

*Living***Faith**

# ADVENT



DAILY CATHOLIC DEVOTIONS

## INTRODUCTION

When we think of Advent, we invariably consider the struggle between the busyness of the season and the holiness that we are called to foster. They seem contradictory. But with a little effort, our busyness and holiness can peacefully coexist. We don't have to make a simple binary choice. Consider today's technology. At its core, it operates using binary language: a two-number system made up of only zeros and ones. A pattern of these digits becomes code that allows our technology to operate.

With this booklet as your aid, I encourage you to take just a little time each day to blend the holy with the busy. With the Scripture, prayers and reflections on the following pages, I hope you will find that, even if you become burdened in your "everyday world," God is with you in all things. Don't be afraid to be busy—busy growing holy!

May you see the holy in your busyness this Advent season and beyond.

TERENCE HEGARTY, EDITOR

## Looking Forward

*God is faithful...* 1 CORINTHIANS 1:9

Today begins the holy season of Advent and another time of resolutions. The ones we made in January have perhaps fizzled out or have even been forgotten. Perhaps, with reflection, we may be asking ourselves, *what was I thinking?* In making new resolutions, we may have decided that we will put a hush in the rush of Advent and not succumb to the hustle and bustle of Christmas.

Make no mistake. Advent resolutions are good and do give us a focus. But we likely realize that they will give way to the demands of Christmas preparations—sending cards, baking cookies, shopping and wrapping presents.

Advent is not a time for discouragement or pious thoughts of our expected fidelity. God alone is faithful. God asks that, each day, we begin again. Perhaps this is the true message of Advent. Both Mary and Joseph had to lean on God. With their careful plans shattered, they began again. They did not look back, only forward, leaning on the absolute belief in God's faithfulness. Can we do the same?

~ SR. BRIDGET HAASE, O.S.U.

## Belief in Our Hearts

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*For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.* ROMANS 10:10

During Advent, the Church encourages us to take part in the sacrament of reconciliation. Parishes typically set aside extra days for reconciliation. Along with gift buying, decorating our homes and celebrating with our families, Christmastime can and should be a time for spiritual renewal. It can be a time to look at those habits and actions of ours that lead us away from God, habits or actions that hurt our families, our faith community, ourselves. Making amends and seeking forgiveness through reconciliation can bring about a necessary renewal of our faith, a commitment to do better, a desire to change. At this early stage of Advent, there is time to “confess with the mouth” and foster belief in our hearts to strengthen our resolve to do better.

~ PAUL PENNICK

## Forgiveness and Love

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*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

When we don't live up to the good we want to do, we can get discouraged and down on ourselves. We try to be better, only to discover that we often can't get out of the trap. Who can help us, as Paul cries out (Romans 7:24)? God rescues the poor and needy when we cry out, answers today's psalm.

Isaiah's arresting image of the wolf as guest of the lamb, the calf and lion browsing together, shows how the world of sin can trick us. We think it's natural that wolf and lamb, leopard and goat, cannot cohabit; that humans are willfully destructive. Isaiah urges us to risk seeing things differently—things as they really are, where right relationship and mutual delight are the order of the day. The shoot sprung from Jesse will reveal and heal all relationships. Unlike Isaiah, we don't need to wait for this fulfillment; we know it in Christ, whose coming we both prepare for and celebrate.

~ MARY MARROCCO

## A God Who Does Not Abandon

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*Even though I walk in the dark valley*

*I fear no evil; for you are at my side...* PSALM 23:4

In December 2010, I was privileged to be part of a delegation to El Salvador in observance of the anniversary of the martyrdom of four Maryknoll Sisters on this day in 1980. Today's readings are so appropriate as we remember the witness of these missionary women whose refusal to abandon the poor ultimately led to their death. They lived with a deep awareness of the consequences of identifying with their neighbors and also a profound trust in the Good Shepherd who does not abandon.

There are many ways to walk in the shadow of death. We may be facing a disturbing diagnosis, the loss of a cherished relationship, an overwhelming sense of failure, our own brokenness. As with these holy women, the tender and faithful shepherd walks with us to comfort and console.

~ SR. CHRIS KOELLHOFFER, I.H.M.

## It's All in the Preparation

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*Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.*

MATTHEW 7:24

Whenever we host a birthday celebration for someone we love, we spend a significant amount of time on the preparations. Part of those preparations might include the choosing of an appropriate gift. What could this mean for us as we prepare to celebrate the birthday of Jesus? What kind of Advent preparations could we make? We wouldn't have to be overly concerned with physical preparations, but spiritual ones would be very important.

As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth, we could ask ourselves how deeply we have followed Jesus' words and how willingly we have shared his love.

Our decision to follow Jesus ever more faithfully would be our gift to him. Our gratitude for the help we received in the painful times of our life could be a part of the gift too. These thoughts could prepare us to celebrate Christ's birth with greater gratitude and joy.

*Lord, help me to take the time to prepare.*

~ FR. KENNETH E. GRABNER, C.S.C.

Being able to celebrate Advent in a prayerful manner is a great blessing. Putting aside our everyday stresses allows us to focus on the impending arrival of our Savior.

In these weeks leading up to Christmas, allow the Advent-themed devotions, written by authors of the popular *Living Faith Daily Catholic Devotions* magazine, to balance the busyness of the season with prayer and reflection. Ultimately, with the help of this booklet, we can prepare properly, even if it's just by dedicating a few minutes each day.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....

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