can to make Mary known, make Mary loved and make Mary served, in the little world in which each of us lives. We cannot change the world at large, but we can change our own little world in which daily operate. God will not judge us on what we did or did not do on the other side of the world, but He will judge us on what we did or did not do in the little part of the world that surrounds us. God could act directly without our help, but God does not do the extraordinary where the ordinary would suffice.

Our Lord chose men and women to be His Apostles and disciples. Mary chooses souls today in the same way and with the same end or goal or purpose in mind: to preach the message and words of God, to make Jesus and Mary known and loved. Just as in the Parable of the Talents, we have been given the graces to do so—will we do so, or will we bury our talents or graces in the ground, or bury them under the mountain of materialism, with its pleasures and treasures? Our eternity might depend on what we do about it!

REVELATIONS TO THE MYSTICS

My love for God burned in my heart even more intensely than before and every day my soul was enkindled with new fervor and longing. So I withdrew from everything even more than formerly....

On the day before the occurrence of this mystery I thought I would die and my heart would burst with love and longing, for God's Providence had

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not comforted me. He filled my soul with the firm hope that the Saviour would descend from heaven without delay. But on the other hand my humility made me fear lest my presence in the world might perhaps delay His coming.

I was afraid that my lips might say or my ears might hear something against God, or my eyes see something evil. Even in my silence I was timid and very anxious that I might be silent when I should rather speak. When I was thus troubled in heart, I committed all my hopes to God....

On the eve of the Annunciation, at the bidding of the divine will the Archangel Gabriel presented himself before the throne of God, and the Blessed Trinity instructed him in the exact words with which he was to greet and speak to Mary. Then the Lord announced to the other angels in Heaven that at last the time for man's Redemption had come, and all the celestial spirits were filled with joy and thanksgiving, and they sang: "Holy, Holy, Holy, art Thou, Lord God."

Accompanied by thousands of resplendent angels, Gabriel descended from the highest heaven, delighted to obey God's epochal command. His appearance was that of an exceedingly handsome young man with wavy blond hair, and his bright features radiated a divine light. His whole bearing was pleasing, yet also god-like and majestic. He wore a rich diadem on his head and a cross on his breast, and his vestments glowed in various striking colors.

Directing his flight toward Nazareth in Galilee, Gabriel arrived at Mary's modest little cottage as night was falling, when as usual she retired to pray in her small, bare room.

The Blessed Virgin was now fourteen and a half years old. While taller than other girls of her age, she was perfectly proportioned. Her beautiful face with its clear and somewhat brownish complexion was more oblong than round. Under her broad forehead, her dark eyes were large and serious and at the same time wondrously beautiful and gentle. Her straight nose, her small

mouth with lips neither thin nor thick—all her features were so symmetrical and so ideally modeled that no other human being has ever had such perfection of form. Her clothes were very humble and poor in appearance, yet spotlessly clean and neat, of a dark silvery color somewhat like ashes, and she wore them without pretense, but with the greatest modesty.

Taking a low narrow table on which was a roll of scriptural writings, Mary placed it in the center of the room. Then she knelt on a little cushion and crossed her hands on her breast. And with growing fervor, her eyes lifted toward Heaven, she began to pray for the coming of the Saviour.

That night I prostrated myself devoutly in prayer, and with the most intense love I begged the Lord that He might deign to let me live long enough to see His Mother with my eyes, serve her with my hands, bow my head before her in reverence, and place myself completely at her service.

I began to meditate on the great power of God how the angels and all creatures serve Him, and how indescribable and immense is His glory. And while I was marveling over this, all of a sudden I perceived three wonderful things:

I saw a star, but not like those that shine in the sky — I saw a light that was greater and brighter than the sun, yet unlike any light in this world.

And I inhaled a scent, but not one that comes from plants or anything of that kind -it was an utterly sweet and almost ineffable scent which completely filled my soul and made me thrill with joy.

Then I heard a voice, but not a human voice--and suddenly there appeared before me the Angel of God in the form of a most beautiful youth, yet not one of flesh and blood.

Recognizing him as an envoy of God, Mary with her usual humility wished to bow reverently before him. But Gabriel would not allow it. Instead he bowed profoundly before his Queen.

And he said to me: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women!"

When I heard this greeting; at first I was indeed very frightened, for I wondered whether it might be an illusion. I asked myself what it might mean and why he uttered such a greeting; because I knew and considered myself unworthy of it or of anything good, although I realized that nothing was impossible with Almighty God.

And now while Mary modestly kept her eyes lowered before the Archangel, the Lord began to make her understand interiorly that He had chosen her for His Mother.

From the midst of this light I heard a voice saying to me: "Thou art to give birth to My Soul." And it added: "Know in truth that I want others to have for thee the reverence which for love of Me thou didst want to have for someone else. I want thee to be My Son's Mother and Giver, so that thou wilt not only have Him, but thou wilt also be able to give Him to whomever thou wishest."

When I heard this I was so overcome with fear and wonder that I could hardly hold myself up, and I was about to faint when some angels came and raised me up and strengthened me.

Then Gabriel said: 'Do not be afraid, Mary for thou hast found grace with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and shalt bring forth a Son. And thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give Him the throne of David His father, and He shall be king over the House of Jacob forever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end.'

As she slowly grasped the full significance of this tremendous grace, Mary raised her humble heart to God, and in the secret of her soul she lovingly begged Him to give her His help in such a crucial moment, for her intuition told her that in order to test her faith and hope and charity in this mystery, the Lord had purposely left her without any other aid than the resources of her human nature.

I still did not believe myself worthy. And so I did not ask the Angel why or when, but I asked how it could happen that my unworthy self should become the Mother of God: "How shall this happen, since I do not know man?" And at the same time Mary interiorly mentioned to the Lord her vow of perpetual chastity and the mystical espousal that He had celebrated with her.

And Gabriel answered: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore the Holy One to be born shall be called the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, thy kinswoman, also has conceived a son in her old age, and she, who was barren, is now in her sixth month." And the Angel answered me as I had said to myself: "For nothing shall be impossible with God."

After I heard these words, without doubting at all that what he said was true, I felt in my heart an exceedingly fervent desire to be the Mother of God. I prostrated myself on the ground, and on my knees, with my hands joined, I worshipped God, and my soul cried forth with love: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord! Be it done to me according to thy word!"

Now a celestial light filled Mary's little room, dissolving the ceiling and revealing the heavens. In a dazzling beam could be seen a brilliant figure of the Blessed Trinity. The Holy Spirit appeared in a winged form. Masses of flame shot out like wings on His right and left. Then three intense rays flashed and darted into the right side of the Virgin, and she became entirely suffused with a glowing light.

As soon as I had spoken those words, the grace of God overwhelmed me — never had I felt such bliss and joy in my soul. And then in that ecstasy God the Father gave me His Son, and my Son was instantly conceived in my womb by the Holy Spirit. He took flesh in my most pure body. And an inexpressible rapture filled my soul and my whole body. And I humbled myself in every way for I knew that the One whom I bore in my womb was the Almighty.

In the same instant of this miraculous conception, Mary was rapt in a marvelous vision in which the Holy Trinity revealed to her the mystery of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the person of the Eternal Word, and confirmed her in the title and rights of Mother of God. She was also shown in this vision the future mysteries of the life and death of her Son, the Redeemer of mankind.

Lost in humility and burning love, Mary adored the Lord and gave Him her fervent thanks for having thus favored her and the whole human race. She offered herself as a willing sacrifice in the rearing and service of her Son throughout His life on earth. And for this purpose she prayed for new graces and light in order that she might be guided in all her actions as becomes the Mother of God. And the Lord answered her: "My Dove, do not fear, for I will assist thee and guide thee in all things necessary for the service of My only begotten Son."

Meanwhile the Archangel Gabriel had departed; and just as the radiant channel of light above Mary's room vanished, a number of closed white roses, each having a small green leaf, dropped slowly down over the Holy Mother of God, who remained utterly oblivious to everything around her.

Thus toward dawn on a beautiful spring morning in the flower-covered hills of Galilee did Almighty God consecrate to Himself a pure and humble Jewish girl of Nazareth, making her and her modest home a new sanctuary and fulfilling in her the words of the Prophet-King: "The Most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle. God is in the midst thereof...."

All the heavenly spirits witnessing this great mystery, in union with the happy young Mother of God, blessed and praised the Lord in the name of the whole human race, which was still ignorant of this greatest of all God's gifts. However at that magic hour the Lord infused into the hearts of some of the just men on earth a new feeling of extraordinary joy and inspiration, though each one thought that he alone experi-

enced this inner renewal of spirit. And throughout the whole of nature there was a remarkable stir and movement on that blessed morning when Nature's God became man.

On coming back to herself in her room, Mary's first act was to kneel in humble and profound adoration of the Word Incarnate within her womb. Then after a long interval the Holy Mother of God arose and went to her little altar against the wall, where for some time she prayed standing. Only toward sunrise did she lie down on her bed to rest.

THE VISITATION

SCRIPTURAL ROSARY VERSES

(Read the appropriate verse before starting each Hail Mary)

1. A priest named Zachary, and his wife Elizabeth, were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame. And they had no son, for that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were well advanced in years.

2. And it came to pass, when he executed the priestly function in the order of his course before God, According to the custom of the priestly office, it was his lot to offer incense, going into the temple of the Lord. And all the multitude of the people was praying without, at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zachary, seeing him, was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

3. The angel said to him: "Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord; and shall drink no wine nor strong drink: and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go be-

fore Him in the spirit and power of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people."

4. Zachary said to the angel: "Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years!" And the angel answering, said to him: "I am Gabriel, who stand before God: and am sent to speak to thee, and to bring thee these good tidings. And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time."

5. The people were waiting for Zachary; and they wondered that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak to them: and they understood that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he made signs to them, and remained dumb.

6. And it came to pass, after the days of his office were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days, Elizabeth his wife conceived, and hid herself five months, saying: "Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein He hath had regard to take away my reproach among men."

7. And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

8. And Elizabeth cried out with a loud voice, and said: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy! And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."

READING FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE

THE BACKGROUND TO THE VISITATION

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zachary, of the course of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name Elizabeth. And they were both just before God, walking in all the commandments and justifications of the Lord without blame. And they had no son, for that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were well advanced in years.

And it came to pass, when he executed the priestly function in the order of his course before God, according to the custom of the priestly office, it was his lot to offer incense, going into the Temple of the Lord. And all the multitude of the people was praying without, at the hour of incense. And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And Zachary seeing him, was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him:

“Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John: and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord; and shall drink no wine nor strong drink: and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias; that he may turn the hearts of the fathers unto the children, and the incredulous to the wisdom of the just, to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people.”

And Zachary said to the angel: “Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.” And the angel answering, said to him: “I am Gabriel, who stand before God: and am sent to speak to thee, and to bring thee these good tidings. And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak

9. And Mary said: “My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him. He hath showed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy: as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His seed for ever.”

10. And Mary abode with her about three months; and she returned to her own house. Now Elizabeth’s full time of being delivered was come, and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had showed His great mercy towards her, and they congratulated with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they called him by his father’s name Zachary. And his mother answering, said: “Not so! But he shall be called John!” And they said to her: “There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name!” And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And demanding a writing table, he wrote, saying: “John is his name!” And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came upon all their neighbors; and all these things were noised abroad over all the hill country of Judea. And all they that had heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: “What a one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him!”

until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time.”

And the people were waiting for Zachary; and they wondered that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out, he could not speak to them: and they understood that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he made signs to them, and remained dumb. And it came to pass, after the days of his office were accomplished, he departed to his own house. And after those days, Elizabeth his wife conceived, and hid herself five months, saying: “Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he hath had regard to take away my reproach among men.”

THE ACTUAL VISITATION

And in the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. ...Behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: because no word shall be impossible with God.”

And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: and she cried out with a loud voice, and said:

“Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord.”

And Mary said: “My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid; for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He, that is mighty, hath done great things to me; and holy is His Name. And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him. He hath showed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy: as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to His seed for ever.”

And Mary abode with her about three months; and she returned to her own house.

THE AFTERMATH OF THE VISITATION

Now Elizabeth’s full time of being delivered was come, and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and kinsfolk heard that the Lord had showed his great mercy towards her, and they congratulated with her. And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they called him by his father’s name Zachary. And his mother answering, said: “Not so! But he shall be called John.”

And they said to her: “There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name!” And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called. And demanding a writing table, he wrote, saying: “John is his name!” And they all wondered. And immediately his mouth was opened, and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God. And fear came upon all their neighbors; and all these things were noised abroad over all the hill country of Judea.

