

*Living***Faith**

ADVENT

DAILY CATHOLIC DEVOTIONS

**Creative
Communications
Sample**



INTRODUCTION

Did you ever have the feeling after a long car ride that you were still moving? Or, perhaps when you were a child, after a day of swimming in the ocean, did you lie in bed and feel as if you were still being tossed around by the waves? The sensation lingers long after the event. But, invariably, it's gone the next day.

Intense spiritual experiences have similar “echoes”—an especially meaningful Mass, praying the Stations of the Cross, maybe a retreat. All can leave a brief but beautiful impression. And then the everyday takes hold and the feeling wears off.

My hope is that, by praying more intently this Advent, by carving out quiet time to prepare to welcome our Savior at Christmastime, you will become a passenger on God's car ride or swim in his waters. May the writings and Scripture verses on the following pages echo in your heart and carry you through a faith-filled, joyful Advent journey.

TERENCE HEGARTY, EDITOR

Hope in Winter

*In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David
a just shoot.* JEREMIAH 33:15

As a child, I helped my father plant seeds in his makeshift basement greenhouse, amazed that within a very few days, sprouts of future tomato and pepper plants would appear—small signs of hope in the dead of winter.

God could have chosen to become flesh and dwell among us in any form, but chose to appear as a “shoot of Jesse,” a small sign of life, an infant struggling for a place in the world. In this child we find, not a full-blown expression of God, but instead, a tiny sign of hope for our life and salvation. We find a reminder that we, too, start off small but grow into the being God created us to be. The infant Jesus, swaddled in rags and lying in a manger, is indeed our hope in bleak midwinter.

*God, thank you for sending Jesus as the smallest of gifts with
immense promise and power.*

~ STEVE GIVENS

Magnifying Light

*O house of Jacob, come,
let us walk in the light of the LORD!* ISAIAH 2:5

Each week of this preparatory season, we light another candle against the darkness. My husband and I have kept the ritual of the Advent wreath all 45 years of our marriage. By this time, we have “prayed out” several versions of our wreath. As newlyweds, we began with a plywood disk with plastic poinsettias glued to it. One luxurious year, there were fresh pine boughs; another version flounced a violet velvet ribbon. Whatever the design of the wreath, there were always four beautiful candles! The children loved the pink candle that meant we were “almost there.” No matter the tasks to be done in what always seemed to be too little time, the stretched budget, the drippy noses and the winter boots puddling on the kitchen floor, each week, the light radiantly increased. As we prayed and loved and tried to live a faithful family life, the light of the Lord became ever more apparent to us.

This Advent, make a simple wreath, light your candles and walk in the magnifying light of Christ!

~ JENNIFER CHRIST

The Present and the Presence

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. LUKE 10:23

A friend recently described a trip to the mailbox with her two-year-old granddaughter as a spiritual experience. My friend has a packed schedule and is always in a hurry. But on this particular day, she decided that instead of rushing, she would make a conscious effort to slow her pace to that of a child. Afterward, she realized how much she enjoyed being in that moment and not thinking of what she had to do next. She said that, then and there, she felt the presence of God.

We often look for God in dramatic events. But the truth is, God is present where love is present. The problem for most of us, however, is that *we* are not present. In this busy season, we are invited to make a space in our schedule to experience God's Spirit within and around us.

~ TERRI MIFEK

All We Need

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. PSALM 23:1

Psalm 23 comforts us with the image of God as our shepherd, especially during times of trouble or grief. During Advent, this psalm serves to remind us that God has already provided everything we need despite what the holiday culture tells us. Like a shepherd guarding and feeding each lamb, God's presence is always with us, protecting us from harm. When we choose to wander away, God searches for us and gently brings us back.

Before we have even the first glimmer of what we need, our Shepherd has already provided it in every minute of our lives. God even had a plan of salvation for us from the beginning, in the Word, which became flesh and lives with us. Advent calls us to remember and to prepare our hearts to be grateful for the birth of Jesus. Where is Christ most present in your life this day?

~ DEBORAH A. MEISTER

A Rock-Solid Faith

Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ...And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. MATTHEW 7:24, 26

Too often, Advent is simply a time filled with preparations and the busyness of Christmas. Advent could also be a good time to take a look at our faith foundation. Is it strong, vital, full of energy and enthusiasm, rock solid? Or has it gone a bit mushy, feeling as if the structure is teetering on sandy soil? It's not easy during the seasonal rush for a faith checkup. But doing so can make your Advent a much more rewarding time, even if you might forget a present or two. So maybe right now, a few weeks before Christmas, set aside some time for examining where you are faithwise. Check your parish bulletin for a prayer service. There may also be opportunities for volunteering. And Advent reconciliation services are always a good way to get closer to God. It all promises to make your Advent something that lasts beyond the season.

~ PAUL PENNICK

Answering the Longing

*The lowly will ever find joy in the LORD,
and the poor rejoice...* ISAIAH 29:19

Isaiah echoes the cry of every soul that has felt small and of no account. Our hurts and fears teach us to hide our inner longing, but it's there all the same. Now our hidden hope is awakened—can it be met? Or, will we be yet again disappointed?

The answer comes clear as a ringing bell on a still morning. But not until we hear the gospel. Jesus answers the cry of two blind people who recognize Jesus' step, touch, voice. We do, too, because they are the hidden truth of our longing. Jesus fulfills not only the ancient prophecy of Israel, but the yearning for healing and freedom that's at the heart of us all.

This is the light of Advent. This is the starlight that the Magi recognize, the angels' song the shepherds hear, the innocent baby who lies in the lowly place within each of us. Advent is given to help wake us to the One among us.

Jesus, Son of David, have pity on us!

~ MARY MARROCCO

Showing Us How

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. LUKE 1:29

So often in our lives, we cannot comprehend what has happened. We are bewildered when a friend, who's always been very healthy, says that they have cancer. We don't understand how a relationship fell apart. We ask God why a terrible tragedy couldn't have been avoided.

Today, we hear that Mary experienced bewilderment. But she also felt comfortable enough to express it: "How can this be..." (verse 34). Though she couldn't grasp what was happening, she had faith enough to go along with God's plan.

We strive to wrap our mind around things because we want to feel that we are in charge of our own destiny. Yet God regularly reminds us that we are not. With faith, we move forward, not knowing how things will unfold. We may still be scared and bewildered, as Mary was. But we can trust in God. Mary has already shown us how.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.

~ TERENCE HEGARTY

The evergreen Advent wreath symbolizes the eternal life that God offers us through his son, Jesus, who came to earth and lived among us as a humble servant. During these weeks, even as we reflect and repent, we wait in joyful hope for our savior to arrive. Allow *Living Faith Advent* to accompany you as you approach Christmas. The daily enrichment, available through Advent-themed devotions written by the authors of the popular *Living Faith Daily Catholic Devotions* magazine, will guide you to a greater appreciation of the Light of the World whom we welcome on Christmas Day.

THIS BOOK, ALONG WITH MANY OTHER CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE PARISH PRODUCTS, IS AVAILABLE ON **amazon**kindle AND **nook**[®]

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible with Revised New Testament* © 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC, and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All rights reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Living Faith Advent. Design by Jeff McCall. Cover image: Shutterstock. © 2018 Creative Communications for the Parish, a division of Bayard, Inc., 1564 Fencorp Dr., Fenton, MO 63026. 800-325-9414. www.creativecommunications.com. All rights reserved.

LFA1