

Journey through Advent

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

First Sunday of Advent • December 3, 2017

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pause to spend a few moments in prayer as we prepare to listen to the Word of God contained in the Sacred Scriptures.

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: By signing ourselves with the cross, we make a commitment to live so others might see the goodness in us that is God's presence.

**All: May all who see us make this sign
be reminded of our commitment to the presence of God in our lives.**

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in the darkness.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in the world.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in our lives each day.

First Reading - *Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7*

Rotate around the circle, having each person read a paragraph aloud. For each reading, begin with the bullet points and then continue on to reading the passage from a Bible.

- ▶ The people have lost control of their lives and are like dead leaves blown about by the wind. They are lost without God. But God has not given up on them, nor does God ever give up on us.
- ▶ God is imaged as "father" and "potter." The people are the clay in the hands of God, who is reshaping them.

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

- ▶ This is a lament seeking the help of God in a time of disaster.
- ▶ The Psalmist prays to see God's face and promises to call upon his name (a metaphor for prayer).

Second Reading - *1 Corinthians 1:3-9*

- ▶ The theme of this reading is that God has enriched us in every way and we are not lacking in any spiritual gifts.

Gospel Acclamation

Leader: Alleluia, alleluia.

**All: Show us, Lord, your love; and grant us your salvation.
Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel - *Mark 13:33-37*

Read the Gospel aloud, rotating around the circle for each paragraph, and then continue on to the following sections.

For Whom Do We Wait?

Being alert, watchful, and waiting are the prominent themes of this Gospel reading. Being alert can be a real challenge. Have you ever been driving along and all of a sudden felt very sleepy? Maybe it was right after a heavy meal or late at night. Your eyelids become heavy. You begin to nod off. Your mind's inner voice cries out: "Pay attention!" "Stay awake!" "Be watchful!" "Remain alert!" This is the Gospel's challenge.

Jesus utters two short, powerful imperatives at the beginning of this Sunday's gospel: "Be watchful! Be alert!" The Advent season calls us to combat our drowsiness by watching and waiting and being alert to God's presence and action in our lives. The Gospel reading does not just ask us to look at Christ's first coming into our midst, but asks us also to look toward Christ's coming at the end of time. Christ came and fulfilled his mission, and then—like the owner of the house in the parable contained in today's gospel reading—is traveling abroad. We, his servants, are in charge, and we have each been given our own work to do until Christ returns. What is that work? It is being aware of God's coming in the ordinary activities of our lives.

Waiting Strengthens the Soul

Christian living is a constant watching and waiting for the surprising presence of God. We are a

people who wait. It is a holy endeavor. Waiting strengthens the soul. Our waiting is an affirmation of hope that Christ will come. We are to be ready for Christ's return at all times, especially when we least expect it. The Gospel makes it clear that we are not to be concerned with the time or place. When we try to dictate the time and place, we always show ourselves to be fools—as if God could be controlled according to our arrogant management.

Whose Calendar Are We Following?

Advent also challenges us to be aware and alert to how calendars influence our lives. People carry smart phones with calendars and often post calendars on the front of their refrigerators. For some, the calendar runs their lives. People mark time with the calendar year, fiscal year, and academic year. The church has its own calendar, the liturgical year. In the church calendar, "New Year's Day" is the first Sunday of Advent. This liturgical calendar begins roughly 11 months into the annual calendar year, 5 months into the fiscal year, and 12 weeks into the academic year. The calendar of the church year is counter-cultural to the secular calendars and their marking of time. Why? Because it marks time by the life of Christ.

A Different Way of Telling and Marking Time

Faith and the real practice of religion are always out of sync with the way the world tells and counts time. What matters most to people of faith differs markedly from the rest of the world's way of determining time. Unquestionably, we have good, scientific reasons to move with the rest of humanity when marking the movements of the earth around the sun. Yet we have even better spiritual reasons to mark time by the movements of God's son, Jesus. In so doing, we are saying that the time-frame of our lives is more than the world of money (the fiscal calendar), larger than the turn of semesters (the academic calendar), more even than the movements of the solar system (the annual calendar). We are saying that we live, move, and have our meaning from Jesus, whose life story reveals the real meaning of God's creation. Living our life cycle the way Jesus lives his is following a calendar that is determined by neither consumerism's hype nor winter's darkness. These will block the light of God.

