

PRAY WITH SCRIPTURE, MEET GOD

The First Sunday of Advent

December 1, 2019

Isaiah 2:1-5

Day One: Isaiah 2:1-2

Reflection question: When you imagine the Lord's house on a mountain above the hills, what do you see? Is the idea of climbing the mountain energizing, or exhausting? Why do you think so?

Day Two: Isaiah 2:3

Reflection Question: Who walks with you to Jesus? Do you walk with one person—or are there many people with you on the journey?

Day Three: Isaiah 2:4

Reflection Question: What would the peace that the prophet describes in this verse look like for you today? For your community?

Day Four: Isaiah 2:5

Reflection question: What does it mean to you to “walk in the light of the Lord”?

Day Five: Isaiah 2:1-5

Reflection question: After you read the full passage today, sit quietly for a few minutes. As you prepare to begin this Advent season, how do you want to meet Jesus? Where do you need to walk in his light?

How to Pray Each Day

Pray:

“Lord Jesus, you who are the Son of the living God, teach me to listen to what you tell me in the holy Scriptures, and to discover your face there.”—Guigo II, the Carthusian (ca. 1113-1193)

Read the day's passage once, slowly:

Take 2-3 minutes to ponder the passage. Note any phrase, word or image that stands out for you.

Read the passage a second time slowly:

Take a few minutes to ponder the passage again. Stay with the text: Why do you think the words or image stand out the first time? Is your mind drawn to another part of the text?

What do you think God is trying to tell you through the text today?

Consider the Reflection Question:

Jot down any thoughts or responses you have to this question—also make note of any questions that rose from the text.

Pray

1. Take a few minutes to be still and present to God.
2. Share your thoughts, questions with God.
3. Is God “speaking” to you? Remember: it may not be a voice you hear but a nudge, a consolation or an insight. If you are keeping a journal, you may want to write these down.
4. When you feel done, say a quick prayer thanking God for this time with him.

Optional Small group session to follow these daily reflections:

Pray the following prayer or one in your own words

“Lord Jesus, you who are the Son of the living God, teach me to listen to what you tell me in the holy Scriptures, and to discover your face there.”—Guigo II, the Carthusian (d.1297)

Allow each person to reflect upon their encounters with the Word this past week. They may wish to review any notes or journaling they did at that time.

Read

- Have one person read the complete passage twice, with a 1-2 minute pause between readings.
- Allow time for silent reflection.
- What stands out when you hear the text, all together? Is it something that stood out before, or is it something new?

Meditate

- Have someone else read the passage once more.
- Where do you meet God today in the Word? Does he speak, or communicate in another way?
 - Sit quietly with God and wait for his response.

Ponder

Allow time for each person to quietly reflect upon these words from St. Bernard of Clairvaux, as he reflects upon three comings of Jesus Christ: in history at his birth, at the end of time in power and glory and in a “middle coming”—“a hidden one, where they see the Lord within themselves”:

In his first coming our Lord came in our flesh and in our weakness; in this middle coming he comes in spirit and in power; in the final coming he will be seen in glory and majesty.

In case someone should think that what we say about this middle coming is sheer invention, listen to what our Lord himself says: If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him. There is another passage of Scripture which reads: He who fears God will do good, but something further has been said about the one who loves, that is, that he will keep God’s word. Where is God’s word to be kept? Obviously in the heart, as the prophet says: I have hidden your words in my heart, so that I may not sin against you.—*Sermo 5, In Adventu Domini, 1-3: Opera Omnia, Edit. Cisterc. 4 {1966}, 188-190 is used in the Roman Office of Readings for Wednesday of the First Week of Advent.*

Reflection questions:

- As you prepare to meet Jesus “within yourself” this Advent, what are your hopes or longings for this meeting?

Discuss

Allow each person to share what they encountered in their prayers this past week as in this session. They can respond to any question from their daily reflection or this session; or share an insight or experience that rose out of their prayer.

As the discussion draws to a close, ask if there are any needs members would like the group to pray for. If it is possible, at this time move to a chapel or the church for the closing prayer.

Pray

- Allow a time of silent prayer, allowing each person to offer their own silent prayers of praise and thanksgiving, petition to the Lord.
- Allow additional time to sit in the Lord’s presence.
- If possible and appropriate, allow each person to offer any prayers aloud.
- Close with prayer as is the custom of your community. It could be: a spontaneous prayer, a parish prayer for renewal said together, an Our Father, Glory Be or prayer to the patron saint of the parish asking his/her intercession, etc.

