



COME, LORD JESUS!

Reflections for
the Season of
Advent

In His Own Words ...
POPE FRANCIS



Faith is no refuge for the fainthearted, but something which enhances our lives. It makes us aware of a magnificent calling, the vocation of love. It assures us that this love is trustworthy and worth embracing, for it is based on God's faithfulness which is stronger than our every weakness.

— *Lumen Fidei*, 53

Trust in the Lord

Matthew 1:18-24

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts! — see Psalm 95



"The Presentation in the Temple" (Courtesy of Michael D. O'Brien, www.studiobrien.com)

In today's Gospel, we hear the familiar story of "how the birth of Jesus Christ came about" from the perspective of Joseph. When all seems to go wrong, Joseph still tries to do what is humanly right. When God reveals to him a different plan, one that seems to make Joseph's life more difficult, he responds with trust: "he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him." Joseph shows us that at the heart of right relationship with God lies trust that is put into action.

ADVENT PRAYER

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light! (Isaiah 9:1)

God of wisdom,
bless us with Mary's "yes"
as we welcome Emmanuel into
our hearts and homes.
Amen.



1 What does the season of Advent teach us about trusting God?

2 When do I find it difficult to let go and trust in the Lord?

3 What is one way I might trust more fully as I prepare for the Christmas celebration?

ADVENT

AROUND THE WORLD



During the last days of Advent, popular customs around the world also draw our attention to the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth.

LAS POSADAS is a reenactment of Mary's and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and their search for lodging. (*Posada* is the Spanish word for dwelling or lodging.) From December 16, on nine consecutive nights, a group gathers at the local church. After reciting part of the Rosary, they process through the neighborhood, knocking on doors while singing a traditional carol and asking for a place to stay, but are refused entry. The procession ends at the designated home that finally lets them in, and a great celebration follows.

WIGILIA is the Polish name for Christmas Eve. When the first star appears in the sky, the Christmas tree is lit and dinner begins. The Christmas Eve meal starts with a prayer, the sharing of the blessed *oplatek* (a bread wafer), and exchanging wishes. Each person gathered offers good health and success in the upcoming year to one another. If there have been any misunderstandings, each asks for forgiveness and for the New Year to be a better one.

WE BELIEVE



ANGELS

The Advent Gospel readings are filled with stories about angels. The word "angel" means "messenger," and in many Scripture accounts the angels serve as God's messengers. Three archangels are named in Scripture — Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. It is the angel Gabriel who visits Mary and gives her the miraculous news that she has been chosen to be the Mother of God. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that angels also serve to protect and serve the faithful. "From its beginning until death, human life is surrounded by their watchful care and protection. 'Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life'" (336). At Mass we join the angels in the invocation, "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts!"

Wait, Watch, Wonder...



Watch for signs of Jesus all around you each day. Watch for someone to hold a door for, or shovel a neighbor's walk, or help carry something heavy.

Watch for opportunities to say "hi" to someone who looks lonely, or to cheer up a crying child, or to clean up a mess that you didn't make. Offer these moments to Jesus in silent prayer. Watch for the first star of the evening one night, then read from the Bible the story of the star announcing Jesus' birth in Luke 2:1-20.



Sitting down together to watch a favorite Christmas movie or have a family reading of a familiar Christmas story is a wonderful way to prepare for the celebration of Christmas. Include favorite snacks or make a special treat for the occasion, and you are on the way to creating a family tradition.

What is your favorite family holiday tradition? Why?

Advent teaches us that joyful expectation unfolds in the present, moment by moment. Our liturgical prayer teaches us that the Spirit of Christ is offered to us at all times. Yet, an encounter can only happen in the present: "It is in the present that we encounter him, not yesterday nor tomorrow, but today" (CCC, 2659).