

ADVENT 2017: READINGS

Introduction:

“Christian hope is knowing that whatever dark or frightening things are going on in one’s life, God is there offering protection and light.” Pope Francis

You can use the following readings and prayers in any order or combination over the days of Advent.

Reading 1A

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you.'

Reading 2A

Mary had to trust in the words of the Angel Gabriel and was a woman of hope because God was with her. Pope Francis tells us that: “Hope does not come with power or wealth, but with trusting in God.

It is knowing that God, with his love, walks with us. I hope because God is alongside me. And this is something all of us can say. I have hope because God walks with me, he walks alongside me and holds my hand.” (Pope Francis)

Prayer

Help us Lord to trust you like Mary did

RESPONSE:

God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us
and we shall be saved

Help us to be messengers of joy like the Angel
Gabriel was to Mary

RESPONSE:

God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us
and we shall be saved

Jesus, help us to know that you are right beside me

RESPONSE:

God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us
and we shall be saved

Lord, I give you my hand today and offer you my
life. Help me to have hope even when things are
difficult

RESPONSE:

God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us
and we shall be saved

Preparation for Christmas

Jesus help us to have more hope in you. Our way of preparing ourselves for Christmas today is to say this prayer when we feel the need for God’s help. Try to say it today at least once and through the rest of Advent.

JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU

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Reading 1B

She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour.

Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus.

Reading 2B

Pope Francis tells us that, “the key players in the Christmas story prove that history is not made by the powerful, but by God together with his little ones, those small and simple people whom we find around Jesus, who is about to be born: Zachariah and Elizabeth, who are old and marked by sterility; Mary, the young virgin engaged to Joseph; the shepherds, who were despised and counted for nothing. They had hope, and they turned the dark and twisted paths of life around them into a highway on which to walk toward the glory of the Lord.”

Prayer:

The Angel Gabriel told Mary not to be afraid. Sometimes, fear overwhelms us and we too must hear the words spoken to Mary. Now in a moment of silence, let us offer to God any dark or frightening things that are going on in our own lives or in the world....

“God is there offering protection and light... [and] leads his people to the path of liberation and salvation.” (Pope Francis).

Preparation for Christmas

Look around you at the people you see every day. Is there someone who needs help? Someone who looks upset or stressed? Is there a story in the news where people are afraid? Is there someone in your family experiencing the darkness of illness, depression or broken relationships? To prepare for the great feast of Christmas, today, spend a few minutes praying for that person. If you can help them in any way then resolve to do so.

Reading 1C: Luke 1: 31-33

You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.

Reading 2C

The Angel Gabriel brought God's message to Mary.

Mary said yes to the action of the Holy Spirit in her which meant that Jesus came into the world.

Now we will hear about sisters who bring God's message to those who need to hear it most and bring Jesus to those they serve.

Aid to the Church in Need is helping thousands of Sisters as they minister to the faithful around the world. They work to ensure that the faithful receive the Word of God as well as much-needed health care and education.

ACN's "Gifts of Faith" offerings detail the support given to religious Sisters around the world including Sisters of Servants of the Infant Jesus who run orphanages and nurseries in their convents in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Also, the Sisters of Jesus and Mary in Lahore, Pakistan are helping young women who have fled persecution by giving them medical care and practical training.

Prayer (for Dec 6th)

Today is the feast of St Nicholas. St. Nicholas was a Christian bishop who helped the needy. After his death, the legend of his gift-giving grew. Let us pray for all those sisters, missionaries, priests and volunteers who give their lives as a gift to God. Lord may you strengthen them and help them as they serve you by loving the poor and needy. We pray especially for the selfless Sisters around the world who continue to bring the love of Christ to those who have been abandoned. Lord God, help us to be sincere as we dedicate ourselves to you and to service within Your Kingdom.

Preparation for Christmas

Find out more about the work of Aid to the Church in Need at <https://acnuk.org/our-campaigns/>

Thursday Reading 1D

“He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.”

Mary said to the angel, “But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?”

The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God.”

Thursday Reading 2D: St John Paul II

“My hope is that the Good News of Christ will enter every home and help families to rediscover that only in Christ can man find salvation. In him it is possible to find the interior peace, hope and strength necessary to face life's various situations each day, even those most onerous and difficult. In the letter accompanying the Gospel, I recalled that Jesus is not a figure of the past. He is the Word of God who even today continues to shed light on man's path; his actions are the expression of the Father's love for every human being.”

(<https://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/J961215.HTM>)

Thursday Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to understand more fully that you are not a figure from the past. Help me to understand the depths of your love for me and allow you to light up my pathway through life. Mary was planning to marry Joseph when the Angel appeared to her and from that day her life changed beyond anything she could have imagined. Help us to allow the Holy Spirit to change us and our lives even when we don't understand your will for us. Help us to work to bring about your Kingdom of love. Help us to allow the News of Christ to enter our hearts.

Preparation for Christmas

Last year Pope Francis asked us to read the second half of the Book of Isaiah. Isaiah foretold the birth of Christ: "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14) It is beneficial for us to read the prophet every year so let us respond to that invitation and prayerfully read at least one chapter of the Prophet Isaiah as we prepare for Christmas this year.

Friday Reading 1E:

And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

Friday Reading 2E:

St Irenaeus* tells us that "The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by Mary's obedience: what the virgin Eve bound through her disbelief, Mary loosened by her faith." This means that Mary (who is sometimes called the 'new Eve') brought life, love, freedom and salvation into the world through Christ which is more powerful than the evil, sin, slavery and death which came through Eve. Mary trusted God and believed the Angel Gabriel when he said; "Nothing is impossible to God." During this Advent, Pope Francis reminds us that "Mary's pure and simple smile [should] be a source of joy for each one of us as we face life's difficulties." He added that "the Lord does not leave us orphans: we have a Mother, the same one as Jesus. Mary takes care of us and always defends us."

(St Irenaeus of Lyons, Adv Haer 3,22,4)*

Friday Prayer

Let us think about the words of the Angel Gabriel: "Nothing is impossible to God."

What does this mean to me?

What does it mean for the world?

How would really believing this change me?

Why do I find it hard to believe this?

Pray the Hail Mary

Friday Preparation for Christmas

Could you raise some money to help the sisters help those who had to flee their homes. Could you think about doing a charity activity to support ACN as they work to give Christmas parcels to displaced and refugee children and emergency aid and food parcels to thousands upon thousands of displaced families in Syria, Iraq and Lebanon?