

Advent

Prayer Book



**SAINT MICHAEL
THE ARCHANGEL**
CATHOLIC CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

These meditations, dear friend, are meant not only as a preparation for Christmas, but also to open the door to a profound experience of life lived in the Holy Spirit, to increase your desire for holy things, and to allow you to experience profound consolation throughout this Advent. In the Holy Spirit there is strength and joy, wisdom and counsel, hope and light. Take courage!

Our goal is to read the Gospel daily, which allows us to reflect on the good news of Christ every day and orients our gaze towards Bethlehem. Meditating on these sacred texts and placing ourselves in the Lord's presence through prayer day after day will transform these Gospel passages into a guiding light for our daily actions and will open our hearts to feel any inspiration that the Holy Spirit might stir in us through these exercises.

Before we start, let us pray to the Holy Spirit to anoint and renew us in this new time of Advent that is beginning:

Holy Spirit, come to my assistance in this new time of my life that begins today. I have great need of You. I believe in You, God. I believe that you are able to transform my life completely. I give myself entirely to You, and I leave all worries and distractions, whether negative or positive, in your hands. I ask You to give me the gift of being able to immerse myself in this mystical experience of Your love. I give myself entirely to You in this moment, and I trust fully in Your transforming power. Come Holy Spirit! Come uproot and destroy the vices and voices of the enemy in my life, come plant and build in me virtues and the gift of praising You.

Holy Spirit, change how I see things, events, people, God and myself. Come and touch my eyes, cleanse them, and re-orient them on Your Eternal Light. May You be the light of my eyes. Come and touch the deepest part of my being. Bless me, and help me to see myself as a sacred work of God: a masterpiece of the Father, saved by Jesus and anointed by You, Holy Spirit. Please, open for me the gates of Advent, and let me soak in the rich glory of Your Trinitarian love.

Praise be to the Father, praise be to the Son, and praise be to You, Spirit of the One Eternal God! Amen.

TOOLS FOR PRAYER

I would like to suggest a few items that will help you pray throughout these Advent meditations. None of them are necessary, except the Bible. They are simply suggestions that might help deepen your prayer.

Bible: It's best to have your own. If you can, buy a cover for it that you like. We are going to use it every day. "It is...your word that gives me life" (*Ps. 119:50*).

Advent Journal: If possible, have a spiritual journal that is just for your meditations this Advent. Buy a new journal, or, if you have an old one that you want to use, consider tearing out the earlier pages as a sign of purification and renovation. In this journal you can write down your spiritual insights and reflect on your prayers: how you were feeling, what things helped you to meditate better, what things made it difficult to pray, and what insights or themes keep reoccurring throughout these brief daily exercises.

Meditation Rug: This refers to a small rug that makes it easier to kneel for a while, and it can also be used to prostrate yourself in order to adore the Lord.

Prayer Shawl, or Elijah's

Mantel: Just as the prophet Elijah "covered himself with his mantel" when he heard the voice of God, in the same way it's often helpful during the meditations to cover your head with a shawl or other piece of cloth as a sign of intimacy with the Lord. It

also helps you to concentrate, blocking out distractions.

Candles: These are always a great help. They symbolize spiritual light and give an atmosphere of prayer to the room. One tip for using candles is to light them in a spiritual way. Ask yourself, what is the significance of this light? In the moment that the candle catches alight, think of a person or a difficult situation and ask God to send His light there.

Incense: On important days, such as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Sundays, or other special times that occur throughout the meditations, you can light incense. Pray that "my prayer may rise up to You like incense," as it says in the Psalms. Incense can add much to prayer. It helps give certain days or moments of prayer special weight, and, with that in mind, should be reserved for the most holy times throughout the year.

Rosary and Image of the

Virgin Mary: The rosary will be a great help to you this Advent. Pray it and experience the presence and intercession of the Virgin Mary in these next four weeks. Let the presence of Mary be like soft music in the background of all of your prayers throughout the Advent Season.