PRAY WITH SCRIPTURE, MEET GOD

The Second Sunday of Advent

December 8, 2019

Romans 15:4-9

Day One: Romans 15:4

Reflection question: Where have you found encouragement and hope in the Scriptures? Do you have a favorite Gospel story that gives you hope?

Day Two: Romans 15:5-6

Reflection Question: For what can you offer praise and glorify God the Father today?

Day Three: Romans 15:7

Reflection Question: Can you describe a time when you felt welcomed by Jesus? How have you welcomed others, as Jesus has welcomed you?

Day Four: Romans 15:8-9

Reflection question: When have you experienced God's mercy? How do you praise God for his mercy?

Day Five: Romans 15:4-9

Reflection question: After you read the full passage today, sit quietly for a few minutes. Is there one particular passage that stands out from your week's reading? Where are you meeting Jesus in this passage today?

How to Pray Each Day

Pray:

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Read the day's passage once, slowly:

Take 2-3 minutes to ponder the passage. Note any phrase, word or image that stands out for you.

Read the passage a second time slowly:

Take a few minutes to ponder the passage again. Stay with the text: Why do you think the words or image stand out the first time? Is your mind drawn to another part of the text?

What do you think God is trying to tell you through the text today?

Consider the Reflection Question:

Jot down any thoughts or responses you have to this question—also make note of any questions that rose from the text.

Pray

1. Take a few minutes to be still and present to God.
2. Share your thoughts, questions with God.
3. Is God "speaking" to you? Remember: it may not be a voice you hear but a nudge, a consolation or an insight. If you are keeping a journal, you may want to write these down.
4. When you feel done, say a quick prayer thanking God for this time with him.

Optional Small group session to follow these daily reflections:

Pray the following prayer or one in your own words

“Lord Jesus, you who are the Son of the living God, teach me to listen to what you tell me in the holy Scriptures, and to discover your face there.”—Guigo II, the Carthusian (d.1297)

Allow each person to reflect upon their encounters with the Word this past week. They may wish to review any notes or journaling they did at that time.

Read

- Have one person read the complete passage twice, with a 1-2 minute pause between readings.
- Allow time for silent reflection.
- What stands out when you hear the text, all together? Is it something that stood out before, or is it something new?

Meditate

- Have someone else read the passage once more.
- Where do you meet God today in the Word? Does he speak, or communicate in another way?
 - Sit quietly with God and wait for his response.

Ponder

From the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

2627 Two fundamental forms express this movement: our prayer *ascends* in the Holy Spirit through Christ to the Father - we bless him for having blessed us; it implores the grace of the Holy Spirit that *descends* through Christ from the Father - he blesses us.

Reflection questions:

- How do you meet the Trinity—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—in prayer this Advent season?

Discuss

Allow each person to share what they encountered in their prayers this past week as in this session. They can respond to any question from their daily reflection or this session; or share an insight or experience that rose out of their prayer.

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Pray

- Allow a time of silent prayer, allowing each person to offer their own silent prayers of praise and thanksgiving, petition to the Lord.
- Allow additional time to sit in the Lord’s presence.
- If possible and appropriate, allow each person to offer any prayers aloud.
- Close with prayer as is the custom of your community. It could be: a spontaneous prayer, a parish prayer for renewal said together, an Our Father, Glory Be or prayer to the patron saint of the parish asking his/her intercession, etc.

PRAY WITH SCRIPTURE, MEET GOD

The Third Sunday of Advent

December 15, 2019

Matthew 11:2-11

Day One: Matthew 11:2-3

Reflection question: Where are you finding Jesus this Advent season? How do you know it is him?

Day Two: Matthew 11:4-6

Reflection Question: Where have you witnessed Jesus' work? Where have you heard his good news? In the world? In your life? In your prayer?

Day Three: Matthew 11:7-9

Reflection Question: John the Baptist prepared the people to encounter Jesus. Jesus describes who they came to see. Who in your life has prepared you to encounter Jesus?

Day Four: Matthew 11:10-11

Reflection question: Have you been a messenger for Jesus? For whom? Were you surprised to take Jesus' message to someone else?

Day Five: Matthew 11:2-11

Reflection question: Take a few moments to sit quietly and imagine yourself in the story. Where are you? Are you with Jesus...or with John? What are they saying?

How to Pray Each Day

Pray:

"Lord Jesus, you who are the Son of the living God, teach me to listen to what you tell me in the holy Scriptures, and to discover your face there."—Guigo II, the Carthusian (ca. 1113-1193)

Read the day's passage once, slowly:

Take 2-3 minutes to ponder the passage. Note any phrase, word or image that stands out for you.