Paying Attention

The marvelous dissonance of the season of Advent helps us as believers to realize our faith agenda fits no existing political party and that our fiscal bottom line is not the same as the Gospel's bottom line. Within our faith's time-frame, the bottom line is always fidelity to our covenant relationship with God, with one another, and with the rest of creation. Are we paying attention to these?

For Reflection

1. God is reshaping us like a potter reshapes clay. How have you been shaped and reshaped by the hands of God?
2. What touched you most in today's Gospel reading?
3. Have you ever had to wait for anything important? What was that like?
4. In your Advent watchfulness, what are you looking for? Whom do you expect?

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us prepare to meet God in everyone we meet this Advent.

All: May we recognize God in all of them.

Leader: Let us be prepared to forgive and reconcile with those who are alienated from us.

All: May God help us with the process.

Leader: Let us be prepared for and open to new revelations from God in our lives.

All: Amen.

Exchange a gesture of peace with all who are present.

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Journey through Advent

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

Second Sunday of Advent • December 10, 2017

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pause to spend a few moments in prayer as we prepare to listen to the Word of God contained in the Sacred Scriptures.

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: By signing ourselves with the cross, we make a commitment to live so others might see the goodness in us that is God's presence.

**All: May all who see us make this sign
be reminded of our commitment to the presence of God in our lives.**

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in the darkness.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in the world.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in our lives each day.

First Reading: *Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11*

Rotate around the circle, having each person read a paragraph aloud. For each reading, begin with the bullet points and then continue on to reading the passage from a Bible.

- ▶ The first reading is from the second section of the book of Isaiah referred to as the "Book of Consolation."
- ▶ The prophet announces to the people that their exile in Babylon is over and they are to journey home. On this journey, the mountains will be made level, valleys filled in, and rough terrain made straight.
- ▶ The passage closes with the image of God as a shepherd who feeds his flock, carrying the lambs in his arms and holding them close. God does the same with God's people.

Psalm - *Psalm 85:9-14*

- This is a community hymn of a people confidently waiting to see God's love, truth, justice and peace.

Second Reading - *2 Peter 3:8-14*

- The central theme of this reading is that Christians should not grow weary of waiting for God, nor should they become careless in their waiting.

Gospel Acclamation

Leader: Alleluia, alleluia.

**All: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths;
all flesh shall see the salvation of God.**

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel - *Mark 1:1-8*

Read the Gospel aloud, rotating around the circle for each paragraph, and then continue on to the following sections.

Symbolism of the Desert

A central theme in today's Gospel reading is the desert. It is a place of deprivation, loneliness, and the stripping away of comforts. It is also the place of encountering either the devil or God. The Jews would have remembered the desert. It was a place of testing where their ancestors had wandered for 40 years after the Exodus from Egypt.

John the Baptist: An Advent Prophet

If a liturgical season were to have a patron saint, John the Baptist would be the patron of Advent. For centuries before John began his ministry, there had been no prophets to speak God's word to the people of Israel. John then appeared, preaching a baptism of repentance. This made a powerful impact. Repentance (Greek *metanoia*) means literally "a change of mind." Like the prophets of old, John was calling the people to a wholehearted return to the Lord: a deep, honest, interior conversion through acknowledging their sinful state and their need for forgiveness.