MEDITATIONS

Advent Prayer

DAY 1: SUN, DEC 1st

Read the Gospel: Mt 24:37–44

Questions to think about: How attentive am I to the signs of God's presence in my life? How prepared am I for Him to come into my life in a new way?

Reflection: For this first meditation, use the Word of God to help deepen your understanding of God's desire to act in your life, to connect with you in prayer, to come into your home, to heal, to restore, to renew, to bring new life. At this time of year, we can become very busy with many different activities: work parties, church pageants, decorating the house, children's performances at school, gift shopping. And it can be far too easy for us to focus on these things and miss the signs of God's presence in our daily lives, or to prepare more for the parties and celebrations than for the coming of the Lord at Christmas. But as Advent begins, Jesus calls us to be attentive, because He can come at any moment, into any situation, and He wants to come into all of the activities of our lives.

Action: Begin this first meditation of Advent offering to Jesus what you have and who you are. It is He who washes, purifies, and elevates all that you are. Make a Sign of the Cross on your heart and say: For Christ, with Christ, and like Christ, I offer you, Lord, my work, my daily tasks and all that I do. I want to live united to You this Advent. I adore You, Lord, as King of my life. Then offer Him your whole self.

Be concrete about who you are as you pray. For example, if you are an architect, you could pray: I offer You all that I am so that you might change me little by little this Advent. Help me build your kingdom here on this earth. Or if you are a housewife, you might pray: I offer you, Jesus, all of my work in the house this Advent that you might purify it, take it into Yourself, and elevate it. Help me be able to use my life to serve my family and care for my home. Order my life, and that of my family, toward You, my God, and help me thoroughly to clean out all the rooms of my heart so that I might better be able to serve you. Amen.

After making an offering of your life to Christ, write it down in your Advent Journal so that you can refer back to it throughout this Advent.

Advent Prayer

DAY 2: MON, DEC 2nd

Read the Gospel: Mt. 8:5–11

Questions to think about: How is my faith in the power of Jesus to do what I ask Him in prayer? As I begin this Advent season, how much am I hoping in Him and in His love?

Reflection: In this Gospel, the centurion comes to Jesus, bringing his needs to the Lord, and Jesus is quick to respond. He even marvels at the centurion's faith, hope and trust in Him. The centurion recognizes his own unworthiness, but places all his hope and trust in the Lord's goodness and power, as he says the words we repeat at every Mass: "Lord I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed." We are called, like the centurion, to ask Him with faith, to trust in Him, to allow Him to work, to hope in all the good things He has in store for us.

Action: Today, go to your place of prayer, light a candle, and repeat the words of the centurion to the Lord. Ask Jesus to enter into your life, to touch something in your life—in your own heart or in your family—that needs to be healed. Repeat the words of the centurion. "Lord, I am not worthy... but only say the word, and your servant will be healed." Pray with great trust in the Lord's goodness and His desire to save, to restore, to heal, to make new, and with great faith and hope in His power to do all that we ask of Him. Write down in your prayer journal the petitions you have made today, with a date, so that when they are answered, you can come back and see the power and faithfulness of the Lord to answer our prayers.

Advent Prayer

DAY 3: TUE, DEC 3rd

Read the Gospel: Lk. 10:21–24 (Memorial of St. Francis Xavier)

Questions to think about: What things move me to praise God? Where do I see the presence of God in my daily activities?

Reflection: Today be attentive to the signs of God's presence in your life. Attune your spirit and your gaze to all the small (or large) ways in which you see God during your day. Jesus, upon seeing the evil spirits cast out and seeing Satan himself falling like lightening from the sky, understood that this was a sign of the presence and power of Almighty God. He "rejoiced in the Holy Spirit" and praised God.

