

*Living***Faith**

ADVENT

DAILY CATHOLIC DEVOTIONS

INTRODUCTION

In your hands you are holding a tremendously powerful resource. I don't say that to be braggadocios. It is not inherently powerful because of what I did to get it produced, what the authors wrote or how the design appears. While all of that was necessary, the real opportunity for this work to stir your soul comes from something infinitely more powerful—the Word of God.

The authors, as well as I, have created original writings in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. We were inspired by Scripture, as I hope that you also will be. This booklet is powerful because it is the result of both human and divine efforts, something we can also celebrate on Christmas Day—the arrival of Jesus, the divine who humbled himself to live among us humans and sacrifice himself for our salvation.

If you are open to allowing God's word to enter your heart as part of your Advent preparations, then you will experience that tremendous power.

I wish you a faith-filled, joyful Advent.

TERENCE HEGARTY, EDITOR

Happy New Year!

Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Happy New Year! Yes, today is the first day of a new liturgical year! If you are looking for a good new year's resolution, today's readings suggest several. First, Isaiah describes nations renouncing war by beating their swords into plows. How might we disarm ourselves this Advent? We could begin by renouncing harsh and unkind words. We could turn complaining into thanksgiving.

Today's second reading reminds us that now is the hour. Is there anything we have been putting off that we could do this Advent? Perhaps we might extend forgiveness to someone or connect with a distant loved one. We are also told to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 13:14). How might we don Jesus' gentleness, approachability and prayerfulness?

And finally, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells us to "stay awake" (verse 42) and "be prepared" (verse 44). A grace to pray for: "*Jesus, don't let me sleepwalk through life.*" Being attentive to what is happening inside of us and around us will prepare us to celebrate Jesus' coming with great rejoicing!

~ SR. MELANNIE SVOBODA, S.N.D.

Inviting Jesus into the Deep

Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed.

MATTHEW 8:8

In Jesus' time, a centurion might have commanded anywhere from 100 to 1,000 men. He would have been well-connected and respected. And yet, the centurion in today's story considered his home unworthy of the carpenter from Nazareth. When the centurion says that Jesus might only say the word and his servant will be healed, he acknowledges that Jesus' authority is beyond any human powers, beyond even the most potent earthly authorities.

When we repeat this centurion's words in Mass, we are invited to consider ourselves as houses, shelters of the living God. Every paralyzed or problematic symptom we express, every dysfunction in our soul, began as solution to our inner woundedness. Having a drink, zoning out on technology, reacting angrily when I'm stressed might subdue problems—until it becomes the problem. Eventually it will cease to be productive.

We invite Jesus to look in and see the deep root, the deeper cause, that needs healing.

~ ELIZABETH DUFFY

Forgiveness and Love

*Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
The calf and the young lion shall browse together,
with a little child to guide them.* ISAIAH 11:6

Any person suffers from estrangement at one point or another. We can grow apart from those we once knew as friends, lovers, spouses and family. Misunderstandings, resentments or the simple passage of time can take a toll on the relationships. Advent arrives each year with a promise from God that reconciliation for all will come. It is a hope that we hold in our hearts that there will come a day when estrangement will give way to peaceful coexistence. Until that day comes, we are asked to offer forgiveness to those estranged from us, with the hope that a new beginning may take place. If forgiveness is beyond our ability to give, we can ask that it might be given to us so that we can make a gift of it to those we once loved and seek to love again.

~ FR. JAMES STEPHEN BEHRENS, O.C.S.O.

'How Many Loaves Do You Have?'

Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" "Seven," they replied, "and a few fish." MATTHEW 15:34

This passage from today's gospel has intrigued me since my pigtail days. As a child, I was fascinated by how Jesus fed so many with so little ... a real miracle! As a young adult, the premise was put to me that perhaps the *real* miracle was that, among the multitudes, there were others who had brought baskets of food. Following the example Jesus gave them, they had shared to the point where the baskets were overflowing.

Much later in my life, I found myself lamenting the fact that it was hard at times to meet the needs of our family. *How could I possibly feed (or help) thousands?* I thought. Suddenly, it came to me—Jesus gave them a fish sandwich, not a four-course meal! Use the gifts you have and miracles will happen. As Mother Teresa (St. Teresa of Calcutta) said, "If you can't feed one hundred people, feed one."

Gracious God, give me the mindset that the little I might be able to do, or give, is more than had I not done or given anything.

~ JUDY SCHUENEMAN

Rock-solid Faith

The rain fell, the floods came, and the wind blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. MATTHEW 7:25

If you have lived long enough, you know that there are seasons in life marked by some pretty serious storms. Illness, accidents, divorce, loss, grief, financial strife, relationship drama and trauma. Experiences like these can feel like torrential rain, heavy flooding, jagged streaks of lightning or howling wind.

But if life is the storm raging outside, faith is the house where we hunker down and wait for it to pass.

This is why our foundation is so important. The middle of a storm is not the time to pour cement or to lament the fact that our foundation is faulty. The time to pay attention is now. Let's use ordinary times to prepare for the inevitable extraordinary ones. Let's use Advent as a real season of preparation. Advent is not just a chance to prepare for Christmas, it's an opportunity to fortify the foundation of our faith so that we are set solidly on rock, so that we will not collapse when a storm hits.

~ KRISTIN ARMSTRONG

In these weeks leading up to Christmas, the Church asks us to reflect and repent as we wait in joyful hope for our Savior to arrive. Featuring Advent-themed devotions written by the authors of the popular *Living Faith Daily Catholic Devotions* magazine, *Living Faith Advent* serves as a daily aid, an oasis from the commercialism and busyness of the season. In addition to preparing gifts for others, give yourself the gift of being better able to welcome our newborn Savior on Christmas Day.

THIS BOOK, ALONG WITH MANY OTHER CREATIVE COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE PARISH PRODUCTS, IS AVAILABLE ON **amazon**kindle AND **nook**^{by Barnes & Noble}

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