And all they that had heard them laid them up in their heart, saying: “What an one, think ye, shall this child be? For the hand of the Lord was with him!” And Zachary his father was filled with the Holy Ghost; and he prophesied, saying:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people: and hath raised up an horn of salvation to us, in the house of David His servant: as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who are from the beginning: salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us: to perform mercy to our fathers, and to remember His holy testament, the oath, which He swore to Abraham our father, that He would grant to us; that, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve Him without fear, in holiness and justice before Him, all our days. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways: to give knowledge of salvation to His people, unto the remission of their sins: through the bowels of the mercy of our God, in which the Orient from on high hath visited us: to enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death: to direct our feet into the way of peace.”

And the child grew, and was strengthened in spirit; and was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel.

WRITTEN MEDITATION

DON'T JUST KEEP CHRIST AND THE FAITH TO YOURSELF! TAKE THEM TO OTHERS!

Boring! Always the Same!

Let nobody say that they have meditated the mysteries of the Rosary and that they find them boring, because of the same old story line being repeated time and time again! In this mystery alone—the Visitation—there are innumerable angles, paths and directions that we can follow in our meditation. Here are JUST A FEW of them, and each of them, like a tree trunk, can produce many additional branches.

From the viewpoint of virtues practiced by some of the personages in this mystery, we have the following possibilities:

- ▶ Faith by Mary in Angel Gabriel’s message about Elizabeth. 100 miles is a long way to go!
- ▶ Hope by Zachary during the punishment for his disbelieving Gabriel’s prophecy;
- ▶ Fortitude by Mary in making the near 100-mile journey;
- ▶ Temperance by Mary and Joseph in the way they lived, both at home and during the journey;
- ▶ Prudence by Mary in her initially keeping the Annunciation hidden from Joseph;
- ▶ Love of God shown by Mary and Elizabeth;
- ▶ Fraternal Charity by Mary in setting aside her own needs, and making time to go help Elizabeth;
- ▶ Obedience of Mary in going to Elizabeth, who probably had many helps living nearby.
- ▶ Humility of Mary, who now knows she is the Mother of God, carrying the Son of God in her womb, yet she goes to help someone spiritually inferior to her.
- ▶ Gratitude by Mary, shown by her canticle, the Magnificat, whereby she praises and thanks God for all that God has done for her;
- ▶ Justice and praise by Elizabeth, who gives Mary the honor and credit due to her.
- ▶ Spontaneous Prayer by Mary, in her instantaneous composition of the Magnificat.
- ▶ Chastity, practiced by Joseph and Mary.

If we were to meditate upon Divine Providence, there are also many angles and avenues that open up to us in this mystery. We see the intervention of Divine Providence...

- ▶ In providing Elizabeth and Zachary with a child against all the odds;
- ▶ In punishing Zachary for his disbelief;
- ▶ In protecting Mary and Joseph on the near 100-mile journey;
- ▶ In the sanctification of John the Baptist through Mary's visit;
- ▶ In miraculously lifting Zachary's punishment;
- ▶ In the way Joseph undergoes his trial;
- ▶ In the way Joseph is informed of the truth of the situation;

All These Choices! What Shall We Choose?

Since the virtue of fraternal charity is traditionally linked to this mystery, then that is the virtue we will meditate this time round for this mystery—leaving the other possible virtues and topics for the future.

Loving our neighbor is not an option, but an obligation. It is not a mere suggestion, but a command. It is a command that comes from God Himself, and is clearly found in Holy Scripture many times over: "And Jesus answered him: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second is like to it: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is no other commandment greater than these!'" (Mark 12:20-31).

Notice the word "commandment"—it is a command by God, not a suggestion. At the Last Supper, Jesus again commands: "A new commandment I give unto you: 'That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another!' By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another" (John 13:24-35). "This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love than this no man hath, that a

man lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do the things that I command you" (John 15:12-14). "These things I command you, that you love one another" (John 15:17).

It is a Law

A command is a law. This is why St. Paul tells us: "For all the law is fulfilled in one word: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!'" (Galatians 5:14), he adds that "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another. For he that loveth his neighbor, hath fulfilled the law ... The love of our neighbor worketh no evil. Love therefore is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8-10).

St. James says the very same thing: "If then you fulfill the royal law, according to the Scriptures, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!' then you do well" (James 2:8). While St. John adds: "For this is the declaration, which you have heard from the beginning, that you should love one another" (1 John 3:11).

It's a Pain!

Helping our neighbor can be very costly and painful. Yet, St. Peter tells us of the purifying power of fraternal charity: "Purifying your souls in the obedience of charity, with a brotherly love, from a sincere heart love one another earnestly" (1 Peter 1:22). "But before all things have a constant mutual charity among yourselves: for charity covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8), which something

St. Peter learned from Our Lord at Simon the Leper's banquet, where Mary Magdalen performed her act of charity over Our Lord's feet—which earned for her the remark from Jesus: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much" (Luke 7:47).

To further develop this point, Our Lord says, at another time, in a parable about the Goats and the Sheep: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me ... as long as you did it not to one of these least, neither did you do it to me!" (Matthew 25:40, 25:45).

Help Who?

However, we are tempted to ask the Scriptural question: “But who is my neighbor?” Instinctively, we tend to limit the idea of neighbor to those whom we like or those whom we cannot escape—like family, relatives and work colleagues, and perhaps that grumpy or obnoxious ‘next-door-neighbor’ whom we did not pick for our neighbor, and certainly would not have picked had anyone give us a choice in the matter!

The answer to the question “But who is my neighbor?” also comes from Scripture (Luke 10:29). Our Lord answers it by the parable of the Good Samaritan. The very title that the Church has given to the parable (“Good Samaritan”) would probably have irritated and grated upon the minds of the Jews in Jesus’ time, let alone the actual events Jesus placed within it. The Jews hated the Samaritans, and the feeling was mutual! Yet Our Lord, being a Jew Himself, makes the Samaritan emerge as the hero of the parable, while the Jewish Priest and Jewish Levite are painted as being the ‘baddies’! This must have irritated His listeners no end! Yet it goes to show that the boundaries of “who is my neighbor?” should not be set too close to home or heart!

Listen to the Master!

Elsewhere, Scripture expands upon that notion. During His Sermon on the Mount, Our Lord clearly says:

“If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath any thing against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother: and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift ... You have heard that it hath been said, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thy enemy.’ But I say to you, ‘Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you!’ so that you may be the children of your Father Who is in Heaven, Who maketh His sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust.

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For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this? Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect!” (Matthew chapter 5).

Listen to Your Mother!

Yet this dipping of the big-toe into the waters of fraternal charity also has its risks. The world is always ready to drag us into its filthy waters when it sees us approach charitably. The comments of Our Lady, made to the Venerable Mary of Agreda, concerning the subject of her visitation to her cousin, St. Elizabeth, can be of help to us in this matter. Our Lady said:

“Whenever the Most High bids thee or communicates to thee anything for the welfare of souls, or especially for their eternal salvation, devote thyself to it entirely; for they are bought at the inestimable price of the blood of the Lamb and of divine love. Do not allow thyself to be hindered in this matter by thy own lowliness and bashfulness; but overcome the fear which restrains thee, for if thou thyself art of small value and usefulness, the Most High is rich, powerful, great, and by Himself performs all things.

“Take notice also of the ugliness of sin, in order that by the opposite thou mayest come to so much the better understanding of the beauty of grace; for neither darkness, nor rottenness, nor the most horrible, the most dreadful, nor the foulest of creatures can ever be compared to sin and to its ugliness.

The martyrs and saints understood much of this mystery, who in order to secure the beauty of grace and preserve themselves from the ruin of sin, did not fear fire, nor wild beasts, nor the sword, nor torments, nor prisons, ignominies, pains, afflictions, nor death itself, nor prolonged and perpetual suffering. The men, who esteem and seek after the fugitive and apparent beauty of creatures, are ignorant of all this; and whatever does not present to them this deceitful beauty, is for them vile and contemptible.

“My dearest daughter, do not be surprised, that my servant John [the Baptist] feared and hesitated to come into the world. Life can never be loved by the ignorant devotee of the world, in the same degree, as the wise in divine science, abhor and fear its dangers.

This science was eminently possessed by the Precursor of my most holy Son; hence knowing of the loss which threatened, John feared the risk. But, since he that knows and dreads the treacherous seas of this world, sails so much the more securely over their unfathomed depths, the fear of the world served John in good stead for entering securely into the world.

The fortunate child began his career with such disgust and abhorrence of all earthly things, that his horror never abated. He made no peace with the flesh, nor partook of its poison, nor allowed vanity to enter his senses, nor obstruct his eyes; in abhorrence of the world and of worldly things, he gave his life for justice. The citizen of the true Jerusalem cannot be in peace or in alliance with Babylon; nor is it possible to enjoy at the same time the grace of the Most High and the friendship of his declared enemies; for no one can serve two hostile masters, nor can light and darkness, Christ and Belial, harmonize.

“Guard thyself, my dearest, against those living in darkness and the lovers of the world more than against fire; for the wisdom of the sons of this world is carnal and diabolical, and their ways lead to death. In order to walk the way of truth, even at the cost of the natural life, it is necessary to preserve the peace of the soul.

Three dwelling-places I point out for thee to live in, from which thou must never intentionally come forth. If at any time the Lord should bid thee to relieve the necessities of thy fellow creatures, I desire that thou do not lose this refuge. Act as one who lives in a castle surrounded by enemies, and who perchance must go to the gate to transact necessary business. He acts with such wariness, that he will pay more attention to safeguard his retreat and shield himself, than to transact business with others, be-

ing always on the watch and on guard against danger. So must thou live, if thou wishest to live securely; for doubt not, that enemies more cruel and poisonous than asps and basilisks surround thee.” (Our Lady’s advice to the Venerable Mary of Agreda).

But God Comes First

So even in showing charity, God still comes first, and we cannot compromise our love for God: “No man can serve two masters. For either he will hate the one, and love the other: or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). “Seek first...God” (Luke 12:31).

“Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). “For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26).

Yet, today, true charity is a rarity—most people do good for a personal benefit, they are ‘do-gooders’ for ulterior motives—perhaps selfish motives, manipulative motives, or even for sinful intentions. This death of charity, or at least its weakening, is foretold by Scripture:

“Know also this, that, in the last days, shall come dangerous times. Men shall be lovers of themselves, covetous, haughty, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, wicked, without affection, without peace, slanderers, incontinent, unmerciful, without kindness, traitors, stubborn, puffed up, and lovers of pleasures more than of God: having an appearance indeed of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Now these avoid” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). “Because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold” (Matthew 24:12).

REVELATIONS TO THE MYSTICS

The Visitation to St. Elizabeth

On the day after the Annunciation, Mary's many guardian angels appeared before her visibly, and with deep humility they adored their incarnate King in His Mother's womb, saying to her: "Now, O Lady, thou art the true Ark of the Testament. We wish to obey thee as servants of the supreme Lord whose Mother thou art." And indeed when Mary was alone, they helped her in her household work, and whenever she ate alone they served her the modest meals which she took at her poor table.

Now at times God sent a number of birds to visit His Mother. Greeting her with lively movements, as if wishing to congratulate her, they divided into harmonious choirs and chirped and sang sweetly for her. They also brought her flowers in their beaks and dropped them onto her hands and then waited until she asked them to sing. When she told them to praise and give thanks to their Creator with her, they all bowed low on the ground to worship the Lord and to honor His Mother. Sometimes in bad weather birds came to her for protection, and she gave them food and shelter.

Three days after the Annunciation the Lord revealed to Mary in a vision that the son whom her cousin Elizabeth had already conceived was destined to be a great prophet and forerunner of the Messiah, and that it was God's will that Mary should visit her in order that both mother and child might be sanctified by the presence of their Redeemer.

Although going out in public and leaving her home for a trip of several days into the mountains of Judea meant a real sacrifice to Mary, she gladly thanked God for this opportunity to serve Him and then asked St. Joseph for his permission. He still knew nothing about the Annunciation, and now Mary told him only that the Lord had informed her that Elizabeth was with child, and that she felt obliged to visit her. Joseph willingly agreed to her plans, and having

borrowed a lowly donkey and prepared some provisions consisting of a little fruit, bread, and a few fishes, they were ready to leave. But first Mary knelt at St. Joseph's feet and, despite his hesitation, insisted that he give her his blessing. Then, raising her eyes and her heart to the Lord, she arose and they set out, accompanied by her numerous invisible guardian angels.

Many times during this tiring four days' journey Mary dismounted and urged Joseph to ride, but he never accepted her offer, though now and then he did allow her to walk with him. Often she conversed spiritually with her angels about the divine mysteries, and at other times she spoke with Joseph about the coming of the Redeemer. To his profound wonderment and joy, her words filled him with an entirely new understanding and love for God, and she realized that the Word Incarnate was giving him unusual graces.

In the course of this trip Mary and Joseph had many opportunities to practice charity, for the Blessed Virgin could not remain idle at the sight of want. Some innkeepers received them kindly, while others were rude. Whenever she could, Mary visited the poor and the sick, consoling and sometimes curing them. One poor girl who was ill with a bad fever was suddenly healed in Mary's presence, and for the rest of her life she never forgot the beautiful young lady who helped her.