Action: Today every time that you perceive the presence of God in your surroundings, in another person, in the beauty of creation, or in a specific event,

say in a loud voice Amen! as a way of praising God. For example, if you are driving home from work in heavy traffic, but on the horizon you see the sun sinking into the sunset, let yourself be moved by the Holy Spirit and say Amen! Or if you're walking through a garden, and you notice how sweet something smells don't be afraid to say Amen! (If you are with someone else, it's also alright to make this act of praise interiorly.) At the end of the day, go to a peaceful place and go through each Amen that you've said, and as they surface from your memory and your heart, praise God again for these moments and say Amen. Make this praise for God be your last action of the day, going to sleep with the sound of your Amens still echoing in your heart. (This is a good exercise to practice not just today but throughout the season of Advent.)

Advent Prayer

DAY 4: WED, DEC 4th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 15:29–37

Questions to think about: Which of my actions give testimony to others that I am Catholic? (*Mt 15:31*).

Reflection: The Word of God today says that the people “glorified the God of Israel” when they saw the mighty deeds that Jesus did. The glory of these actions rightly belongs to God. And as the people saw Jesus’ actions, they understood this and glorified Him. Jesus wants to lead us to praise of God, to bring us to the Father through His works. He raised up the blind, the lame, and the mute, and cured them. And the people glorified God!

Action: Today chose a Corporal Work of Mercy to do. It's best if you can accomplish it today, but if not, you can choose a specific day, time, and place this week in which to do it. Put it on your calendar.

Which Work of Mercy should you choose? Visit the sick or the elderly, give someone something to eat, give your coat away to someone who really needs it, or listen to what Work of Mercy the Holy Spirit is inspiring in you. Do this work with the intention that those around you may praise and glorify God through this simple action. Unite your work to Jesus so that those around you may be moved to praise God the Father.

Advent Prayer

DAY 5: THU, DEC 5th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 7:21, 24–27

Questions to think about: Do I speak the Word of God to others? Do I proclaim His Words of Eternal Life?

Reflection: The saints who have gone before us all built their spiritual life, their interior castle, on the firm foundation of the Word of God. What a gift it is to have this deep foundation and stronghold in the voice of Jesus, our teacher! Just as the saints did, with serenity try to know the Word of God more deeply and to speak it to others. For example: If someone asks you for advice on how to treat someone who's done wrong, respond: Forgive them, and God who sees in secret will repay you.

Action: Dive into the Word of God in this meditation. Ask for the spiritual grace to have a deep love for it. In a prophetic gesture, carry the Word of God around with you as you go about your day. Take the Bible literally with you everywhere you go. For example: If you usually have a purse with you, carry the Bible inside it. That way when you need something from your purse, you will see the Bible and will remember to ask for a renewed love for the Word. If you don't carry a purse, you could carry the Bible in your hand with you. If anyone asks you what it is, tell them that it's the Word of God, which you have with you to read when you need it.

If you're not able to carry the Bible with you physically, note down on a piece of paper a few verses down which speak to you and have them in your pocket. Throughout the day, look at them and reflect on the importance of the Word of God in your life.

Advent Prayer

DAY 6: FRI, DEC 6th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 9:27–31

Questions to think about: Do I accept myself as I am? Am I able to accept my own limitations with serenity and spiritual peace?

Reflection: To do this mediation, go to a quiet place and enter into the spiritual graces that flow out of the Word of God. Today Scripture talks about two blind men who follow Jesus, shouting, "Have pity on us!"

Blindness is traditionally connected to darkness, desperation, the inability to see, and the lack of light. We all have dark places that reject light. "The light came into the world, and men preferred the darkness to the light" (*Jn. 3:19*). You do not have to fear your own dark places. If you accept them and open up these interior recesses little by little so that the light can enter them, then you will become like the two blind men whose "eyes were opened." Jesus will give you a new life.

Action: As a step toward purification this Advent, in order to receive the Child Jesus on Christmas in the best way possible, write down in your spiritual

journal where the dark places in your life are. Write down three concrete things so that, at some moment during Advent, you can bring them up with a priest in confession or in spiritual direction. You need to open the windows of your soul to the light, as you would with a closed room that smelled bad. Come Holy Spirit, and breathe air into our souls!

Because it's Friday, choose a small sacrifice to make. Some examples could be: bite back a sharp word to someone or piece of gossip; give up for one day something you like to eat, (such as chocolate, butter, or salt); serve myself a little less than usual at meals, etc.

