

GROUP



THE ART OF WAITING

A Retreat Guide for Advent

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FIRST MEDITATION

LEARNING FROM THE EXPERTS

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION/ GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Think back over my most beautiful or enriching experiences of Advent and Christmas in the past. What made them so valuable to me? Savor them and thank God for them.
2. St. John the Baptist was given a mission to help prepare the people of his time to welcome the coming of the Messiah. As a Christian, I too share in the mission of helping people welcome Christ into their hearts. What I am doing to fulfill that mission? What can I do during Advent to fulfill it a little bit better?
3. The Blessed Virgin Mary anticipated the birth of Jesus by serving and building her spiritual friendship with St. Elizabeth and by taking time to pray and ponder over God's words and actions. How can I follow her example in the here-and-now of my life during this Advent?

THREE QUOTATIONS TO HELP YOUR MEDITATION

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch. Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

—Mark 13:33–37
NABRE

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

—Mark 1–8
NABRE

Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You too must be patient. Make your hearts firm, because the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another, that you may not be judged. Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates. Take as an example of hardship and patience, brothers and sisters, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

—James 5:7–10
NABRE



SECOND MEDITATION

WHY CHRISTMAS HAPPENED

QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION/ GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Which of the four reasons behind Jesus's incarnation resonates the most in my heart and mind? Why? Which resonates least? Why?
2. How would my life, and the life of the world around me, be different if Jesus had never come to earth?
3. In the Second Reading for the Mass of Gaudete Sunday (Year C), St. Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4). How is that possible, considering all of life's sufferings? Does Pope Francis give us the answer when he writes: "Joy ... always endures, even when only as a flicker of light born of the certainty that, when everything is said and done, we are infinitely loved ..." (Evangelii Gaudium, 6)?

THREE QUOTATIONS TO HELP YOUR MEDITATION

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God... I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord GOD make justice and praise spring up before all the nations.

—Isaiah 61:1–2A, 10–11
NABRE, Lectionary

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me. Then the God of peace will be with you.

—Philippians 4:4–9
NABRE

*And Mary said:
"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior.
For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness;
behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.
The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.
His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.
He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.
He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly.
The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty.
He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."*

—Luke 1:46–56
NABRE



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FURTHER READING

If you feel moved to continue reflecting and praying about this theme, you may find the following books helpful:

- *A Handbook of Spiritual Perfection*
by Fr. Philip E. Dion
- *The Fulfillment of All Desire*
by Ralph Martin
- *Introduction to the Devout Life*
by St. Francis de Sales
- *Seeking First the Kingdom: 30 Meditations on How to Love God with All Your Heart, Soul, Mind, and Strength*
by Fr. John Bartunek, LC
- *Answers: Catholic Advice for Your Spiritual Questions*
by Fr. John Bartunek, LC

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