At last the holy couple reached the little village of Ain Karem in the Judean hills five miles west of Jerusalem. As they approached the house of Zacharias, which was situated in the midst of a lovely garden on an isolated slope, St. Joseph hastened ahead in order to announce their visit, calling out to those within the house: "The Lord be with you and fill your souls with divine grace!"

St. Elizabeth, who was tall and past middle age, with a small face and very sweet features, had been forewarned by the Lord Himself that Mary of Nazareth had set out to visit her, although the mystery of the Annunciation had not yet been revealed to her. Elizabeth immediately came out

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to welcome her cousin, who as the younger in years hastened to greet her, saying: "The Lord be with you, my dearest cousin."

They met near a fountain and clasped hands affectionately. At this moment the Blessed Virgin became as it were suffused with a mystic light, and a bright ray went forth from her to Elizabeth and had an extraordinary effect on the latter, as she replied: "The same Lord reward you for having come in order to give me this pleasure."

Holding hands they crossed the garden to the house, where St. Elizabeth again welcomed her cousin and invited her to enter. Once inside, they threw their arms around each other and remained for some time in a warm embrace. Then Mary said in a most friendly way: "May God save you, my dearest cousin, and may His Divine Light give you grace and life!"

At the sound of Mary's voice, Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, which revealed to her the Mystery of the Incarnation, the unique dignity of Mary, and her own sorts sanctification. Rapt in joy she looked reverently at the Holy Mother of God-then, stepping back a little and lifting her hands, she exclaimed with an expression of deep humility, happiness and inspiration:

"Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! And how have I deserved that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, the moment that the sound of thy greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leapt for joy! And blessed is she who has believed, because the things promised her by the Lord shall be accomplished."

Mary humbly referred these words of praise to the Creator. She says: "I was similarly moved by an extraordinary joy in my heart, so that I spoke words about God that I myself did not devise, and my soul could hardly contain itself with joy."

Crossing her hands on her breast, Mary intoned her prayer: "My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid: for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generation to them that fear Him. He hath showed might in His arm: He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat: and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel His servant: being mindful of His mercy. As He spoke to our fathers: to Abraham and to his seed for ever."

Thanks to a divine inspiration, St. Elizabeth was able to recite the Magnificat at the same time as Mary.

While Elizabeth marveled at the fervor of the Holy Spirit that spoke through me, I likewise marveled at the grace of God in her, and we praised God together

Then St. Elizabeth offered herself and her whole family and all her house for the service of the Mother of God, asking Mary to take as a quiet retreat the room which she herself was accustomed to use for her prayers. The Blessed Virgin accepted with humble thanks, and used the room for meditation and sleeping; and no one ever entered it except the two cousins. Mary also offered to serve Elizabeth as a maid, for she said that this was the purpose of her visit.

When toward evening the two holy women came forth after a long friendly talk about the heavenly mysteries that were to be accomplished in them, as soon as the Blessed Virgin saw her cousin's husband Zacharias, a tall and handsome old priest, she asked him for his blessing, which he gave her without saying a word, for he had been stricken dumb six months earlier in the Temple when he had doubted the angel's prophecy that Elizabeth would bear a son.

Three days later St. Joseph returned to his work in Nazareth, as Mary planned to spend three months with her cousin. During this time, in

addition to all her usual prayers, the Blessed Virgin busied herself by sewing and preparing swaddling clothes for her cousin's baby. And whenever she could, despite Elizabeth's protests, Mary swept the house and her own room, and washed the dishes with the servants. One of the latter was a very irritable and nervous woman who easily gave way to anger and even to cursing. But as a result of her growing love and reverence for Mary, she soon became kind, meek and self-controlled. And a vain, sensual neighbor who dropped in to see what she called "this guest who gives herself such holy airs," after staring at the Blessed Virgin with impertinent curiosity, went home and began to weep sincerely over her sins and evil intentions. Naturally the holy Mother of Mercy also prayed for all such persons whom she met, and thus usually obtained their conversion.

Every evening Mary and Elizabeth recited the Magnificat together, standing facing each other in Mary's room, with their arms crossed on their chests and their veils lowered over their faces. Sometimes they spent nearly all night praying together. Mary always arose at midnight for her prayers. A few times St. Elizabeth merited to see the Mother of God in ecstasy, raised above the ground and radiant with supernatural splendor and beauty.

Often during the intense heat of these early summer months, Mary went with Elizabeth and Zacharias into their lovely garden in the evenings, and they all took a light supper outdoors and then went for a walk by moonlight in the surrounding fields and hills before retiring for the night. But they always arose before sunrise.

During the third month of the visit, St. Elizabeth begged her young cousin, whom she loved deeply, to stay with her at least until the birth of Zacharias' son. "Let me see my child in your arms, dear Mary," she pleaded. "Do not deny this consolation to me, nor this great happiness to my son!" With her usual prudence, Mary agreed that they should both pray to know God's will. And the Lord said to her:

"My Dove, assist My servant Elizabeth at her childbirth. And after her son shall be circumcised, return to thy home with Joseph. And continue to pray to Me for the salvation of souls!"

A few days later, while Mary prayed fervently in her room for both mother and child, with only moderate pains St. Elizabeth gave birth to a fine baby son, who was destined to be the holy Forerunner of Christ. After he was wrapped in the swaddling clothes made by Mary's own hands, the Blessed Virgin came into her cousin's room and took the babe into her arms. The newborn child already had the use of reason by a special grace, and knowing that Mary bore in her womb the Word Incarnate, he gazed at her with great love and adored his Lord in her with intense humility and thanksgiving. Holding him in her arms, Mary offered him to the Eternal Father and prayed for him and for his future ministry. Then, while St. Elizabeth looked on with keen joy, Mary lovingly caressed the saintly child—but she did not kiss him, as she wished to keep her chaste lips untouched for her own divine Son.

Naturally this extraordinary birth after so many years of childlessness was generally considered almost a miracle, and numerous friends and relatives came to congratulate Zacharias and Elizabeth, whose joy and gratitude were touching. Then in a private talk Mary informed her cousin that neither she nor her husband was destined by God to live very long and that they should therefore be still more generous in their charity to the poor, for the Lord would take care of their son. And she helped her good hosts prepare and distribute numerous gifts to the poor.

Eight days after his birth, the baby boy was circumcised, and during the discussion as to his name, his father Zacharias wrote on a tablet: "His name is John!" In that very moment, at Mary's prayer, he recovered the use of his voice and joyfully broke forth into the inspired canticle, the Benedictus:

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has visited and wrought the redemption of His people ... that, delivered from the hand of

our enemies, we should serve Him without fear, in holiness and justice before Him all our days. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Most High, for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give to His people knowledge of salvation through forgiveness of their sins, because of the loving kindness of our God.”

A few days later St. Joseph came to accompany Mary back to Nazareth. Then the Blessed Virgin said a sad farewell to her dear cousin and her husband. Kneeling before Zacharias, she took his hand and begged him to bless her and to forgive her for all her faults while in his house. The old priest, who knew now that she was the chosen Mother of the Messias, was deeply moved, and giving her his blessing he said: “In thee let all nations know their God, and through thee let the name of the Lord of Jacob be glorified!”

Next Mary consoled St. Elizabeth, who was heartbroken at seeing her leave, and taking the child John in her arms again, Mary gave him many mystic blessings and graces, while he whispered to her: “You are the Mother of God Himself may your intercession never fail me!” And he kissed her hand three times. Then, after St. Joseph had also bid farewell to his good friends, Mary knelt before him for his blessing, and they set out on their journey home.

During this four-day trip the Blessed Virgin mercifully healed a poor woman who was partly possessed by evil spirits, and she also converted to a better life an innkeeper who received her and Joseph kindly. Because she was now in her third month with child, she was more easily fatigued. And now she prayed more than ever that the Lord might assist St. Joseph with special graces and understanding when he became aware of her condition, as would inevitably happen soon. For she knew that she could not explain God’s holy secret to him until the Lord Himself allowed her to do so.

THE NATIVITY

SCRIPTURAL ROSARY VERSES

(Read the appropriate verse before starting each Hail Mary)

1. And it came to pass, that in those days there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child.
2. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.
3. And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them; and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: “Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people.”
4. For, this day, is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: “Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will!”
5. And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another: “Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us.” And they came

with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger. And seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this child. And all that heard, wondered; and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

6. When Jesus therefore was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of king Herod, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to adore Him." And king Herod hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him: In Bethlehem of Juda. For so it is written by the prophet: "And thou Bethlehem the land of Juda art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come forth the Captain that shall rule My people Israel."

7. Then Herod, privately calling the wise men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them; and sending them into Bethlehem, said: "Go and diligently inquire after the Child, and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I also may come to adore Him." Who having heard the king, went their way; and behold the star which they had seen in the east, went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother, and falling down they adored Him; and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their country.

8. And after they were departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and

fly into Egypt: and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the child to destroy Him." Who arose, and took the Child and His Mother by night, and retired into Egypt: and he was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: "Out of Egypt have I called My Son."

9. Then Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceeding angry; and sending killed all the men children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet, saying: "A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not." But when Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the child."

10. Who arose, and took the Child and His Mother, and came into the land of Israel. But hearing that Archelaus reigned in Judea in the room of Herod his father, he was afraid to go thither: and being warned in sleep retired into the quarters of Galilee. And coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was said by prophets: "That He shall be called a Nazarene."

READING FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE

(Matthew 2:1-18; Luke 2:1-20)

LEADING UP TO THE NATIVITY

"And it came to pass, that, in those days, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from

Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem: because he was of the house and family of David, To be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with Child” (Luke 2:1-5).

THE ACTUAL NATIVITY

“And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. “And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them; and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: ‘Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people: for, this day, is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.’ (Luke 2:6-14)

“And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into Heaven, the shepherds said one to another: ‘Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us!’ And they came with haste; and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger. And seeing, they understood of the word that had been spoken to them concerning this Child. And all that heard, wondered; and at those things that were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God, for all the things they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them” (Luke 2:15-20)

WRITTEN MEDITATION The Spirit of Poverty

God Owns Everything

“Learn, that one be not puffed up against the other for another! For who distinguisheth thee? Or what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:6-7). “Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God” (Ecclesiasticus 11:14). “Remember poverty in the time of abundance, and the necessities of poverty in the day of riches” (Ecclesiasticus 18:25).

Danger of Riches

Holy Scripture is full of quotes about the distraction and danger of riches: “Behold the man that made not God his helper: But trusted in the abundance of his riches and prevailed in his vanity” (Psalm 51:9). This brings to mind a sad incident in the life of Our Lord:

“A certain man running up and kneeling before Jesus, asked Him: ‘Good Master! What shall I do that I may receive life everlasting?’ And Jesus said to him: ‘Thou knowest the commandments: Do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, bear not false witness, do no fraud, honor thy father and mother!’ But he answering, said to him: ‘Master, all these things I have observed from my youth!’ And Jesus looking on him, loved him, and said to him: ‘One thing is wanting unto thee: go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; and come, follow Me!’ Who being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.

“And Jesus looking round about, saith to His disciples: ‘How hardly shall they that have riches, enter into the Kingdom of God!’ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus again answering, saith to them: ‘Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches, to enter into the kingdom of God? It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a

rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God!' Who wondered the more, saying among themselves: 'Who then can be saved?' And Jesus looking on them, saith: 'With men it is impossible; but not with God! For all things are possible with God!' (Mark 7:17-27).

The Regret of the Rich

St. James speaking to the rich, writes: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl in your miseries, which shall come upon you! Your riches are corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten! Your gold and silver is cankered: and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire! You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days!" (James 5:1-3). There is nothing wrong with riches rightly used according to the mind of God—who gave those riches in the first place. Yet to use riches selfishly and store them greedily is not according to the mind of God.

Words of Our Lady

"The vow of poverty is a generous renunciation and detachment from the heavy burden of temporal things. It is an alleviation of the spirit, it is a relief afforded to human infirmity, the liberty of a noble heart to strive after eternal and spiritual blessings. It is a satiety and abundance, in which the thirst after earthly treasures is allayed, and a sovereignty and ownership, in which a most noble enjoyment of all riches is established. All this, and many other blessings, are contained in voluntary poverty, and all this the sons of the world are ignorant and deprived of, precisely because they are lovers of earthly riches and enemies of this holy and opulent poverty.

"They do not consider, although they feel and suffer, the heavy weight of riches, which pins them to the earth and drives them into its very bowels to seek gold and silver in great anxiety, sleeplessness, labors and sweat, as if they were not men, but wild beasts that know not what they are suffering and doing. And if they are thus weighed down before acquiring riches, how much more when they have come into their possession? Let the countless hosts that have

fallen into Hell with their burden, proclaim it; let their incalculable anxieties of preserving their riches, and much more, let the intolerable laws, which riches and those that possess them have foisted upon the world, testify what is required to retain them.