Advent Prayer

DAY 7: SAT, DEC 7th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6–8. (Memorial of St. Ambrose)

Questions to think about: Do I intercede before the throne of God for others? How is my intercessory prayer?

Reflection: The Word of God says that “at the sight of the crowds, [Jesus’] heart was moved with pity for them.” Jesus connected deeply with the lives of those around him. Always attentive, He looked at others with open eyes and an open heart. He wants you also to connect in this way with those around you, because each person’s life is profoundly positive in its essence. Each person that you encounter is a beloved child of God, created in the image of God and sustained every minute of the day by Him. Ask that today Jesus give you His own eyes to see who is near you and how much He loves them. Ask that He give you His own heart and His infinite ability to connect with others, that you may love each person around you with His love, no matter how much it might cost.

Action: Since today is Saturday, perhaps you have a little more free time than during the week. Take advantage of this by begging God to show you the people that the Holy Spirit wants to bring to your mind. In order to do this, go to the place where you meditate each day, (if you wish, you can use a prayer shawl or Elijah’s mantel,) close your eyes and open your hands. Invoke the Holy Spirit and let Him show you the face of each person that He is asking you to intercede for. For each face that you see in your imagination, say out loud Alleluia or Amen, and pray for that person for a moment. Most likely, they will be the people that you are closest to, but sometimes the Holy Spirit surprises us. At the end, give thanks to God for this moment of prayer, then write down the names of those that He showed you and continue to pray for them throughout Advent.

Advent Prayer (Pray this prayer in full.)

DAY 8: SUN, DEC 8th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 3:1–12

Questions to think about: What do I need to repent of this Advent? What fruits of repentance do I need to produce?

Reflection: John the Baptist is one of the most important figures of Advent. The last and greatest of the prophets, his call to repentance helped many turn their hearts away from sin and prepared them to receive the Lord Jesus. The word for repentance in the Gospel is *metanoia*, which means a change of thinking, a turning away from something that is wrong and toward what is right. The path to holiness, the preparation of the coming of the Lord to our hearts in ever deeper ways, involves a continued *metanoia*, a conversion that is ongoing. As we grow in our spiritual life, we see more and more ways in which we need to turn away from lesser goods and turn toward Jesus.

Action: Go through your room today, and see if there is anything that is a distraction in your relationship with God, or any unnecessary possessions: clothes you no longer wear or don't need, extra gizmos or gadgets, anything to which your heart is too attached. In an act of repentance and renunciation, offer these items to the Lord, and tell Him you don't want to fill your heart or mind or home with anything that clutters your heart, that distracts you from Him, that doesn't allow you to turn fully to Him. Then take those items and donate them. Physically detaching from these things helps the heart to detach from them, and frees you to turn your mental and emotional attention to the coming of God. Think that you are preparing a place in your heart and home through this action for the arrival of the Holy Family. Thank God for the gift of repentance as you drop of these items at their donation destination.

Advent Prayer

DAY 9: MON, DEC 9th

Read the Gospel: Lk. 1:26–38 (Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception)

Questions to think about: Do I know the house in Nazareth? Spiritually, have I ever been there?

Reflection: Today we contemplate Mary. Take her hand and allow her to lead you into her house in Nazareth. If you have already had this spiritual experience, take this moment to deepen it with her. Imagine being visited by an angel, experience him speaking to you. Now re-read Mary's responses from the Gospel and proclaim them as if they were your own, with her by your side. Then rest in the Holy Spirit who covers you and who plants the seed of Christ in you. As you end your reflection say, I am the handmaid (or servant) of the Lord...

Action: Set up a crèche, or manger scene, as a family, placing the angels in it, then Mary and Joseph. Go to Mass today and receive Jesus in the Eucharist (or spiritually). In order to celebrate this great feast, cook a special meal for your family and perhaps invite friends over as well, in order to help celebrate this day of the Virgin Mary.

