

Daily Devotions  
*for Advent*

# Prepare Him Room



Fr. Chi Ai Nguyen, A.A.

# An Introduction: Plenty of Room for You

Spencer, a seven-year-old boy, was very happy to participate in a Nativity play that took place in his parish church. As the innkeeper, Spencer was assigned to send Mary and Joseph away when they requested a room in the inn. For that, he needed to say this sentence three times to them: “Go away, there’s no room for you here.” Spencer splendidly played his role. But after repeating that sentence for the third time, he started to feel very sad. When Joseph and Mary were about to go away, he said something unforeseen in the script: “Wait! There’s no room for you here, but there’s plenty of room in my parents’ house. Their house is on the left side of the church.”

Telling stories may have unintended effects. We often tell sad stories to recognize the errors of the past and to find better solutions for the present. In the Bible, there are many sad and dark stories. It’s by acknowledging our darkness and our inability to scatter it by ourselves that we are more willing to let the light of God illumine our lives.

An Advent challenge: Allow the brokenness of our world and of our relationships to open a space through which God’s grace enters our lives.

One thing is certain: The Word of God became a human being to share in our human condition, to transform us from within and to lift us up to God. As we make our Advent journey, we hope to grow in grace and say: There’s plenty of room for God in our hearts and homes.

Let’s prepare for his coming. Let’s give God room to work in us.

*Fr. Chi Ai Nguyen, A.A.*

**FSC  
Badge**

# Expectedly Unexpected

...at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.

**MATTHEW 24:44**

**W**hen I was a student, I was convinced that an unannounced exam wouldn't be possible. For me, it was impossible for a professor to announce that there would be an unexpected exam on one day during the following week. Suppose that the exam didn't take place on Thursday. There wouldn't be an unexpected exam on Friday because Friday was the only day of the week that remained. And so, it wouldn't be possible to have an unexpected exam on Friday. With the same reasoning, I considered that if the exam didn't take place on Wednesday, the exam on Thursday would not be unexpected because it was already impossible to have an unexpected exam on Friday. By following the same logic, I eliminated by turns Wednesday, Tuesday and Monday. Finally, I was able to affirm that an unexpected exam could never take place!

Very often, we want to believe that unexpected things are impossible. But the truth is they exist whether we like them or not. What can we do, then? Study every day as if the finals will take place the next day. Live our lives as if something important will happen to us very soon. Cultivate our relationship with God so that our encounter with him is always an occasion for joy.

**O Lord, help us to expect the unexpected.**

*Daily Practice: Open the door of my heart so that Jesus can come at any moment.*

Monday of the First Week of Advent

# Two Good Centurions

...in no one in Israel have I found such faith.

**MATTHEW 8:10**

**I**n June 2023, I had the opportunity to participate in an international meeting of my community in Rome. During 25 days, 43 Assumptionists from different countries shared with one another the joys, hopes and challenges of their mission at the service of the Church. One key element of the final document produced by the group is the call to fraternity without borders. “As part of the Assumptionist way of being in the Church, [fraternity] invites us to accompany and work with the people of God. It urges us to proclaim a God who makes of us brothers and sisters. It extends to ecumenical dialogue, where we desire unity among the Churches. Recognizing each other as brothers and sisters is already a first step towards unity. Interreligious dialogue, crucial to peace, is a way of recognizing the believer of another religion as a brother in humanity.”

In today's Gospel, Jesus admires the faith of someone who doesn't share his convictions and doesn't go to the same worship place. He heals the servant of the centurion from a distance because of the great faith of the petitioner. This good centurion reminds us of another good one at the end of Mark's Gospel (see Mark 15:39). There, a centurion recognizes the crucified Jesus as the true Son of God. His profession of faith remains memorable for many generations.

**Merciful Father, help us to admire the faith of those who don't share our convictions.**

*Daily Practice: Reflect on the common humanity through which all human beings become brothers and sisters to one another.*

Tuesday of the First Week of Advent

# Looking Upon Others With a Favorable Eye

Blessed are the eyes that see what you see.