"If, on the one hand, possessions throttle the spirit and tyrannically oppress it in its weakness, if they suppress the soul's most noble privilege of following eternal goods and God himself: it is certain on the other hand, that voluntary poverty restores to man the nobility of his condition and, liberating him from vile servitude and reinstating him his noble freedom and mastery of all things. The soul is never more a mistress than when she despises them, and only then has she the more firm possession and makes the more excellent use of riches, when she gives them away or leaves them of her own free will; only then her appetite for them is best satiated, when she does not care to possess them. Then above all is the heart set free and made capable of the treasures of the Divinity, for which it is furnished by the Creator with almost infinite capacity.

"I wish thee to study diligently this divine philosophy and science, which the world forgets, and not only the world, but also many religious souls, who have promised it to God. Great is the divine wrath on account of this fault, and suddenly will the infringers of this vow receive heavy and unexpected punishment. By setting aside their voluntary poverty, they have alienated from themselves the spirit of Christ, my most holy Son, and all that We have come to teach men in abnegation and poverty. Although they do not now feel it, because the Judge delays and they enjoy the abundance which they desire, yet in the judgment they will find themselves overwhelmed and dismayed by the rigor of their punishment, greater than they ever expected, considered or imagined in their forgetfulness of divine justice.

"The temporal goods are created by the Most High for the sole purpose of sustaining life; having attained this end, the need of them ceases. And as this need is limited, soon and easily sat-

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isfied, there is no reason that the care for the immortal soul should be only fitful and temporary, while the hunger after riches should be so perpetual and unintermitting, as it has come to be among men. It is the height of perverseness for man to mix up the end and the means in an affair so important and urgent, that he devote all his time, all his care, all the exertion of his powers and all the alertness of his mind to the life of his body, of which he knows not the duration nor the end, and that on the other hand, in many years of his existence he spare for his poor soul only one hour, and that very often the last and the worst one of his whole life

“My most holy Son is such a faithful Lover of souls that He hast set me as the teacher and living example of the love of humility and true contempt of worldly vanity and pride. He ordained also, for his own glory as well as for my sake, that I should be left without shelter and be turned away by mortals. He also sought destitution and poverty, not because He had any need of them for bringing the practice of virtues to the highest perfection, but in order to teach mortals the shortest and surest way for reaching the heights of divine love and union with God ... Thus riches as well as poverty must be attributed to God and made use of in a holy and legitimate way for the glory of the Creator and Ruler of all things. If men would observe this rule of action nobody would be without the assistance of the Lord, who is a true Father, and neither would the poor be led into sin by poverty, nor the rich by prosperity.” (Our Lady to the Venerable Mary of Agreda).

Thoughts on Riches and Poverty

Fr. Tanquerey has a passage of the spirit of poverty that is well worth taking to heart: “As regards inordinate love of the goods of this world, we must bear in mind that wealth is not an end in itself, but the means given by Providence to minister to our needs. God ever retains the supreme dominion over all things, and we are but stewards who shall have to render an account of the use we have made of our temporal possessions: ‘Give an account of thy stewardship!’ (Luke 16:2). It is wise, then, to give a large portion of what is over and above, our needs in

almsgiving and other good works.

“This is in truth to enter into the designs of God who wills that the rich be, so to speak, the treasurers of the poor; it is to make in the Bank of Heaven a deposit which will be returned to us with a hundredfold interest upon our entrance into eternity. ‘Lay up to yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither the rust nor the moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through or steal’ (Matthew 6:20).

This is the way to detach our hearts from earthly goods so as to raise them to God; for as our Lord adds: ‘Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also’ (Matthew 6:21). Let us then seek first the kingdom of God, holiness, and all other things shall be added unto us.

One—Two—Three

“If we would be perfect we must go further and practice evangelical poverty. ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’ (Matthew 5:3). This may be achieved in three ways according to our attractions and opportunities:

- (1) By selling all our goods and giving the proceeds to the poor. ‘Sell what you possess and give alms’ (Luke 12:33).
- (2) By having all things in common, as is done in religious communities.
- (3) By renouncing the right of using the capital which we retain, refraining, for instance, from making any outlay not sanctioned by a prudent spiritual director” (Fr. Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life*, §202-§203).

“Charity in what concerns ownership suffices for entrance into Heaven, but if one would be perfect, one must sell his possessions, give their price to the poor and so practice voluntary poverty ... Poverty, by uprooting disordered love for wealth, sets the heart free to reach out to God and heavenly things ... Those who are not bound by vows must, in order to be perfect, observe the spirit of these vows, each according to his condition in life, the inspirations of grace, and

the guidance of a prudent spiritual adviser. Thus they will exercise themselves in the spirit of poverty by depriving themselves of many useless things, and so will spare money for almsgiving and for works of charity or zeal” (Fr. Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life*, §335-§339).

Detached from Things, Attached to God

“Whichever way is adopted, the heart must be freed from its attachment to riches if it would take its flight towards God. This is what Bossuet urges: ‘Happy they who in the lowly seclusion of God’s house delight in the bareness of their narrow cells, in the beggarly appointments that satisfy their wants in this earthly existence a shadow of death there to gaze solely upon their weakness and the heavy, oppressing , yoke of sin. Happy those consecrated Virgins who no longer seek to appear before the world and who would fain hide themselves from their own eyes beneath the sacred veil that shrouds their form!

Blessed that sweet restraint wherewith we guard our eyes lest they light upon vain things, the while we say with David: “Turn away mine eyes, that they may not behold vanity!” (Psalm 113:37). Happy those who, living in the, world according to their state of life, remain undefiled and unfettered, ... those who can say with Queen Esther: “Thou knowest, Lord, how I scorn this emblem of pride (her crown); how I abhor the glory of the wicked and ungodly; how thy handmaid hath never rejoiced save in thee, Lord God of Israel” (Esther 14:15-18).’ (Fr. Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life*, §202-§203).

Struggle Against Avarice and Riches

“This, however, we can do only if we practice mortification; for, on the one side, the Holy Ghost, given us in Baptism, urges us to embrace contempt, poverty, suffering; and, on the other, our flesh longs for honor, pleasure, riches. Within us, therefore, rages a conflict, an incessant struggle; nor can we be faithful to God unless we renounce the inordinate love of honor, pleasure, and riches. Thus in the rite of Baptism, the priest marks us with two Crosses, one upon the heart to stamp thereon the love of the Cross, the

other upon our shoulders to give us the strength to carry it. We should be untrue to our baptismal vows, if we did not carry our cross by waging war against the lust for honor through humility, against the lust for pleasure through mortification, against the lust for riches through poverty” (Fr. Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life*, §760).

Natural Poverty

“Besides, we stand in sore need of God’s help. Whether in the order of nature or in the order of grace, we are poor, steeped in poverty. Depending of necessity upon God, even in the order of nature, we cannot so much as preserve the very existence He has given us; we are at the mercy of physical causes, themselves depending on God. In vain we may protest that we possess brain and sinews, and that we are well able with our strength and our energy to draw from the Earth, the things we need for our subsistence. That brain, those sinews, are sustained by God; they can work only with His concurrence. The Earth flowers not, save when watered by the rain He sends; it produces nothing, save when quickened by the warmth of His glowing sun. And how many forces of destruction can wreck the fruit of man’s work and man’s care!

Supernatural Poverty

“Our dependence upon God .in the supernatural order is more absolute still. We need light to guide us, and who will give it to us if not the Father of lights? We need courage and strength to fellow the light; who will give these except He Who is All-Powerful? What else then can we do but implore the help of Him Whose one desire is to succor us? Let no one say that. His omniscience is aware of all that is necessary and useful to us.

St. Thomas answers that ho doubt, out of pure liberality, God does bestow upon us innumerable benefits unasked, unsought, but that there are some which He will grant only at our request, and this for our own good, namely, that we should place our confidence in Him and come to acknowledge Him as the source -and origin of all our goods. When we pray, we cherish the

hope of being heard and we are less exposed to forget God. As it is, we forget Him all too often; what would it be, if we should never feel the need of recurring to Him in our distress? It is for very good reasons then that God demands of us prayer in the form of petition” (Fr. Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life*, §508-§509).

The Three Degrees of St. Ignatius

“Towards the end of the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises, before the Rules for Election (Vocation in Life), St. Ignatius proposes three degrees of humility, which are at bottom three degrees of self-abnegation.

(1) The first degree consists, as St. Ignatius writes, ‘in perfect submission to the law of God, so that we should be ready to refuse the empire of the whole world, or even to sacrifice our lives, rather than transgress any precept which obliges us under pain of mortal sin.’ This degree is essential for every Christian who wants to remain in the state of grace.

(2) The second is more perfect. St. Ignatius says ‘It consists in the indifference of the soul towards riches or poverty, honor or shame, health or sickness, provided the glory of God and the salvation of souls are equally secured; further, that no consideration of interest or temporal disgrace, not even the consideration of immediate death, should be capable of drawing us into deliberate venial sin.’ This is a disposition already implying great perfection, and few souls attain it.

(3) St. Ignatius then says: ‘The third is most perfect. It embodies, the first two, and it goes further, preferring, for the sole love of Jesus Christ and from the wish to resemble Him the more, poverty to riches, shame to honors, etc., even though our salvation and the glory of God would be assured by either.’ This is the degree of perfect souls; it is the love of the Cross and the love of humiliation, in union with Christ and out of love for Him. When a soul has arrived thus far, it is already on the highroad, to sanctity.” (Fr. Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life*, §1133).

REVELATIONS TO THE MYSTICS

The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Mary and Joseph arrived at the town of Bethlehem at four o’clock of the fifth day, a Saturday. As it was at the time of the winter solstice, the sun was already sinking and the night was falling. They entered the town, and wandered through many streets in search of a lodging-house or inn for staying overnight. They knocked at the doors of their acquaintances and nearer family relations; but they were admitted nowhere and in many places they met with harsh words and insults. The most modest Queen followed her spouse through the crowds of people, while he went from house to house and from door to door. Although she knew that the hearts and the houses of men were to be closed to them, and although to expose her state at her age to the public gaze was more painful to her modesty than their failure to procure a night lodging, she nevertheless wished to obey St. Joseph and suffer this indignity and unmerited shame.

While wandering through the streets they passed the office of the public registry and they inscribed their names and paid the fiscal tribute in order to comply with the edict and not be obliged to return. They continued their search, betaking themselves to other houses. But having already applied at more than fifty different places, they found themselves rejected and sent away from them all. The heavenly spirits were filled with astonishment at these exalted mysteries of the Most High, which manifested the patience and meekness of His Virgin Mother and the unfeeling hardness of men. At the same time they blessed the Almighty in His works and hidden sacraments, since from that day on He began to exalt and honor poverty and humility among men.

It was nine o’clock at night when the most faithful Joseph, full of bitter and heartrending sorrow, returned to his most prudent spouse and said: “My sweetest Lady, my heart is broken with sorrow at the thought of not only not being able to shelter thee as thou deservest and as I desire,

but in not being able to offer thee even any kind of protection from the weather, or a place of rest, a thing rarely or never denied to the most poor and despised in the world. No doubt Heaven, in thus allowing the hearts of men to be so unmoved as to refuse us a night-lodging, conceals some mystery. I now remember, Lady, that outside the city walls there is a cave, which serves as a shelter for shepherds and their flocks. Let us seek it out; perhaps it is unoccupied, and we may there expect some assistance from Heaven, since we receive none from men on earth.”

The most prudent Virgin answered: “My spouse and my master, let not thy kindest heart be afflicted because the ardent wishes which the love of thy Lord excites in thee cannot be fulfilled. Since I bear Him in my womb, let us, I beseech thee, give thanks for having disposed events in this way. The place of which thou speakest shall be most satisfactory to me. Let thy tears of sorrow be turned into tears of joy, and let us lovingly embrace poverty, which is the inestimable and precious treasure of my most holy Son. He came from Heaven in order to seek it, let us then afford Him an occasion to practice it in the joy of our souls; certainly I cannot be better delighted than to see thee procure it for me. Let us go gladly wherever the Lord shall guide us.”