Advent Prayer

DAY 10: TUE, DEC 10th

Read the Gospel: 18:12–14

Questions to think about: When have you been one of the ninety-nine? When have you been the lost sheep that Jesus brought back to the fold? What lost sheep is He calling you to help bring back to the fold?

Reflection: The image of the shepherd in this Gospel is of great tenderness, of attentive and personal love for each of the sheep in his keeping. When just one is lost, he goes out to find it. Imagine that sheep, having wandered off, now caught up in brambles, trapped in thorny bushes, unable to come back home, wet and cold and lonely, crying out sadly. Imagine the shepherd's hurry to find the sheep, how carefully he breaks the branches and vines that are entangling it, how he pulls the thorns out of her dirty wool, how he lifts her, those she is dirty and wet, into his arms and carries her back home. Thank Jesus for all the times and ways He has come looking for you and carried you back to His home.

Action: Make a list of five people you believe the Lord is calling you to look for, to bring back to the fold. Spend some time in prayer talking to Him about each one, and make a plan for how you will invite them back. Maybe to Alpha, maybe to a Christmas Mass or other Church event, maybe to have a cup of coffee and share with them your testimony... whatever you decide upon, write down the name, what you will invite them to, how you will invite them, and when you will do this. Then ask the Lord for the grace and strength and courage to do what He is calling you to do to bring these lost sheep home.

Advent Prayer

DAY 11: WED, DEC 11th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 11:28–30

Questions to think about: Do I allow the Good Shepherd to carry my burdens for me?

Reflection: Jesus says, "Come to me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." Contemplate Jesus the Good Shepherd. Look to Him who loves you just as you are. Spiritually, rest your burdens on the shoulders of Jesus.

Let yourself rest in Him. Jesus does not reproach you, but simply invites you to place all your worries, fears, and obligations on His shoulders. Give thanks for these shoulders of the Good Shepherd. Rest on Jesus. At last, you can finally rest on His shoulders. Close your eyes. Breathe in the Holy Spirit who fills your inner being, and rest awhile on the shoulders of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Action: In the crèche, place the sheep and cows by the manger, in remembrance of Jesus the Good Shepherd. Make a resolution to visit an elderly person you know or someone who is in need of relief, and resolve that you will be Jesus the Good Shepherd for that person. Enjoy being with them. Throughout this day, repeat an aspiration. An example could be: “Blessed are your shoulders, Good Shepherd.”

Advent Prayer

DAY 12: THU, DEC 12th

Read the Gospel: Lk. 1:39–48 (Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe)

Questions to think about: Do I look for ways to bring Jesus to others by following the example of Mary?

Reflection: Today is the Feast of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Mary, under this title, evangelized over four million people in Mexico and the surrounding areas. Today we call her “The Star of the New Evangelization.” In this reflection, imagine Mary walking through every room in your house and all the places where you gather as a family. Imagine her also at your workplace and everywhere you often go. As she walks through all the places of your life, imagine her filling each one with her maternal blessing.

Action: Pray a Rosary at some point during the day for the New Evangelization, here and now. Make it a Rosary of intercession. Pray for all those who do not know the love of God and for those who are farthest away from God. Make a list of names of people that you want to pray for and offer them to Mary during each mystery.

Advent Prayer

DAY 13: FRI, DEC 13th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 11: 16–19

Questions to think about: Do I use the wisdom that the Lord has given me for His glory and to the best of my ability? How do I understand what wisdom is?

Reflection: Read the Book of Wisdom 9:9–12: “With you is Wisdom, who knows your works and was present when you made the world; and who

understands...what it is according to your commands. Send her forth from your holy heavens and from your glorious throne dispatch her that she may... work with me, that I may know what is pleasing to you. For she knows and understands all things, and will guide me wisely in my affairs and safeguard me by her glory..." To be wise means knowing and enjoying what is holy. A wise person is one who sees things as they really are, with realism and good spirit, and then applies them in his or her daily life.