**LUKE 10:23**

**H**ave you ever looked at the reverse of a tapestry? It appears ugly with its tangled threads. But when you look at the right side of the tapestry, everything becomes beautiful. It's from this side that God looks at us and our stories. Out of our failures and brokenness, God made something new and magnificent. He draws straight with crooked lines. He brings out the best in us. He joins us where we are to lead us to where we should be.

Jesus invites us to see the good of others with a favorable eye. To understand his message, let's take a look at the context of today's Gospel. The disciples come back from their mission. They rejoice because the demons were subjected to Jesus' name. Jesus tells them to rejoice rather because their names are written in heaven. Instead of focusing on his own name by which Satan falls, Jesus orients his regard towards the good of his disciples, whose names are written in God's heart. It's in the same movement of joy that Jesus praises the Father for the gift of knowledge and revelation given to the humble of heart. For Jesus, seeing God revealing himself through his Son in the joy of the Holy Spirit is a blessedness for the eyes. This blessedness changes our outlook on things and people forever.

**Heavenly Father, we give thanks to you for having written our names in your heart.**

*Daily Practice: See things and people through Jesus' eyes.*

Wednesday of the First Week of Advent

# Breaking the Bread

[Jesus] ...broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples...

**MATTHEW 15:36**

**A**t the end of the Mass, instead of saying, “Go forth, the Mass is ended,” a certain priest I knew used to say, “Go forth, the Mass is about to start.” By that he meant the Eucharist is really beginning when we, having received the body of Christ, become one body with everyone else, even with those who do not participate in the Mass.

To share something like bread with others, we need to divide it. In the Gospel from where today’s verse is taken, there were seven loaves to start, but the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves did not describe the disciples putting a loaf into each hand. Rather, Jesus gave everyone not a whole loaf but a broken piece of bread. People were satisfied, but there’s still some lack suggested by the gesture of donation itself. It’s that there’s still a place for God and for others. While the broken pieces of bread nourish people, in a spiritual sense, they also foster a hunger for unity among humankind.

After the miraculous meal, people picked up not the seven loaves that the disciples had at the beginning but only the fragments leftover.

In a certain sense, the Eucharist calls us to become broken pieces of bread for the life of the world. For mutual sharing is an important and vital mission for recipients of the Eucharist.

**O merciful God, help us live in the world—eucharistically—for you and for others.**

*Daily Practice: At the end of each Mass, may I say to myself, “The Mass is about to start.”*

Thursday of the First Week of Advent

# Listening Without the Hearing Aid

Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man...

**MATTHEW 7:24**

**I** know an elderly priest who, whenever he hears confessions, removes his hearing aid! (Don't misunderstand his intention. He simply doesn't need the hearing aid when he's sitting near to people.)

Listening to others is difficult. Listening with the intention of being changed is even more difficult. One can listen to others while believing that one's own opinion is better anyway. In that case, listening doesn't change anything. It only confirms the listener's point of view.

However, it is possible for one to become a true listener. One must put aside personal opinions to have a sincere dialogue. Little by little, one enters into the experience of the other. He or she is willing to be transformed by what is being said and shared. And so, listening with an open mind becomes an occasion of growth.

Some background about today's verse: Before teaching his disciples to be good listeners, Jesus leads them to an openness of mind and heart. A good disciple is not someone who says just what he wants to say even if it's true. It's right and just to call Jesus "Lord," but it isn't enough. A good disciple is someone who does the will of the Father, who dwells in heaven.

**Lord, help us listen to one another with the ears of our hearts.**

*Daily Practice: Put off any form of prejudice when listening to another.*



An Advent challenge: What if the brokenness of our world, and in our lives, opens a space through which God's grace enters in? Through stories and reflections, prayers and daily practices, Fr. Chi Ai Nguyen, Provincial of the Augustinians of the Assumption, reminds us that the Word of God became a human being to share in our human condition, to transform us from within and to lift us up to God. As we make our Advent journey, let us give God room to work in us.



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