Baptism: A Call to Adult Faith

As a prophet, John baptized people. “Baptize” is a Greek word that means “to dip,” “to plunge,” or “to immerse” in water. Why dip people in water? The Jews were familiar with repeated ritual washings that symbolized interior purity. But John’s invitation to a one time immersion in the Jordan River was more than a cleansing. It was an adult rite of commitment to the faith of Judaism. In addition, the Jordan River had great symbolic significance for the Jews. After the Exodus and wandering in the desert, the people of Israel had entered the Promised Land by crossing the Jordan on dry land, led by Joshua (Joshua 3). It was a rite of passage from a former lifestyle of semi-nomadic wanderers to a new lifestyle of living in the land God had promised. John’s baptism was a call for adult Jews to reaffirm their identity as God’s People, come into the desert with God once more, and symbolically re-enter the Promised Land through the water of the Jordan River. A new Exodus was occurring—not from captivity in Egypt but from captivity to sin.

John the Baptist and the Prophet Elijah

The description of John has a resemblance to the prophet Elijah, who is similarly dressed in the Second Book of Kings (1:8). This is a signal that John is a new Elijah. The locusts and wild honey that he eats evokes the plagues in the Book of Exodus, where they represented God’s judgment on sin (the plague of locusts, Exodus 10:13-15) and God’s promises to his people of “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). The Baptist will not mediate plagues, but rather a repentant people who will return to God.

John the Baptist and Jesus

By interpreting John as another Elijah, the Gospel of Mark indicates John’s greatness as a prophet. Elijah passed on his gift as a prophet to a successor Elisha. So John the Baptist will be succeeded by another prophet: Jesus. In the Elijah-Elisha stories, however, Elijah is pictured as the greater prophet; here, John’s proclamation about Jesus reverses that order. John sees himself as only a predecessor of Jesus, not a successor. John says that he is not even worthy to perform the task of a slave for the one who is to come, to loosen the thongs of his sandals. In the Gospel of Mark, John the Baptist’s sole role is to point to Jesus and to highlight his unique status and role.

John contrasts his own baptism as an outward sign of repentance with the mightier One who will “baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” To baptize or drench in the Spirit evokes the biblical promise that in the last times God would “pour out” his Spirit like water (Joel 3:1-2; Zechariah 12:10), bringing about the transformation of heart that would finally enable God’s people to respond to him.

Joining Our Voices with John the Baptist

Like John, we must be voices crying out to prepare “the way of the Lord.” What we are doing with our lives now is critical, as critical as what John the Baptist was doing to announce Jesus’ first coming. The way we live our lives makes a difference since we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and already share in God’s divine life. Thus, we are to announce God’s reign to others. The role of John the Baptist is now transferred to us. The most effective announcement of and preparation for Christ’s coming is living our lives as committed to our baptismal vows. The “way of the Lord” begins right now with us.

For Reflection

1. Have you ever lost your way? What was it like? How did you find your way back?
2. How is God smoothing out the rough spots in your road of life to make your travel both possible and easier?
3. Describe what is meant by the phrase “the way of the Lord” when it’s used here in these readings. What does that “way” look like?
4. What do I find most challenging about living the “way of the Lord”? Who are the people in my life who model the “way of the Lord”?

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us prepare to meet God in everyone we meet this Advent.

All: May we recognize God in all of them.

Leader: Let us be prepared to forgive and reconcile with those who are alienated from us.

All: May God help us with the process.

Leader: Let us be prepared for and open to new revelations from God in our lives.

All: Amen.

Exchange a gesture of peace with all who are present.

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Journey through Advent

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

Third Sunday of Advent • December 17, 2017

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pause to spend a few moments in prayer as we prepare to listen to the Word of God contained in the Sacred Scriptures.

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: By signing ourselves with the cross, we make a commitment to live so others might see the goodness in us that is God's presence.

All: May all who see us make this sign be reminded of our commitment to the presence of God in our lives.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in the darkness.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in the world.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in our lives each day.

First Reading - *Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11*

Rotate around the circle, having each person read a paragraph aloud. For each reading, begin with the bullet points and then continue on to reading the passage from a Bible.

- ▶ In today's first reading, the prophet Isaiah proclaims his mission to the exiles returning to Jerusalem after decades of slavery in Babylon.
- ▶ In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus himself reads these words at the beginning of his ministry (Luke 4:16-20).