Action: In your Advent Journal, write down at least three things that you learned or three insights that you had this past year. It will help if you specifically answer these questions: What did I learn from God this year? When and how did I learn it? What did I learn from others? How? What did I learn about myself? Write at least three concrete things down. Then give thanks to God for this treasure that He's given you.

Since it is Friday, give up something today, (such as soda, alcohol, candy, etc.).

Advent Prayer

DAY 14: SAT, DEC. 14th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 17:9–13

Questions to think about: Where can I hear the voice of God most clearly? In which situations or through which people?

Reflection: Read Kings 19:9–13. Imagine that you are Elijah, waiting to hear the voice of the Lord that day. Adopt his attitude of listening. Resolve not to be like those who did not recognize that Elijah came, who did not listen to the prophets and so could not hear the voice of the Lord?

Go to your meditation place and cover your head with the Elijah's mantle or your prayer shawl. Making the sign of the cross on your ears and offer them for Christ, with Christ and like Christ. "The Lord opens my ears that I may hear your voice. Whatever you say to me, I do not refuse, I do not turn back," (*Is. 50, 4*).

Action: In order to live out this verse, be attentive today to the voice of Jesus in those places or through those people who most help you to hear Him clearly. Perhaps make a resolution today not to listen to the radio or music while driving to work, or make a different small sacrifice that helps you hear Christ, such as walking away when someone else is talking rudely or laughing at someone else.

Advent Prayer

DAY 15: SUN, DEC. 15th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 11:2–11

Questions to think about: What signs have I seen of the Kingdom of God in this parish community? In my own life?

Reflection: When John's disciples come to Jesus, He gives them six signs of His Kingdom: the blind seeing, the lame walking, the lepers being healed, the deaf hearing, the dead being raised, and the poor having the good news preached to them. The coming of the Kingdom of God, the coming of Christ into our lives, always bears fruit. Not all the fruits are miraculous, like the first five on the list, but they all transform lives. And of all these fruits, the one we can most easily and most readily participate in is the last one: the preaching of the good news to the poor.

Action: Today put together a “blessing bag” of items you can give to a homeless person you encounter. You can include things like a granola bar, tissues, hand warmers, socks, a rosary, a laminated holy card, and other items. As you go about your day today, be attentive: you will encounter a homeless person to whom you should give this bag. Ask for their name, and tell them you want to bless them today because you know that God loves them, and ask if they would like you to pray for them. Then carry them in your prayer to the Lord throughout the day.

Advent Prayer

DAY 16: MON, DEC. 16th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 21:23–27

Questions to think about: Do I let Jesus teach me? Do I listen when others instruct me? Do I share my wisdom with those around me?

Reflection: After reading this Gospel, ask for the wisdom of God to be alive in you and to bear fruit. The Gospel says that Jesus taught. In fact, this phrase is repeated again and again in the Gospels. Jesus wants us to teach others as He did and to share the treasures of wisdom that are shored up in our hearts. When you share your material possessions, naturally you end up with less than you had. But when you share spiritual gifts, they begin to multiply, both in yourself as well as in others. (Take a minute to reflect on this.) Although to our ears the word “authority” can bring to mind an image of domination or ambition, its original meaning was “to grow, and to enrich others.” It is through the authority of Jesus that our gifts grow and we are moved to share with others.

Action: Be mindful of the words that you speak today and the way in which you say them. (If you have trouble remembering to pay attention to what you're saying, a way to jog your memory might be to change something habitual [such as wearing a different ring than usual] that you'll notice every now and then. Every time it catches your attention, reflect on what you've said.)

Use only positive words today, words that bless and give life to those around you. Try to speak with God's words. As much as possible, build up those around you, helping them grow and participate in the blessing of God, which multiplies the more it is shared. Work hard to use positive language, but also be aware of any tendencies you have toward the negative. Be especially mindful of complaints, gossip, harsh words, sharp tones of voice, or hurtful silence. Don't be the one to wound anyone today, but, like Jesus, help others experience growth and healing.

This is a wonderful exercise to repeat throughout Advent. To begin with, watching your words can often be difficult, but with practice, positive speech begins to come easily. Becoming a more spiritual person often is accomplished through small concrete actions like this one.