The holy angels accompanied the heavenly pair, brilliantly lighting up the way, and when they arrived at the city gate they saw that the cave was forsaken and unoccupied. Full of heavenly consolation, they thanked the Lord for this favor, and then happened what I shall relate in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION WHICH OUR LADY, GAVE THE VENERABLE MARY OF AGREDA

“My dearest daughter, if thou art of a meek and docile heart, these mysteries which thou hast written about and hast understood, will stir within thee sweet sentiments of love and affection toward the Author of such great wonders. I wish that, bearing them in mind, thou from this day on embrace with new and great esteem the contempt and neglect of the world. And tell me,

dearest, if, in exchange for this forgetfulness and scorn of the world, God look upon thee with eyes of sweetest love, why shouldst thou not buy so cheaply what is worth an infinite price? What can the world give thee, even when it esteems thee and exalts thee most? And what dost thou lose, if thou despise it? Is its favor not all vanity and deceit? Is it not all a fleeting and momentary shadow, which eludes the grasp of those that haste after it? Hence, if thou hadst all worldly advantage in thy possession, what great feat would it be to despise it as of no value? Consider how little thou dost in rejecting all of it for the love of God, for mine and that of the holy angels. And if the world does not neglect thee as much as thou shouldst desire, do thou on thy own behalf despise it, in order to remain free and unhampered to enjoy to the full extent the highest Good with the plenitude of His most delightful love and conversation.

“My most holy Son is such a faithful Lover of souls that He hast set me as the teacher and living example of the love of humility and true contempt of worldly vanity and pride. He ordained also for His own glory as well as for my sake that I, His servant and Mother, should be left without shelter and be turned away by mortals, in order that afterwards His beloved souls might be so much the more readily induced to offer Him a welcome, thus obliging Him, by an artifice of love, to come and remain with them. He also sought destitution and poverty, not because He had any need of them for bringing the practice of virtues to the highest perfection, but in order to teach mortals the shortest and surest way for reaching the heights of divine love and union with God.

“The dread, with which this command to imitate me has inspired thee, as a being above thy strength, thou must moderate and thou must encourage thyself, by the words of my most holy Son in the Gospel of St. Matthew: “Be ye perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). This command of the Most High imposed upon His holy Church is not impossible of fulfillment, and, if His faithful children on their part dispose themselves properly, He will deny

to none of them the grace of attaining this resemblance to the heavenly Father. All this my most holy Son has merited for them. But the degrading forgetfulness and neglect of men hinder them from maturing within themselves the fruits of His Redemption.

“Of thee particularly I expect this perfection, and I invite thee to it by the sweet law of love which accompanies my instruction. Ponder and scrutinize, by the divine light, the obligation under which I place thee, and labor to correspond with it like a faithful and anxious child. Let no difficulty or hardship disturb thee, nor deter thee from any virtuous exercise, no matter how hard it may be. Nor be content with striving after the love of God and salvation of thyself alone; if thou wouldst be perfect in imitating me and fulfilling all that the Gospel teaches, thou must work for the salvation of other souls and the exaltation of the holy name of my Son, making thyself an instrument in His powerful hands for the accomplishment of mighty works to advance His pleasure and glory.”

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR IS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN BETHLEHEM, JUDA

The palace which the supreme King of kings and the Lord of lords had chosen, for entertaining His eternal and incarnate Son in this world, was a most poor and insignificant hut or cave, to which most holy Mary and Joseph betook themselves, after they had been denied all hospitality and the most ordinary kindness by their fellowmen. This place was held in such contempt that, though the town of Bethlehem was full of strangers in want of night-shelter, none would demean or degrade himself so far as to make use of it for a lodging; for there was none who deemed it suitable, or desirable, for such a purpose, except the teachers of humility and poverty, Christ our Savior and His purest Mother.

On this account, the wisdom of the eternal Father had reserved it for them, consecrating it, in all its bareness, loneliness and poverty, as the first temple of light (Malachias 4:2; Psalm 3:4) and as the house of the true Sun of justice,

which was to arise for the upright of heart from the resplendent Aurora, Mary, turning the night of sin into the daylight of grace.

Most holy Mary and St. Joseph entered the lodging thus provided for them, and, by the effulgence of the ten thousand angels of their guard, they could easily ascertain its poverty and loneliness, which they esteemed as favors and welcomed with tears of consolation and joy. Without delay the two holy travelers fell on their knees and praised the Lord, giving Him thanks for His benefit, which they knew had been provided by His wisdom for His own hidden designs. Of this mystery the heavenly Princess Mary had a better insight; for as soon as she sanctified the interior of the cave, by her sacred footsteps, she felt a fullness of joy which entirely elevated and vivified her.

She besought the Lord to bless, with a generous hand, all the inhabitants of the neighboring city, because, by rejecting her, they had given occasion to the vast favors which she awaited in this neglected cavern. It was formed entirely of the bare and coarse rocks, without any natural beauty or artificial adornment; a place intended merely for the shelter of animals; yet the eternal Father had selected it for the shelter and dwelling-place of His own Son.

The angelic spirits who, like a celestial militia, guarded their Queen and Mistress, formed themselves into cohorts in the manner of court guards in a royal palace. They showed themselves in their visible forms also to St. Joseph; for on this occasion it was befitting that he should enjoy such a favor, on the one hand in order to comfort his sorrow, by allowing him to behold this poor lodging, thus beautified and adorned by their celestial presence, and on the other, in order to enliven and encourage him for the events which the Lord intended to bring about during that night, in this forsaken place. The great Queen and Empress, who was already informed of the mystery to be transacted here, set about cleaning with her own hands the cave, which was so soon to serve as a royal throne and sacred mercy-seat; for neither did she want

to miss this occasion for exercising her humility, nor would she deprive her only-begotten Son of the worship and reverence implied by this preparation and cleansing of His temple.

St. Joseph, mindful of the majesty of his heavenly spouse (which, it seemed to him, she was forgetting in her ardent longing for humiliation), besought her not to deprive him of this work, which he considered as his alone; and he hastened to set about cleaning the floor and the corners of the cave, although the humble Queen continued to assist him therein. As the holy angels were then present in visible forms, they were (according to our mode of speaking) abashed at such eagerness for humiliation, and they speedily emulated with each other to join in this work; or rather, in order to say it more succinctly, in the shortest time possible they had cleansed and set in order that cave, filling it with holy fragrance.

St. Joseph started a fire with the material which he had brought for that purpose. As it was very cold, they sat at the fire in order to get warm. They partook of the food which they had brought, and they ate this, their frugal supper, with incomparable joy of their souls. The Queen of Heaven was so absorbed and taken up with the thought of the impending mystery of her divine delivery, that she would not have partaken of food if she had not been urged thereto by obedience to her spouse.

After their supper they gave thanks to the Lord, as was their custom. Having spent a short time in this prayer and conferring about the mysteries of the incarnate Word, the most prudent Virgin felt the approach of the most blessed Birth. She requested her spouse St. Joseph to betake himself to rest and sleep, as the night was already far advanced. The man of God yielded to the request of his spouse and urged her to do the same; and for this purpose he arranged and prepared a sort of couch with the articles of wear in their possession, making use of a crib or manger, that had been left by the shepherds for their animals.

Leaving most holy Mary in the portion of the cave thus furnished, St. Joseph retired to a corner of the entrance, where he began to pray. He was immediately visited by the divine Spirit and felt a most sweet and extraordinary influence, by which he was wrapt and elevated into an ecstasy. In it was shown him all that passed during that night in this blessed cave; for he did not return to consciousness until his heavenly spouse called him. Such was the sleep which St. Joseph enjoyed in that night, more exalted and blessed than that of Adam in paradise (Genesis 21:2).

The Queen of all creatures was called from her resting-place by a loud voice of the Most High, which, strongly and sweetly, raised her above all created things and caused her to feel new effects of divine power; for this was one of the most singular and admirable ecstasies of her most holy life. Immediately also she was filled with new enlightenment and divine influences, such as I have described in other places, until she reached the clear vision of the Divinity.

The veil fell and she saw intuitively the Godhead itself, in such glory and plenitude of insight, as all the capacity of men and angels could not describe or fully understand. All the knowledge of the Divinity and humanity of her most holy Son, which she had ever received, in former visions, was renewed and, moreover, other secrets of the inexhaustible archives of the bosom of God were revealed to her.

The Most High announced to His Virgin Mother, that the time of His coming into the world had arrived and what would be the manner in which this was now to be fulfilled and executed. She prostrated herself before the throne of His Divinity and gave Him glory, magnificence, thanks and praise for herself and for all creatures, such as was befitting the ineffable mercy and condescension of His divine love.

At the same time she asked of the divine Majesty new light and grace in order to be able worthily to undertake the service and worship and the rearing up of the Word made flesh, whom she was to bear in her arms and nourish with

her virginal milk. This petition the heavenly Mother brought forward with the profoundest humility, as one who understood the greatness of this new sacrament. She held herself unworthy of the office of rearing and conversing, as a Mother, with a God incarnate, of which even the highest seraphim are incapable. And, because she humbled herself to the dust and acknowledged her nothingness in the presence of the Almighty, therefore His Majesty raised her up and confirmed anew upon her the title of Mother of God.

The most holy Mary remained in this ecstasy and beatific vision for over an hour immediately preceding her divine delivery. At the moment when she issued from it and regained the use of her senses, she felt and saw that the body of the infant God began to move in her virginal womb; how, releasing and freeing Himself from the place which in the course of nature He had occupied for nine months, He now prepared to issue forth from that sacred bridal chamber.

This movement not only did not cause any pain or hardship, as happens with the other daughters of Adam and Eve in their childbirths; but filled her with incomparable joy and delight, causing in her soul and in her virginal body such exalted and divine effects that they exceed all thoughts of men. Her body became so spiritualized with the beauty of Heaven that she seemed no more a human and earthly creature.

Her countenance emitted rays of light, like a sun incarnadined, and shone in indescribable earnestness and majesty, all inflamed with fervent love. She was kneeling in the manger, her eyes raised to Heaven, her soul wrapped in the Divinity and she herself was entirely deified. In this position, and at the end of the heavenly rapture, the most exalted Lady gave to the world the Only-begotten of the Father and her own, our Savior Jesus.

In accordance with this truth her true motherhood was not impaired by her remaining a Virgin in His conception and birth through operation of the Holy Ghost. Although she could have lost

her virginity in a natural manner without incurring any fault, yet in that case the Mother of God would also be without this singular prerogative of virginity.

The infant God therefore was brought forth from the virginal chamber unencumbered by any corporeal or material substance foreign to Himself. But He came forth glorious and transfigured for the divine and infinite wisdom decreed and ordained that the glory of His most holy soul should in His Birth overflow and communicate itself to His body, participating in the gifts of glory in the same way as happened afterwards His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor in the presence of the Apostles (Matthew 17:2).

The sacred evangelist Luke tells us that the Mother Virgin, having brought forth her first-begotten Son, wrapped Him in swathing clothes and placed Him in a manger. The two sovereign princes, St. Michael and St. Gabriel, were the assistants of the Virgin on this occasion. They stood by at proper distance in human corporeal forms at the moment when the incarnate Word, penetrating the virginal chamber by divine power, issued forth to the light, and they received Him in their hands with ineffable reverence. In the same manner as a priest exhibits the sacred host to the people for adoration, so these two celestial ministers presented to the divine Mother her glorious and refulgent Son. All this happened in a short space of time.

In the same moment in which the holy angels thus presented the divine Child to His Mother, both Son and Mother looked upon each other, and in this look, she wounded with love the sweet Infant and was at the same time exalted and transformed in Him.

And when she saw Him in her arms, she spoke to Him and said: "My sweetest Love and light of my eyes and being of my soul, Thou hast arrived in good hour into this world as the Sun of justice (Malachias 4:2), in order to disperse the darkness of sin and death! True God of the true God, save Thy servants and let all flesh see Him, who shall draw upon it salvation (Isaias 9:2). Receive

me Thy servant as Thy slave and supply my deficiency, in order that I may properly serve Thee. Make me, my Son, such as Thou desirest me to be in Thy service.”

Then the most prudent Mother turned toward the eternal Father to offer up to Him His Only-begotten. Holding Him in her arms she thus served as the altar and the sanctuary, where the angels adored in visible human forms their Creator incarnate. And as the most blessed Trinity assisted in an especial manner at the birth of the Word, Heaven was as it were emptied of its inhabitants, for the whole heavenly court had betaken itself to that blessed cave of Bethlehem and was adoring the Creator in His garb and habit of a pilgrim (Philippians 2:7).

And in their concert of praise the holy angels intoned the new canticle: “Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis” (Luke 2:14). In sweetest and sonorous harmony they repeated it, transfixed in wonder at the new miracles then being fulfilled and at the unspeakable prudence, grace, humility and beauty of that tender Maiden of fifteen years, who had become the worthy trustee and minister of such vast and magnificent sacraments.

It was now time to call St. Joseph, the faithful spouse of the most discreet and attentive Lady. He was wrapped in ecstasy, in which he was informed by divine revelation of all the mysteries of this sacred Birth during this night. But it was becoming that he should see, and, before all other mortals, should in his corporeal faculties and senses be present and experience, adore and reverence the Word made flesh; for he of all others had been chosen to act as the faithful warden of this great sacrament.