Psalm - *Luke 1:46-50, 53-54*

- ▶ The responsorial psalm chosen for this Sunday is Mary's canticle, the Magnificat. It is a psalm of praise for God having chosen her for the special role of being the mother of the Messiah and raising up the lowly.
- ▶ The passage is also a compilation of key themes garnered from the Biblical tradition of our ancestors in faith.

Second Reading - *1 Thessalonians 5:16-24*

- ▶ This reading is taken from the oldest surviving document of Christianity, Paul's first letter to the church at Thessalonica (composed around 51 AD).
- ▶ Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to rejoice. It gives us the traditional name for the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday (Latin for "rejoice").
- ▶ Paul wants the Christian community at Thessalonica, and all subsequent Christian communities, to rejoice in the joy of their faith and to pray without ceasing.

Gospel Acclamation

Leader: Alleluia, alleluia.

**All: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.**

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel - *John 1:6-8, 19-28*

Read the Gospel aloud, rotating around the circle for each paragraph, and then continue on to the following sections.

At the center of today's Gospel reading is the question "Who are you?" It is addressed to John the Baptist. This is not simply an inquiry about his name and occupation; it is a very concrete question: "Who are you in relation to the Messiah?" The first half of the Gospel reading clarifies the identity of the Baptist in relation to Jesus the Messiah, while the second half contains the Baptist's own testimony regarding that relationship.

Symbolism of Light

Throughout the Bible, light is the symbol for the very presence of God. In the Gospel of John, *Jesus* is the very presence of God. Jesus identifies himself: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows

me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (John 8:12, see 9:5). John the Baptist is described in terms of his relationship with Jesus the light. The Baptist is the divinely chosen witness to Jesus the light. He is not the light, but is to bear testimony to the light. He was a voice that cried out from the darkness, the voice that proclaimed the light was soon to come.

Testifying to the Light

John the Baptist’s mission was to “testify to the light”—Christ’s presence among people. Testimony to the light requires two things. First, it means to do good work (“bring glad tidings to the poor,” “heal the brokenhearted”). By these good works, we too bring the presence of Christ to others. Second, to “testify to the light” means to grow in relationship to Christ and with others.

Messianic Expectations

In the second section of today’s Gospel reading, John the Baptist—who is the witness for Jesus—is cross-examined by Jewish religious leaders from Jerusalem. His responses to their questions are all negative. He is not the Messiah; he is not Elijah; he is not the prophet promised long ago. All of the aforementioned are messianic figures, and John refuses to be identified with any of them. “Messiah,” means “anointed one.” It was a term used of several agents of God anointed for the service of the protection of Israel. Kings were anointed, as were priests and some prophets. The belief was that just as the olive oil used in anointing penetrated into the skin of the one anointed, so did God’s Spirit. In John the Baptist’s day, there were many different expectations of just who the Messiah would be.

Another popular notion held that Elijah, the prophet who had been taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot (see 2 Kings 2:11), would return at the end of time and usher in the reign of the Messiah. He would purify the priesthood (Malachi 3:2-4), restore the tribes of Israel, and mitigate the wrath of God. Much later tradition looked to Elijah as the forerunner companion of the Messiah. Finally, some people were looking for a prophet, sent by God, who, in the manner of Moses, would solve the people’s legal squabbles (see Deuteronomy 18:15-18).

Witnessing to Jesus

John the Baptist identifies himself. He is “the voice of one crying out in the desert” (see Isaiah 40:3). Taking a familiar text from Isaiah that recounts the leveling out of the wilderness so that the exiles might return home from Babylon, the author of John’s Gospel transforms it into a description of the Baptist’s own ministry. The original clearing, in order to make a way for God’s people to return to their land, now becomes an opening for God to come to the people.

John the Baptist’s role is preparatory; he explains this when the Jewish religious officials question his reason for baptizing. He further states that the one for whom he prepares is already in the midst of the people but they do not recognize him. This obscure individual, who is none other than Jesus himself, will far exceed anything the Baptist might be or do. John the Baptist is content to be the witness and herald of Jesus, and nothing more.