Read the passage a second time slowly:

Take a few minutes to ponder the passage again. Stay with the text: Why do you think the words or image stand out the first time? Is your mind drawn to another part of the text?

What do you think God is trying to tell you through the text today?

Consider the Reflection Question:

Jot down any thoughts or responses you have to this question—also make note of any questions that rose from the text.

Pray

1. Take a few minutes to be still and present to God.
2. Share your thoughts, questions with God.
3. Is God "speaking" to you? Remember: it may not be a voice you hear but a nudge, a consolation or an insight. If you are keeping a journal, you may want to write these down.
4. When you feel done, say a quick prayer thanking God for this time with him.

Optional Small group session to follow these daily reflections:

Pray the following prayer or one in your own words

“Lord Jesus, you who are the Son of the living God, teach me to listen to what you tell me in the holy Scriptures, and to discover your face there.”—Guigo II, the Carthusian (d.1297)

Allow each person to reflect upon their encounters with the Word this past week. They may wish to review any notes or journaling they did at that time.

Read

- Have one person read the complete passage twice, with a 1-2 minute pause between readings.
- Allow time for silent reflection.
- What stands out when you hear the text, altogether? Is it something that stood out before, or is it something new?

Meditate

- Have someone else read the passage once more.
- Where do you meet God today in the Word? Does he speak, or communicate in another way?
 - Sit quietly with God and wait for his response.

Ponder

Because it is hard to distinguish word from voice, even John himself was thought to be the Christ. The voice was thought to be the word. But the voice acknowledged what it was, anxious not to give offense to the word. “I am not the Christ,” he said, “nor Elijah, nor the prophet.” And the question came, “Who are you, then?” He replied, “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord.”

The voice of one crying in the wilderness is the voice of one breaking the silence.

Prepare the way for the Lord, he says, as though he was saying: “I speak out in order to lead him into your hearts, but he does not choose to come where I lead him unless you prepare the way for him.”

To prepare the way means to pray well; it means thinking humbly of oneself. We should take our lesson from John the Baptist.”¹

Reflection questions:

- What are the voices that make Jesus present for you this Advent season?
- St. Augustine reminds us to *prepare the way*. How is your preparation to receive Jesus into your heart this Advent going?

Discuss

Allow each person to share what they encountered in their prayers this past week as in this session. They can respond to any question from their daily reflection or this session; or share an insight or experience that rose out of their prayer.

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Pray

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¹ St. Augustine of Hippo, Sermon 293, 3: PL 1328-1329, Second Reading of the Office of Readings, Third Sunday of Advent

PRAY WITH SCRIPTURE, MEET GOD

The Fourth Sunday of Advent December 22, 2019

Matthew 1:18-24

Day One: Matthew 1:18-19

Reflection question: Who do you feel drawn to more in these verses: Mary or Joseph? Why do you think that is so?

Day Two: Matthew 1:20-21

Reflection Question: What does it mean to you that Jesus came to save *you* from *your* sins?

Day Three: Matthew 1:22-23

Reflection Question: John the Baptist prepared the people to encounter Jesus. Jesus describes who they came to see. Who in your life has prepared you to encounter Jesus?

Day Four: Matthew 1:24

Reflection question: How is Jesus, Emmanuel, “God with us” with *you* today?

Day Five: Matthew 1:18-24

Reflection question: As you read the whole passage today, to which part are you drawn? As the weeks leading up to Christmas draw to a close, what is different about how you meet Jesus *now* compared to the beginning of Advent?

How to Pray Each Day

Pray:

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Consider the Reflection Question:

Jot down any thoughts or responses you have to this question—also make note of any questions that rose from the text.

Pray

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Ponder

These two figures, Mary and Joseph, who were the first to welcome Jesus through faith, introduce us to the mystery of Christmas. Mary helps us to assume an attitude of openness in order to welcome the Son of God into our concrete life, in our flesh. Joseph spurs us to always seek God’s will and to follow it with full trust. Both allow God to draw near to them.

...the angel says: “the child shall be called Emmanuel, which means God-with-us”, in other words, God near to us. And to God who draws near, do I open the door — to the Lord — when I sense an interior inspiration, when I hear him ask me to do something more for others, when he calls me to pray?¹

Reflection questions:

- What response do you have to the question in this passage?
- How have you opened the door to your heart to Jesus this Advent season?

Discuss

Allow each person to share what they encountered in their prayers this past week as in this session. They can respond to any question from their daily reflection or this session; or share an insight or experience that rose out of their prayer.

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¹ Pope Francis, Angelus, December 18, 2016

http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2016/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20161218.html

May 20, 2019

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