At the desire of his heavenly spouse he issued from his ecstasy and, on being restored to consciousness, the first sight of his eyes was the divine Child in the arms of the Virgin Mother reclining against her sacred countenance and breast. There he adored Him in profoundest humility and in tears of joy. He kissed His feet in great joy and admiration, which no doubt would

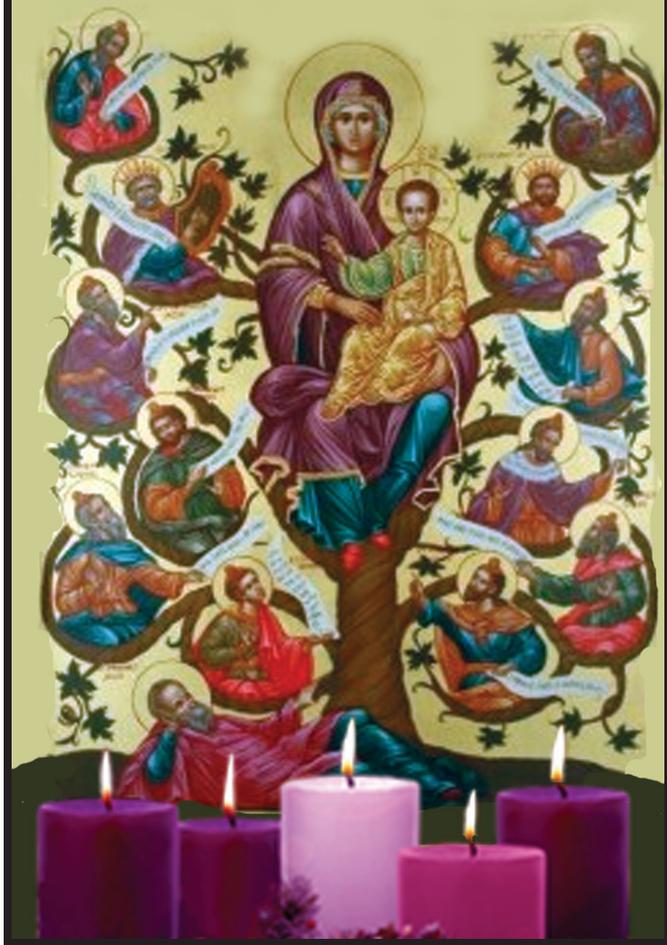
have taken away and destroyed life in him, if divine power had not preserved it; and he certainly would have lost all the use of his senses, if the occasion had permitted.

When St. Joseph had begun to adore the Child, the most prudent Mother asked leave of her Son to arise (for until then she had remained on her knees) and, while St. Joseph handed her the wrappings and swaddling-clothes, which she had brought, she clothed Him with incomparable reverence, devotion and tenderness. Having thus swathed and clothed Him, His Mother, with heavenly wisdom, laid Him in the crib, as St. Luke related (Luke 2:7).

For this purpose she had arranged some straw and hay upon a stone in order to prepare for the God-Man His first resting-place upon earth next to that which He had found in her arms. According to divine ordainment an ox from the neighboring fields ran up in great haste and, entering the cave, joined the beast of burden brought by the Queen.

The blessed Mother commanded them, with what show of reverence was possible to them to acknowledge and adore their Creator. The humble animals obeyed their Mistress and prostrated themselves before the Child, warming Him with their breath and rendering Him the service refused by men. And thus the God made man was placed between two animals, wrapped in swaddling-clothes and wonderfully fulfilling the prophecy, that “the ox knoweth his Owner, and the ass his Master’s crib; but Israel hath not known Me and My people hath not understood.”

ADVENT CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES



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9. CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES FOR THE ADVENT SEASON

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THE ADVENT WREATH

The Advent Wreath is one of the most popular Advent traditions. The Advent Wreath has deep origins, extending back to pre-Christian pagan customs of burning lights during the darkest months of winter. Its origin is in pre-Christian pagan Germany and Scandinavia, where the people gathered to both beg and celebrate the return of the sun during and after the winter solstice.

There is evidence of pre-Christian pagan Germanic peoples using wreathes, with lit candles, during the cold and dark December, days as a sign of hope in the future warmth and extended-sunlight days of spring. In Scandinavia, during winter, lighted candles were placed around a wheel, and prayers were offered to the god of light to turn “the wheel of the earth” back toward the sun to lengthen the days and restore warmth.

These pagan people thus tried to break the darkness of winter with candles and invoke the sun god to quickly return with the warmth and light of spring. In addition, the evergreen wreath would remind them, during the apparent death of nature during winter, that there is still life and the circle of time would again come back to spring and warmth. As the days grew longer, people lit more candles to offer thanks to the “sun god” for the light.

The design of today’s Advent Wreathes was borrowed from the customs of those pre-Christian pagan cultures, who used candles and greenery (often paired together), where the candle represents light and the evergreen represents life.

The circular wreath made of evergreens, with four candles interspersed, and represented the circle of the seasons of year and the life that endures through the winter.

Medieval Christians retained the custom, while seeing such lights as an obvious symbol of Christ, for they used candles themselves in many liturgical functions, not least the Sacrifice of the Mass. The lighting of the Advent candles represents the promise of the coming of Jesus, the light of the world. After all, Christ is “the Light that came into the world” to dispel the darkness of sin and to radiate the truth and love of God (John 3:19-21).

When these candles were lit, Scripture and prayer was part of the custom and the family devotion time was a time of instructing the children about Christ’s coming. Later, the custom crossed over different denominational lines and other Christian religions adapted its use. It was quickly adopted by both Protestants and Catholics throughout Germany, and it was brought to the United States by German immigrants in the 19th century.

The Advent Wreath is very symbolic and therefore, spiritually, very beautiful.

- ▶ The circle of the wreath reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end.
- ▶ The green of the wreath speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life.
- ▶ The circular form reminds us that God’s love is eternal; it has no beginning and no end.
- ▶ The evergreen leaves of the wreath remind us that God never changes.
- ▶ The evergreens used for the wreath itself are a reminder of continuous life. Whereas most the leaves (the children) of most trees have lived their life and are now fallen and rotting on the ground, the evergreens live on, seemingly immortal, though some needles are fallen on the

ground, the branches are still laden with them.

- ▶ The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and the everlasting life found in Christ.
- ▶ It is traditionally made of some type or mixture of evergreens (fir, spruce, juniper, holly, etc.), symbolizing the continuation of life in the middle of the cold and dark winter (in the northern latitudes, at least, which is where the Advent Wreath originated).
- ▶ The wreath is made of various evergreens, signifying different virtues.
- ▶ The evergreens have a traditional meaning which can be adapted to our faith.
- ▶ The laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering.
- ▶ The pine, holly, and yew, signify immortality; and cedar, strength and healing. Holly also has a special Christian symbolism. One English legend tells of how the cross was made of holly.
- ▶ The prickly leaves recall the crown of thorns.
- ▶ The pine cones, nuts, or seedpods of the evergreens are used to decorate the wreath also symbolize life and resurrection.
- ▶ All together, the wreath of evergreens depicts the immortality of our soul and the new, everlasting life promised to us through Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, who entered our world becoming true man and who was victorious over sin and death through His own passion, death, and resurrection.
- ▶ Finally, the wreath reminds us of the crown of joy waiting for us in Heaven, if we are prepared to wear Christ’s crown of thorns here below!

Rejoice, O daughter of Sion, and be jubilantly glad, O daughter of Israel!. Behold, thy Lord cometh, and, in His day, a great light shall arise!

THE ADVENT CALENDAR

Another popular Advent custom, also from Germany, creates a similar build-up of anticipation. Advent calendars are colorful pieces of cardboard on which is depicted a many-windowed house. Behind the shutters of each house is a picture or symbol that points to the coming of Christmas. Beginning December 1st, the children are allowed to open the shutters of one window per day. Finally, on December 24th, the front door of the house is opened, showing the nativity.

BARBARA BRANCHES

St. Barbara, one of the “Fourteen Holy Helpers”, is the patron saint of artillerymen, miners, and a happy death. Though her feast, on December 4th, obviously belongs to the cycle of saints and not to the temporal cycle of Advent, there is a custom observed in her honor that ties into the meaning of the Advent season. A “Barbara Branch” is the name given to a twig that is broken from a fruit tree (especially cherry), placed in a bowl of water, and kept in a warm, well-lit part of the house, such as the kitchen. According to legend, if the Barbara branch blooms on or before Christmas Day, extra blessings will come to the person whose branch it is. “Barbara Branches” are reminiscent of the image from Isaias—of Christ as a Flower from the root of Jesse (Isaias 11.2; also the Epistle for Advent Ember Friday); they can thus be instructive in teaching children the meaning of Advent and Christmas.

LUCY LIGHTS

The customs surrounding the Feast of St. Lucy (December 13th) also illuminate the themes of Advent and Christmas. Lucy, whose name means “light” and whose association with light has made her the patron saint of the “light of the body” (the eyes), once had her feast fall on the shortest day of the year. Before the Gregorian calendar was reformed in the Middle Ages, December 13th was the day of the winter solstice. For all of these reasons, St. Lucy is honored with a number of customs involving fire. Lucy candles were once lit in the home and Lucy fires burned outside. In Sweden and Norway a girl dressed in

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white and wearing an evergreen wreath on her head with lit candles would awaken the family and offer them coffee and cakes. She was called the “Lussibrud” (Lucy bride) and her pastry the “Lussekattor.” The Feast of St. Lucy comes at a propitious time during the observance of Advent. Reminding us of the importance of light, the light of St. Lucy foreshadows the coming of the Light of the World on December 25th, like a spark foreshadows the sun.

ST. NICHOLAS & SANTA CLAUS

As is well-known, “Santa Claus” comes from the Dutch rendering of Saint Nicholas, a fourth-century bishop famous for giving gifts anonymously to children and the needy. However, as Father Francis Weiser argues in his *Handbook of Christian Customs* (p. 113), the various legends surrounding Santa Claus actually come from the god of Norse and Germanic mythology, Thor (after whom Thursday is named). Thor was portrayed as a large, jovial old man with a long white beard whose symbolic color was red (owing to his association with fire). The fireplace was also considered sacred to Thor because it was through it that he came into the fire.

We owe this odd metamorphosis of a Christian saint into a pagan god to New York City. When the Dutch founded the city in the seventeenth century, they observed the Catholic custom of “Saint Nicholas’ visit” on the saint’s feast day (December 5th). This the Dutch did even though they were Protestant. When English Protestants later overtook the city, they were offended by the practice, but their children very much liked it. The compromise that was eventually made was to transfer the giving of gifts from the 5th of December to the 25th. The older Christian custom is that on the night of December 5th (the vigil of Saint Nicholas Day), children write notes addressed to the Child Jesus and put them on their window sill, whence St. Nicholas carries them to Heaven. A variation of this custom, prevalent in South America, is to write notes sometime between December 16th to 24th and to put them in front of the crib, from which point Angels carry the requests to Heaven.

ADVENT WREATH PRAYERS & READINGS



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10. BLESSING & PRAYERS, READINGS FOR THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

from devotiontoourlady.com

THE BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

1. All make the Sign of the Cross.

2. The leader begins:

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who made Heaven and earth.

Leader: In the short days and long nights of Advent, we realize how we are always waiting for deliverance, always needing salvation by our God. Around this wreath, we shall remember God's promise.

3. A verse from Holy Scripture is read:

"The people that walked in darkness, have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and hast not increased the joy. They shall rejoice before thee, as they that rejoice in the harvest" (Isaias 9:2-3).

4. Then all pray together:

Come, O long-expected Jesus—Redeemer and Savior of mankind! Plant in me a seed of wonder at the wisdom and power of Thy Father; the mercy of the Son, and the love of the Holy Ghost.

Come, O long-expected Jesus—Redeemer and Savior of mankind! Sow in me the seed

of sorrow for sin; a desire for penance; a contempt of my past sins and a love for Thy example of humility and poverty.

Come, O long-expected Jesus—Redeemer and Savior of mankind! Plant in me a seed of a great desire and love for prayer and the things of Heaven and a great distaste and hatred for worldliness of the world.

Come, O long-expected Jesus—Redeemer and Savior of mankind! Plant in me the seed of a great Faith and knowledge of Thee; a great Hope and confidence in Thee; and a great love of and a humble submission to Thee.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
O guide of the flock of Joseph!
Rouse Thy power, and come to save us.

O Lord of hosts, restore us, if Thy face shine upon us, then we shall be safe.

O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou burn with anger while Thy people in misery pray?

Thou hast fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in ample measure.

Thou hast left us to be fought over by our neighbors, and our enemies mock us.

O Lord of hosts, restore us, if Thy face shine upon us, then we shall be safe.

I beg these graces in the Name of Jesus Christ, whose advent I hail. Amen.