Our Own Witness to Jesus

We too are called to be witnesses to Jesus. This is a part of our Advent practice. We are the contemporary voices crying out in the wilderness, “prepare the way of the Lord.” This is how we live out our baptismal promises. At baptism, we were given a lighted candle. This is a symbol of Christ the Light of God, who enlightens our way and helps us overcome the darkness that can often show up as

we pilgrimage through life. This is the light that we are to keep shining.

For Reflection

1. What touched you most in today's Gospel reading?
2. Have you ever been a witness for anyone, at the signing of a document, at a marriage, or in a court of law? What was that like?
3. How do you bring glad tidings to the poor, heal the broken hearted, and witness to the light of Christ in your own life?

Closing Prayer

Leader: Light and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Jesus, you are the light of the world

All: Come, enlighten our way as we continue to pilgrimage through life.

Amen

Exchange a gesture of peace with all who are present.

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Journey through Advent

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

Fourth Sunday of Advent • December 24, 2017

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pause to spend a few moments in prayer as we prepare to listen to the Word of God contained in the Sacred Scriptures.

+ In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader: By signing ourselves with the cross, we make a commitment to live so others might see the goodness in us that is God's presence.

All: May all who see us make this sign be reminded of our commitment to the presence of God in our lives.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in the darkness.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in the world.

Leader: Christ be our light.

All: Shine in our lives each day.

First Reading - *2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16*

Rotate around the circle, having each person read a paragraph aloud. For each reading, begin with the bullet points and then continue on to reading the passage from a Bible.

- ▶ This reading consists of two sections: an account of David's desire to construct a temple suitable for the God of Israel, and God's plan to build a dynasty (a house) of David's descendants and to establish the Davidic covenant.
- ▶ This passage also gave rise to the belief that the messiah would come from the dynasty of David.

Psalm - *Psalm 89: 2-5, 27, 29*

- ▶ This royal psalm praises God's faithfulness to the promises made to David. It describes the bond between God and David as transcending history.

Second Reading - *Romans 16:25-27*

- ▶ This passage is Paul's closing benediction (blessing) in his Epistle to the Romans, giving glory to God through Jesus Christ.

Gospel Acclamation

Leader: Alleluia, alleluia

All: Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel - *Luke 1:26-38*

The annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel that she is to be the mother of Jesus is found only in the Gospel of Luke. It depicts Mary in a mood of celebration as a hearer and doer of God's word. The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a young, unlettered woman in Nazareth, a poor village in the oppressed region of Galilee. The heavenly messenger announces God's desire that Mary bear a child who will be great: the Messiah, the holy son of God. Assured that the spirit will empower and protect her, she gives her free consent, believing that nothing is impossible with God.

With God We Have No Fear

The angel greets Mary, "Hail Full of Grace! The Lord is with you." Mary is blessed because God has chosen her for God's salvific plan. Mary is blessed because she heard the word of God and kept it. The angel confirms this, calling her "full of grace." She is favored to conceive the son of God. "The Lord is with you" is a frequent expression throughout Sacred Scripture for God's assurance. The point being, no matter what obstacles Mary faces, God's indwelling in her will be realized. Mary was confused by what the angel said. She is reassured and told by the angel not to fear. She will conceive and give birth to a son and give him a divinely chosen name, Jesus (which means "God saves"). We, too, like Mary are called to hear the word of God to keep it and to have no fear.

Surprised By God's Activity

Mary's puzzled response to the angel ("How can this be?") and her insistence that she has had no sexual relations with a man have a variety of purposes in the Gospel of Luke. It confirms she is a

virgin; it expresses wonder at something that is humanly impossible; and it moves the dialogue to the next stage of revelation about who the child will be.