Advent Prayer

DAY 17: TUE, DEC 17th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 1:1-17

Questions to think about: Advent is a time to reconcile with those in our families. Is there anyone in my family with whom I need to reconcile? Is there someone I owe an apology to or someone I need to forgive?

Reflection: After reading the Gospel, take a moment to realize that the genealogy of Jesus is full of sinful people, just as our own families are. Accept your family for who they are, with their gifts and their faults. With simplicity and humility, ask Jesus to bless all those who are part of your family tree.

Action: Gather your family together in prayer beside the crèche in your home and pray an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be. If you feel that you cannot invite your family, go alone, but bring each person spiritually to the manger. Then write down on a small piece of paper the names of each person in your family—your wife, husband, children, siblings, and parents—and put them by the figure of Joseph. Ask him to watch over them and care for them as he did the Holy Family.

Advent Prayer

DAY 18: WED, DEC 18th

Read the Gospel: Mt. 1: 18–25

Questions to think about: Who reigns in my home?

Reflection: Read through this passage again and again until you could almost recite it from memory. Immerse yourself in the scene; contemplate it. Imagine it so fully—with all of its colors, sounds, and smells—that it is as if you are there.

Action: This is a special day. Today you will welcome Mary into your home. It's good to do this once a year, and this is an excellent moment for it. You may do this in your house, in your office, in your room: wherever the Holy Spirit inspires you. The Gospel says that Joseph “took Mary into his home.” In order to live out this verse, take an image of the Virgin Mary, (it can be a painting, a statue, or a holy card, although perhaps the best choice might be the image of Mary from your manger scene). Go to the door of your house, either by yourself or with your family, and pray one Hail Mary, saying, “Mary, today I invite you into my home [again or for the first time] so that Christ might be born here.” Then carry the image of Mary into your home, proclaiming: Alleluia! You can also sing a hymn to Mary, if you'd like.

Advent Prayer

DAY 19: THU, DEC 19th

Read the Gospel: Lk. 1:5–25

Questions to think about: Do I pray to or talk with my Guardian Angel? Do I have any sort of relationship with the angels?

Reflection: Angels are creatures of God. They are alive and actually exist. Throughout the Bible, it's clear that the angels not only exist, but that they are very important in our lives. Jesus speaks about the angels many times in the Gospels, and the Bible is full of references to their intervention and assistance in people's lives.

Action: Today invite the angels to come into your home, and ask them to take care of you and your family. They are the strongest warriors of God. There are battles in our lives that only angels can win, (take a moment to reflect on this). Pray the “Guardian Angel” prayer if you know it, and take a moment to pray to your Guardian Angel, especially if you do not often think to pray to him.

Advent Prayer

DAY 20: FRI, DEC 20th

Read the Gospel: Lk. 1:26–38

Questions to think about: What makes me happy? What do I love? What brings me joy?

Reflection: Reflect on the words: “full of grace” and “the Lord is with you.” This is a passage that is full of light! Call on the Holy Spirit and enter deeply into this passage. Christmas is almost here. An approaching holiday often awakens in us a feeling of anticipation and excitement, but how much more excitement should we feel when we reflect on how profound and great an event is about to occur! Offer your feelings about this Christmas season to Jesus and ask Him to reach out His hand and prepare you, day by day, for His coming. This is not magic; it requires in us a desire to receive Jesus and an internal preparation of heart. Just as we prepare our homes for Christmas, so we should prepare our hearts.

Action: Make a list of the things that really make you happy, writing them in order of importance. If you feel that some things on this list are disordered, or in too high a place, ask the Holy Spirit to help you to reorder them. Try to be as honest as possible in this.

Since today is Friday, give up something you enjoy as a small sacrifice. Examples include: television, cigarettes, chocolate, soda, etc. Try to do this at least once today.

Advent Prayer

DAY 21: SAT, DEC 21st

Read the Gospel: Lk. 1:39–45

Questions to think about: What places inside me need the light of God?