5. Then the Leader says the prayer of blessing:

Let us pray: All-powerful God, bless this Advent wreath with Thy own hand, (make a Sign of the Cross) in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. Increase our strength of will for doing good and avoiding evil; grant us a love of virtue and hatred of sin, so that Christ may find an eager welcome at His coming and call us to His side in the King-

dom of Heaven, where He lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYERS FOR THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

The first purple candle is lit. Then the prayers for the first week are said.

Antiphon: Stir up Thy might, we beg Thee, O Lord, and come, so that we may escape all sin and evil through Thy protection and be saved by Thy help from the dangers that threaten us because of our sins.

V. O Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, desire of every nation!

R. Savior of all peoples, come and dwell amongst us and save us from our sins!

Let us pray: Almighty and powerful God, increase our strength of will for doing good and avoiding evil, so that Christ may find a fitting welcome at His coming; so that being freed from our sins, we may be worthy to be called to His side in the Kingdom of Heaven, where He lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

During the first week one purple candle is left burning during the evening meal, at prayers, or at bedtime.

PRAYERS FOR THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Two purple candles are lit. Then the prayers for the second week are said.

Antiphon: O Lord, stir up our hearts that we may prepare for Thy only begotten Son, that through His coming we may be made worthy to serve Thee with pure souls.

V. O King of all nations, Jesus Christ, only joy of every heart!

R. Come and save your people and fill our hearts with desire and joy of Heaven!

Let us pray: O God of power and mercy, cleanse, purify and open our hearts in readiness to welcome Thy Divine Son. Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy, so that we may share in His purity and wisdom and become one with Him when He comes in glory, for He lives and reigns with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

During the second week, two purple candles are left burning during the evening meal, at prayers, or at bedtime.

PRAYERS FOR THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Three candles (one rose and two purple) are lit. Then the prayers for the third week are said.

Antiphon: O Stir up Thy might, we pray Thee, O Lord, and come; rescue us through Thy great strength so that salvation, which has been hindered by our sins, may be hastened by the grace of Thy gentle mercy.

V. O Key of David, Jesus Christ, the gates of Heaven open at Thy command!

R. Come and forgive us our sins and show us the way to salvation!

Let us pray: O : O Lord God, as we, Thy people, who look forward to the birthday of Christ, let us remember that He came so seek and save that which was lost and call all to penance, lest they perish. Grant that we bring forth worthy fruits of penance in preparation for experiencing the joyous arrival of our salvation and celebrate that feast with love and thanksgiving. We ask this through Christ our Lord, who livest and reignest for ever and ever. Amen.

During the third week, the three candles (two purple and one rose) are left burning during the evening meal, at prayers, or at bedtime.

PRAYERS FOR THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

One rose and three purple candles are lit. Then the prayers for the fourth week are said.

Antiphon: We humbly beg Thee, O Lord, to listen to our prayers; and by the grace of Thy coming bring light into our darkened minds.

V. O Wisdom, holy Word of God, Jesus Christ, light and life of the world!

R. Enlighten our minds and teach us the way to salvation!

Let us pray: O Father, all-powerful God, Thy eternal Word took flesh on our earth, when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of Thy Divine plan for our redemption and salvation. Lift our minds and hearts above the sinful things of world, and open our minds to receive the Holy Spirit, who prepares us for Christ's coming. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

During the fourth week, all four candles are left burning during the evening meal, at prayers, or at bedtime.

UNLESS
YOU DO
PENANCE
YOU WILL
PERISH!

(Luke 13:3)



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11. PENANCE IN THE ADVENT SEASON

from devotiontoourlady.com

The name "Advent" is applied, in the Latin Church, to that period of the year, during which the Church requires the faithful to prepare for the celebration of the feast of Christmas, the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ. The mystery of that great day had every right to the honor of being prepared for by prayer and works of penance; and, in fact, it is impossible to state, with any certainty, when this season of preparation (which had long been observed before receiving its present name of Advent) was first instituted.

It would seem, however, that its observance first began in the west. Since it is evident that Advent could not have been looked on as a preparation for the feast of Christmas, until that feast was definitively fixed to the twenty-fifth of December; which was done in the east only towards the close of the fourth century; whereas it is certain that the Church of Rome kept the feast on that day at a much earlier period.

We must look upon Advent in two different lights: first, as a time of preparation, properly so called, for the birth of our Savior, by works of penance: and secondly, as a series of ecclesiastical Offices drawn up for the same purpose. We find, as far back as the fifth century, the custom of giving exhortations to the people in order to prepare them for the feast of Christmas. We have two sermons of Saint Maximus of Turin on this subject, not to speak of several others which were formerly attributed to St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, but which were probably written by St. Cesarius of Arles.

If these documents do not tell us what was the duration and what the exercises of this holy season, they at least show us how ancient was the practice of distinguishing the time of Advent by special sermons. Saint Ivo of Chartres, St. Ber-

nard, and several other doctors of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, have left us set sermons de Adventu Domini, quite distinct from their Sunday homilies on the Gospels of that season.

In the capitularia of Charles the Bald, in 846, the bishops admonish that prince not to call them away from their Churches during Lent or Advent, under pretext of affairs of the State or the necessities of war, seeing that they have special duties to fulfil, and particularly that of preaching during those sacred times.

The oldest document in which we find the length and exercises of Advent mentioned with anything like clearness, is a passage in the second book of the History of the Franks by St. Gregory of Tours, where he says that St. Perpetuus, one of his predecessors, who held that see about the year 480, had decreed a fast three times a week, from the feast of St. Martin until Christmas. It would be impossible to decide whether St. Perpetuus, by his regulations, established a new custom, or merely enforced an already existing law.

Let us, however, note this interval of forty, or rather of forty-three days, so expressly mentioned, and consecrated to penance, as though it were a second Lent, though less strict and severe than that which precedes Easter.

Later on, we find the ninth canon of the first Council of Macon, held in 582, ordaining that during the same interval between St. Martin's day and Christmas, the Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, should be fasting days, and that the Sacrifice should be celebrated according to the Lenten rite. Not many years before that, namely in 567, the second Council of Tours had enjoined the monks to fast from the beginning of December till Christmas.

This practice of penance soon extended to the whole forty days, even for the laity: and it was commonly called St. Martin's Lent. The capitularia of Charlemagne, in the sixth book, leave us no doubt on the matter; and Rabanus Maurus, in the second book of his Institution of clerics,

bears testimony to this observance. There were even special rejoicings made on St. Martin's feast, just as we see them practiced now at the approach of Lent and Easter.

The obligation of observing this Lent, which, though introduced so imperceptibly, had by degrees acquired the force of a sacred law, began to be relaxed, and the forty days from St. Martin's day to Christmas were reduced to four weeks.

We have seen that this fast began to be observed first in France; but thence it spread into England, as we find from Venerable Bede's history; into Italy, as appears from a diploma of Astolphus, king of the Lombards, dated 753; into Germany, Spain, etc., of which the proofs may be seen in the learned work of Dom Martene, On the ancient rites of the Church.

The first allusion to Advent's being reduced to four weeks is to be found in the ninth century, in a letter of Pope St. Nicholas I to the Bulgarians. The testimony of RATHERIUS of Verona, and of Abbé of Fleury, both writers of the tenth century, goes also to prove that, even then, the question of reducing the duration of the Advent fast by one-third was seriously entertained.

It is true that St. Peter Damian, in the eleventh century, speaks of the Advent fast as still being for forty days; and that St. Louis, two centuries later, kept it for that length of time; but as far as this holy king is concerned, it is probable that it was only his own devotion which prompted him to this practice.

The discipline of the Churches of the west, after having reduced the time of the Advent fast, so far relented, in a few years, as to change the fast into a simple abstinence; and we even find Councils of the twelfth century, for instance Selingstadt in 1122, and Avranches in 1172, which seem to require only the clergy to observe this abstinence.

The Council of Salisbury, held in 1281, would seem to expect none but monks to keep it. On

the other hand (for the whole subject is very confused, owing, no doubt, to there never having been any uniformity of discipline regarding it in the western Church), we find Pope Innocent III, in his letter to the bishop of Braga, mentioning the custom of fasting during the whole of Advent, as being at that time observed in Rome; and Durandus, in the same thirteenth century, in his Rational on the Divine Offices, tells us that, in France, fasting was uninterruptedly observed during the whole of that holy time.

This much is certain, that, by degrees, the custom of fasting so far fell into disuse, that when, in 1362, Pope Urban V endeavored to prevent the total decay of the Advent penance, all he insisted upon was that all the clerics of his court should keep abstinence during Advent, without in any way including others, either clergy or laity, in this law.

St. Charles Borromeo also strove to bring back his people of Milan to the spirit, if not to the letter, of ancient times. In his fourth Council, he enjoins the parish priests to exhort the faithful to go to Communion on the Sundays, at least, of Lent and Advent; and afterwards addressed to the faithful themselves a pastoral letter, in which, after having reminded them of the dispositions wherewith they ought to spend this holy time, he strongly urges them to fast on the Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, at least, of each week in Advent.

Finally, Pope Benedict XIV, when Archbishop of Bologna, following these illustrious examples, wrote his eleventh Ecclesiastical Institution for the purpose of exciting in the minds of his dioceses the exalted idea which the Christians of former times had of the holy season of Advent, and of removing an erroneous opinion which prevailed in those parts, namely, that Advent concerned religious only and not the laity.

He shows them that such an opinion, unless it be limited to the two practices of fasting and abstinence, is, strictly speaking, rash and scandalous since it cannot be denied that, in the laws and usages of the universal Church, there exist

special practices, having for their end to prepare the faithful for the great feast of the birth of Jesus Christ.

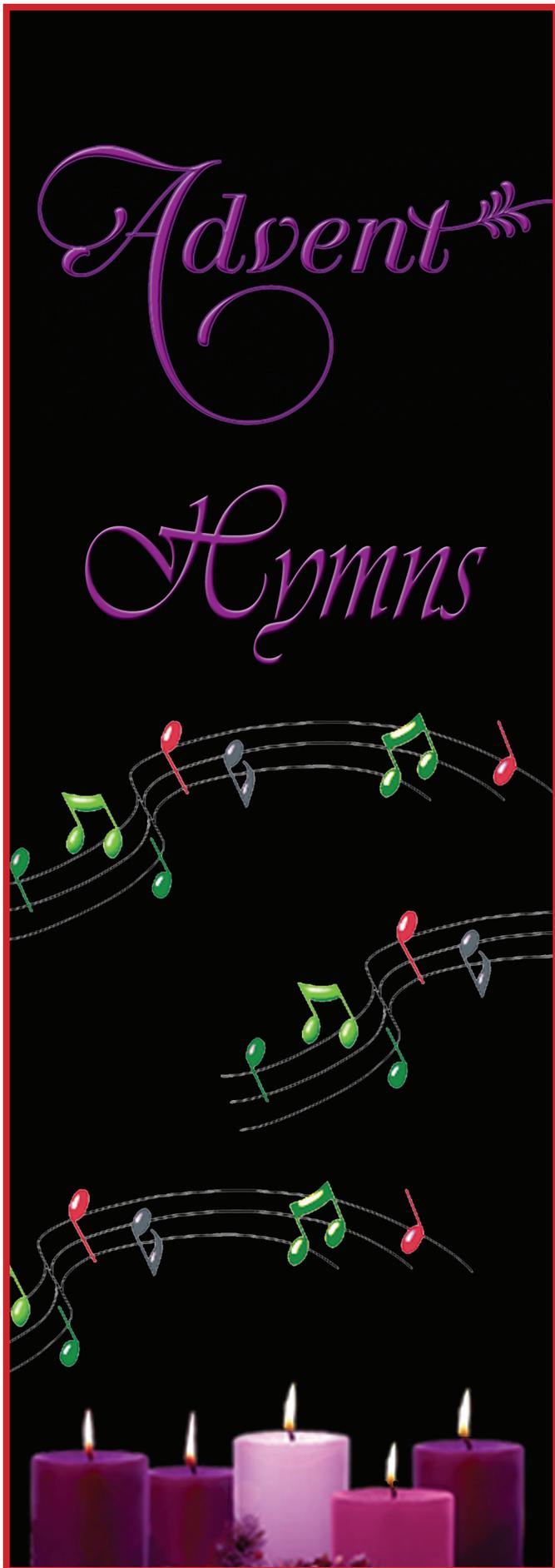
The Greek Church still continues to observe the fast of Advent, though with much less rigor than that of Lent. It consists of forty days, beginning with November 14th, the day on which this Church keeps the feast of the apostle St. Philip.

During this entire period, the people abstain from flesh-meat, butter, milk, and eggs; but they are allowed, which they are not during Lent, fish, oil, and wine. Fasting, in its strict sense, is binding only on seven out of the forty days; and the whole period goes under the name of St. Philip's Lent.

The Greeks justify these relaxations by this distinction: that the Lent before Christmas is, so they say, only an institution of the monks, whereas the Lent before Easter is of apostolic institution.