Gabriel tells Mary that the “Holy Spirit” and the “power of the most high” will come upon her. These are parallel expressions of God’s power. The Spirit of God that moved over the waters to bring creation from the abyss (Genesis 1:2) now comes upon Mary to bring forth a new creation from her womb. Just as the cloud of God’s presence overshadows the tabernacle in the desert and the glory of God filled it (Exodus 40:35), so too is Mary overshadowed. God’s overshadowing presence fills the womb of Mary. Mary becomes a tabernacle of God’s presence dwelling with God’s people. She is the new ark of the covenant in whose womb dwells Jesus, the incarnate presence of God. The child to be born will be called “Son of God.” The angel provides Mary with a sign to confirm her own pregnancy by telling her that Elizabeth, her relative, is pregnant: “For nothing will be impossible with God” (1:37).

Mary’s response: “May it be done to me according to your word” flows from both her trusting faith and forthright response to God’s activity in her life. She is the ideal disciple, a woman who has said “yes” to God’s surprising activity in her life.

At the Center of the Story Is God’s Holy Breath/Holy Spirit

At the center of the story lies a powerful declaration of the relationship between this peasant woman and the Spirit of God. When Mary objects, “How can this be?” the angel replies, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the most high will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, son of God.” There are a variety of very important statements here.

First, “the Holy Spirit” (in Greek, *hagios pneuma*) means “holy breath,” the same breath that God breathed into the clay when creating humankind (Genesis 2:6). Now this breath of God will create new life in Mary’s womb.

The second is “come upon.” In Greek, it literally signifies the coming and going of a person or thing. Carrying the notion of onrushing, overpowering vitality, the verb “come upon” tells of the divine presence on the move, creating something new. This is Luke’s way of saying that something new is about to happen through the decisive power of God.

Third, the other verb is “overshadow.” In Greek it literally means to cast a shadow on something. In the Middle East, where the sun is so strong it could fry eggs, the cooling shadow of a little tree or even the wall of a building is much appreciated. So the Spirit of God “overshadowing” has the positive meaning of powerful, divine protection over the person.

The point of the Spirit’s coming upon and overshadowing Mary is to place this woman in deep, attentive relation to the Spirit of God. We do not have access to Mary’s interior personal religious experience, but can simply say that by the power of the Spirit she encountered the mystery of the living God. We, like Mary, are challenged to be open to God’s holy breath coming upon us, for it is the oxygen we need to live our faith.

Mary’s Consent

All of this takes place as a result of God’s free initiative. Hearing the divine call, Mary decides to say yes. Casting her lot with the future, she responds with courage and, as the next scene of the visitation shows, with joy and prophecy to this unexpected call: “And Mary said, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.’”

Annunciation as a Faith Event

The annunciation is a faith event. Dramatically, this poor, unconventional, teenaged peasant woman's free and autonomous answer to God opens a new chapter in the history of God with the world. It is Mary's faith that makes possible God's entrance into the world, in the sense that henceforth God will be at home in the flesh of humans. Listening to the Spirit that comes upon her, Mary walks by faith in the integrity of her own person. And this is exactly what we are all called to do as disciples. We walk by faith, not by sight.

All Things Are Possible With God

Gabriel's departing words ring with assurance: "Nothing will be impossible for God." They echo the wonder of Sarah: "Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14) and Jesus' later declaration: "What is impossible for mortals is possible for God" (Luke 18:27). A barren woman can bear a child. A virgin can conceive. The Lord can enter into human history as a child. From a tomb can come a resurrection, and the Holy Spirit can empower a church for its worldwide mission. It is a promise in the future tense, providing hope for the rest of Advent and forever.

For Reflection

1. How do you respond to God's activity in your life? Have you ever been surprised by God?
2. How has the Spirit of God "rushed" upon you?
3. Do you believe that nothing is impossible for God? If so, how does that affect your life?
4. Mary is presented as a model disciple. How can she help you to be a disciple of Jesus, one who hears the word of God and keeps it?

Closing Prayer

Leader: Come and visit us in peace Lord.

All: And we will rejoice with hearts renewed.

Leader: Come and visit us in our families Lord.

All: And we will rejoice with hearts renewed.

Leader: Come and visit us in our co-workers Lord.

All: And we will rejoice with hearts renewed.

Exchange a gesture of peace with all who are present.

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