Reflection: Mary carried Jesus inside her, in her womb. The Gospel says, “Blessed is the fruit of thy womb.” Look inside of yourself to find the places that are dark or the things that are preventing you from living freely and fully in God, as Jesus and Mary did. With serenity don’t be afraid to look deeply at yourself and find what is distancing you from what is good, find what is hindering your relationship with God, with yourself, and with others. Write down the things you discover in your Advent Journal, naming the situations in which these things occur and what they look like. Be concrete about the dark places inside of you. Naming everything you see will help you be more open to God’s light.

Action: At some point before Christmas, go to confession and receive the blessing and forgiveness of Jesus. At the same time, as an exterior sign of your

desire to change interiorly, make a resolution today to care for the places around you. Pick up clutter, for example, throw

away trash lying on the ground, or clean and organize rooms in your house. Tackle something you've been putting off, whether it is cleaning your room, office, car, closet, purse, glove compartment, or the drawer of your bedside table.

Advent Prayer

DAY 22: SUN, DEC 22nd

Read the Gospel: Mt. 1:18–24

Questions to think about: When I realize that God is asking me to do something, what is my initial reaction?

Reflection: Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom. Then reflect on how Joseph in this Gospel reveals the attitude of a true disciple: one of much love and self-sacrifice. A disciple is someone who is attentive to the message of the Lord, and quick to put it into action. A disciple is someone who does everything out of love, joy and freedom, and not just out of duty. A disciple is not someone who always wants to feel good. Rather, he is someone who knows and trusts that what Jesus asks of us is always best, no matter what.

Action: Give a small physical gesture of love to someone in need today. (Examples could be: giving a friendly pat on the back, looking them in the eyes, putting your hand on their shoulder, smiling at them, etc.) Put your love in action! Try to express the love of Christ through your gestures. Reflecting on Jesus' commandment will help us with this: "Do unto others as you would have them do to you." If it's appropriate to the situation, don't be embarrassed to make a concrete gesture of kindness to someone else, as we ourselves often appreciate these small acts when we receive them from someone else. At the end of the day, take a moment to evaluate how well you were able to do this.

Advent Prayer

DAY 23: MON, DEC 23rd

Read the Gospel: Lk. 1: 57–66

Questions to think about: What is my personal story of how I have come to know Jesus? What happened the day that I first encountered Him, and how has a relationship with Him continued to develop?

Reflection: The Gospel says that when Elizabeth's friends and neighbors "heard that the Lord had shown His great mercy toward her... they rejoiced with her." Today, trusting in the Lord's great mercy and calling on the Holy Spirit to inspire you, write a hymn or prayer of thanksgiving to Him who has shown such mercy to you.

Action: Today look for a way to share your testimony with someone. It could be either your faith journey or any experience that you've had of God's mercy. Using both wisdom and creativity, look for the right moment. Trust that God will work through you today.

Advent Prayer

DAY 24: TUE, DEC 24th

Read the Gospel: Lk. 1: 67–79

Reflection: Today in prayer, put your hand on heart and simply say to Jesus: Thank you... Thank Him for all the graces that you've received this year, naming them one by one. Even if it's hard sometimes to feel grateful, know that this act of thanksgiving is pleasing to God. This year is almost over; what is done is done. Open your heart to the Child Jesus, and let Him come with a special anointing to sanctify your life tonight. If throughout Advent you were not able to enter deeply into these meditations, this is the moment to pray with all your heart. All praise be to Jesus Christ!

Action: Give up something today in order to prepare yourself for Christmas. Try not to complain, speak poorly of others, or be anxious today, letting thoughts of the celebrations we have planned distract us from being able to truly prepare to celebrate this most Holy Mass. Don't let any anxiety creep in. Seek to live out today in the most spiritual way possible. Don't let anything distract you from what is most important: Jesus is born! Try to live out this day with interior recollection—with your heart rooted in the coming in Christ—to the best of your abilities. After Mass: REJOICE! CELEBRATE!

O Come,
Let Us

*Adore
Him*