But, if the exterior practices of penance which formerly sanctified the season of Advent, have been, in the western Church, so gradually relaxed as to have become now quite obsolete except in monasteries, the general character of the liturgy of this holy time has not changed; and it is by their zeal in following its spirit, that the faithful will prove their earnestness in preparing for Christmas.

The English observance of fast and abstinence on the Wednesdays and Fridays in Advent, may, in some sense, be regarded as a remnant of the ancient discipline.



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12. ADVENT HYMNS

(to sing, read or recite)

from devotiontoourlady.com

O COME! O COME! EMMANUEL!

1. O come! O come! Emmanuel!
And ransom captive Israel;
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall be born for thee, O Israel!*

2. O come! Thou Rod of Jesse! free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall be born for thee, O Israel!*

3. O come! Thou Day-Spring! Come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine Advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall be born for thee, O Israel!*

4. O come! Thou Key of David! Come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads to Thee,
And close the path to misery.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall be born for thee, O Israel!*

5. O come! O come! Thou Lord of Might!
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law,
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall be born for thee, O Israel! Amen.*

**CREATOR OF THE STARS OF NIGHT
“CREATOR ALME SIDERUM”**

(Traditional Advent Hymn)

Advent Hymn from 6th or 7th Century

Conditor alme siderum,
aeterna lux credentium,
Christe, redemptor omnium,
exaudi preces supplicum.

Qui condolens interitu
mortis perire saeculum,
salvastis mundum languidum,
donans reis remedium.

Vergente mundi vespere,
uti sponsus de thalamo,
egressus honestissima
Virginis matris clausula.

Cuius forti potentiae
genu curvantur omnia;
caelestia, terrestria
nutu fatentur subdita.

Te, Sancte, fide quaesumus,
venture iudex saeculi,
conserva nos in tempore
hostis a telo perfidi.

Sit, Christe, rex piissime,
tibi Patrique gloria
cum Spiritu Paraclito,
in sempiterna saecula. Amen.

ENGLISH VERSION

Creator of the stars of night,
Thy people's everlasting Light;
Jesu, Redeemer, save us all,
And hear thy servants when they call.

Thou, grieving that the ancient curse
Should doom to death an universe,
Hast found the medicine, full of grace,
To save and heal a ruin'd race.

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Thou cam'st, the Bridegroom of the Bride,
As drew the world to evening-tide;
Proceeding from a Virgin shrine,
The spotless Victim all divine.

At whose dread Name, majestic now,
All knees must bend, all hearts must bow
And things celestial thee shall own,
And things terrestrial, Lord alone.

O thou, whose coming is with dread
To judge and doom the quick and dead,
Preserve us, while we dwell below,
From ev'ry insult of the foe.

To God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit, Three in One,
Laud, honour, might, and glory be
From age to age eternally. Amen.

PRAYERS
READINGS
AND RITUAL
AT MEALS
DURING
ADVENT



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13. PRAYERS AND RITUAL FOR MEALS IN ADVENT

from devotiontoourlady.com

THE BLESSING BEFORE THE MEAL

The priest, or the father of the family, who is to bless the table says:

LEADER: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: Be not angry, O Lord, and remember no longer our iniquity : behold the city of thy sanctuary is become a desert, Sion is made a desert. Jerusalem is desolate, the house of our holiness and of thy glory, where our fathers praised thee.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: We have sinned, and we are become as one unclean, and we have all fallen as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast crushed us by the hand of our iniquity.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: See, O Lord, the affliction of thy people, and send him whom thou hast promised to send. Send forth the Lamb, the ruler of the earth, from the rock of the desert to the mount of the daughter of Sion, that he himself may take off the yoke of our captivity.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: Be comforted, be comforted, my people; thy salvation shall speedily come why wilt thou waste away in sadness? Why bath sorrow seized thee? I will save thee; fear not: for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: Bless the Lord.

ALL: Bless the Lord.

LEADER: The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord.

ALL: Thou do give them food in due time. Thou do open Thy hand and fill all creatures with Thy blessings.

LEADER: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.

ALL: As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

LEADER: Lord, have mercy.

ALL: Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Our Father (the rest is said silently until:)

LEADER: And lead us not into temptation.

ALL: But deliver us from evil.

LEADER: Let us pray. Bless us + O Lord, and these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty; through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

ONE OF THE FAMILY: Please, Father, give us a blessing.

LEADER: May the King of everlasting glory give us a place at His heavenly table.

ALL: Amen.

THE READING BEFORE OR DURING THE MEAL

You may take a reading from any spiritual book. The *Imitation of Christ* is often used in religious communities. Another suggestion might be the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVOUT LIFE PART IV, CHAPTER 1

We Must Not Bother with the Words of Worldly Wisdom

As soon as your worldly friends see that you aim at leading a devout life, they will let loose endless arrows of mockery and misrepresentation upon you; the more malicious will accuse you of hypocrisy, pretense, or bigotry; they will say that since the world has looked coldly upon you, failing to win its favor, you now turn to God.

Your friends will make a series of what, from their point of view, are prudent and charitable corrections as to your pious behavior. They will tell you that you are growing morbid; that you will lose your worldly credit, and will make yourself unacceptable to the world; they will say you have become prematurely senile, that all this threatens to ruin of your material prosperity; they will tell you that in the world you must live as the world does; that you can be saved without all this fuss; and many more things of a similar nature.

My child, all this is vain and foolish talk: these people have no real concern either for your bodily health, or your material prosperity, or your soul. "If you were of the world," the Savior has said, "the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

We have all seen men, and women too, pass the whole night, even several nights in succession, playing at chess or cards, or some

other thing; and what can be a more dismal, unwholesome thing than that? But the world has not an unkind word to say against it, and their friends are in no way troubled by it. But if you give up an hour of your time to meditation, or get up rather earlier than usual to prepare for Holy Communion, and they will send for the doctor to cure you! People spend every night for a month dancing, and no one will complain of being any for the worse; but if they are made to keep a prayer vigil on Christmas Eve, we shall hear of endless colds and maladies the next day! Is it not as plain as possible that the world is an unjust judge; indulgent and kindly to its own children, harsh and uncharitable to the children of God?

We cannot get on well with the world, unless we want to lose the Lord's approval. It is not possible to satisfy the world's unreasonable demands: *"John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and you say he hath a devil. The Son of Man is come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-lover, the friend of publicans and sinners!'"*

Even so, my child, if we give-in to the world, and laugh, dance, and play as it does, it will pretend to be scandalized at our behavior; but if we refuse to do so, it will accuse us of being hypocritical or morbid.

If we clothe ourselves with its fashions, it will put some evil interpretation on why we do so; but if we dress modestly, plainly and simply, it will accuse us of meanness.

If the world sees us cheerful, it will call us dissipated. It will call our mortification dulness; and, ever casting its evil eye upon us, nothing we can do will please it.

It exaggerates our failings, and publishes them abroad as sins; it represents our venial sins as mortal sins, and our sins of weakness as malicious premeditated acts.

Saint Paul says that charity is kind, but the world is unkind; charity thinks no evil, but the

world thinks evil of every one, and if it cannot find fault with our actions, it is sure at least to judge bad motives to them—whether the sheep be black or white, horned or no, the wolf will devour them if he can.

Do whatever we will, the world must wage war upon us. If we spend any length of time in confession, it will speculate on what scandalous things we have so much to talk about! If we are brief, it will suggest that we are keeping back something serious!

It spies out our every act, and at the most trifling angry word, sets us down as intolerable. Attention to business is called avarice; meekness is mere weakness; whereas the anger of worldly people is to be reckoned as a generous fraternal correction; their avarice is economy; their mean deeds are honorable. There are always spiders at hand to spoil the honey-bee's comb.

Let us leave the blind world to make as much noise as it may—like a bat harassing the songbirds of day; let us be firm in our ways, unchangeable in our resolutions, and perseverance will be the test of our self-surrender to God, and our deliberate choice of the devout life.

The planets and a wandering comet shine with much the same brightness, but the comet's brightness is a mere passing blaze, which does not linger long, while the planets cease not to display their brightness.

Likewise, hypocrisy and real goodness have much outward resemblance; but one is easily known from the other, inasmuch as hypocrisy is short-lived, and disperses like a mist, while real goodness is firm and abiding.

There is no surer groundwork for the beginnings of a devout life than the endurance of misrepresentation and calumny, since thereby we escape the danger of vainglory and pride, which are like the midwives of Egypt, who were bidden by Pharaoh to kill the male children born to Israel directly after their birth. We are

crucified to the world, and the world must be as crucified to us. It esteems us as fools, let us esteem it as mad.

If there has been reading at table the reader, after finishing the reading, says:

But Thou, O Lord, have mercy on us.

All: Thanks be to God.

THE BLESSING AFTER THE MEAL

All rise for the prayer.

LEADER: Let all Thy works praise Thee, O Lord.

ALL: Let all Thy saints glorify Thee. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, etc.

LEADER: We give Thee thanks, almighty God, for all Thy benefits; Thou who livest and reignest forever and ever.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER: Praise the Lord, all you nations; glorify Him, all you peoples.

ALL: His love for us is enduring; He is faithful forever.

LEADER: Glory be to the Father, etc.

ALL: As it was in the beginning, is now and etc.

LEADER: Lord, have mercy.

ALL: Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Our Father (the rest inaudibly until:)

LEADER: And lead us not into temptation.

All: But deliver us from evil.

LEADER: He has been generous to the poor.

ALL: His goodness is everlasting.

LEADER: I will bless the Lord at all times.

ALL: His praises are ever on my lips.

LEADER: My soul will exult in the Lord.

ALL: The meek will hear it with gladness.

LEADER: Praise the Lord with me.

ALL: Let us heighten our praise of His Name.

LEADER: Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

ALL: Both now and forever more.

LEADER: Lord, be pleased to award everlasting life to all who do good to us in Thy Name.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER: Let us bless the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

LEADER: May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER: May the Lord grant us His peace.

ALL: Amen.

BEFORE THE EVENING MEAL

LEADER: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: Be not angry, O Lord, and remember no longer our iniquity : behold the city of thy sanctuary is become a desert, Sion is made a desert. Jerusalem is desolate, the house of our holiness and of thy glory, where our fathers praised thee.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: We have sinned, and we are become as one unclean, and we have all fallen as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast crushed us by the hand of our iniquity.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: See, O Lord, the affliction of thy people, and send him whom thou hast promised to send. Send forth the Lamb, the ruler of the earth, from the rock of the desert to the mount of the daughter of Sion, that he himself may take off the yoke of our captivity.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: Be comforted, be comforted, my people; thy salvation shall speedily come why wilt thou waste away in sadness? Why hath sorrow seized thee? I will save thee; fear not: for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Redeemer.

ALL: Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the Just One.

LEADER: Bless the Lord.

ALL: Bless the Lord.

LEADER: The poor will eat and receive their fill.

ALL: Those who seek the Lord will praise Him and will live forever. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was etc.

LEADER: Lord, have mercy.

ALL: Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: Our Father (the rest is said silently until:)

LEADER: And lead us not into temptation.

ALL: But deliver us from evil.

LEADER: Let us pray. Bless us + O Lord, and these Thy gifts which we are about to receive from Thy bounty; through Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

ONE OF THE FAMILY: Please, Father, give us a blessing.

LEADER: May the King of everlasting glory bring us to His heavenly banquet.

ALL: Amen.

AFTER THE EVENING MEAL

LEADER: The kind and compassionate Lord has left us a memorial of His wondrous deeds.

ALL: He has given food to all who live in holy fear. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning etc.

LEADER: Blessed is God in His gifts and holy in all His works; He who lives and reigns forever and ever.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER: Let us bless the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

LEADER: May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace.

ALL: Amen.

LEADER: May the Lord grant us His peace.

ALL: Amen.

ADVENT READING

“Not in bread
alone doth
man live,
but in every
word that
proceedeth
from the
mouth of
God.”

(Matthew 4:4)



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14. A LIST OF RECOMMENDED ADVENT READING

from devotiontoourlady.com

- ▶ The Liturgical Year (Advent Volume)
by Dom Gueranger
- ▶ The Church's Year of Grace
(Volume 1 : Advent)
by Dr. Pius Parsch
- ▶ The Essential Advent and Christmas
Handbook
- ▶ Bethlehem by Fr. Frederick Faber
- ▶ The Sermons of St. Francis de Sales:
For Advent and Christmas
- ▶ The Life of Mary as Seen by the Mystics
by Raphael Brown
- ▶ The Life of the Blessed Virgin Mary:
From the Visions of Venerable
Anne Catherine Emmerich
- ▶ The Wood of the Cradle—The Wood of
the Cross by Caryll Houselander
- ▶ The Year and Our Children:
Catholic Family Celebrations for Every
Season by Mary Reed Newland