



ADVENT 2020

Daily Reflections, Practices & Prayers



A WORLD  
FULL *of*  
PROMISE



DAVID M. KNIGHT

# The Angelus

The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.

And she conceived by the Holy Spirit.

(Hail Mary)



Behold the handmaid of the Lord.

Be it done unto me according to your word.

(Hail Mary)



And the Word was made flesh.

And dwelt among us.

(Hail Mary)



Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God.

That we may be made worthy

of the promises of Christ.



Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,  
your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the  
Incarnation of Christ, your Son, was made known by  
the message of an angel, may, by his passion and cross,  
be brought to the glory of his resurrection. Through the  
same Christ, our Lord. Amen.

# INTRODUCTION

We can only say, “I love you” once. From wedding night to fiftieth anniversary, new meaning and richness make the words different every time. Unique. Prayers are the same. Every time we say one as we should, it is an unrepeatable act.

For seven hundred years, Christians have prayed the *Angelus* three times a day, focusing on 1. God’s *promise* to Mary (and us), 2. the human *response* that makes it come true, and 3. its *fulfillment* in the *Word made flesh*. The *Hail Mary* we say after each verse is never the same. There is new depth, new meaning, even a new mystical experience every time—if we really pray what we say.

These Advent reflections come from my experience of daily prayer. The *Angelus* launches me into a day filled with promise, direction, and hope. Now I begin my day in conscious relationship with Jesus Christ. Since I began interacting with him, my life has never been the same. I know what he promises. I know how to make it come true. And I can envision the change it will make in me and in the world.

Look forward this Advent to thinking deeply. We need “chicken soup for the soul.” But our soul also needs meat and potatoes—thoughts we have to chew on. Come to these reflections prepared to think.

And “give flesh” to your thoughts by putting them into action. We will give concrete suggestions. *Read, reflect, and respond*. Your life will never be the same.

**TWENTY-THIRD PUBLICATIONS**, A division of Bayard; One Montauk Avenue, Suite 200;  
New London, CT 06320; (860) 437-3012 or (800) 321-0411; [www.twentythirdpublications.com](http://www.twentythirdpublications.com)

Copyright ©2020 David M. Knight. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission of the publisher. Write to the Permissions Editor.

Printed in the U.S.A.

ISBN: 978-1-62785-601-0 ■ Cover image: ©Shutterstock.com / Amanda Carden

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

*The world is full of promise*

**NOVEMBER 29 • FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Isaiah 63:16B–17, 19B; 64:2–7; 1 Corinthians 1:3–9; Mark 13:33–37

# “You will conceive...”

*The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary,  
and she conceived by the Holy Spirit.*

The first Advent began when an angel told a teenage girl—probably about fourteen—that God had a great plan for her life. She would “conceive by the Holy Spirit.” What was her reaction? What would yours be?

The truth is, we have all “conceived by the Holy Spirit.” At baptism we gave our bodies to Jesus so that he might live in us. Jesus took flesh in us. We are his body on earth. Paul called his converts, “My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).

God has promised each of us that our life can count for something great on this earth. We wake up every morning to the promise of greatness. We need to think about this, dream the impossible dream. Human life, now that Jesus has entered the world, is full of promise. My life, now that Jesus lives in me, is full of promise. Advent invites me to focus on this.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Wear something—a cross, a medal, a white shirt!—that reminds you you are Christ’s body. Do everything the way you think he would.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *“Lord, no ear has heard, no eye seen, what you do in your body on earth. I give you my body. Live in me.”*

# God promises—divine life

*“Hail, full of grace...”*

The *Hail Mary* enriches our understanding of the promise. Mary was full of “grace”—not something poured into our souls, but the gift of sharing in God’s own divine life. I wake every morning to live a divine life. My words and actions will have divine value, produce divine results—if I speak and act in union with Jesus, as his body on earth.

This is what Jesus took flesh to give us: “I came that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10).

For God to use me for something great in this world, I have to focus more on living my divine life than my human life. More precisely, I have to live my human life divinely. I have to consciously think, speak, and act always on the level of God.

For this I have to keep praying that all my thoughts, desires, and actions will be “conceived by the Holy Spirit.” Advent is a time to remember that.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Whatever you do, all day long, ask how you can do it divinely. For example, if Jesus were doing the work you do, how would he do it?

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Lord, you told fishermen, “I will make you fishers of men.” What do you say to me about the work I do?*

**DECEMBER 1 • TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK**

Isaiah 11:1–10; Luke 10:21–24

# God promises—presence

*The Lord is with you.*

God promises to be “with us.” What difference can that make in my day? What can I hope to do if God is “with” me?

As Creator, God is “with” everything he made, giving each the power to live and move and exercise its being (Acts 17:28). But God is not with us fully until he is living in us, sharing our human lives and sharing his own divine life with us. Christian life is letting Jesus act *with us*, *in us*, and *through us* whenever we live or move or exercise our being.

Paul said he was sent “to make known...the glory of this mystery, which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory.” Three words sum up all his preaching: “Christ in you” (Colossians 1:26).

Mary was always aware God was with her, inspiring, guiding, strengthening her to keep giving flesh to Jesus in her words and actions. But we keep forgetting it. So we need to look for reminders to keep us focused on the promise that, by “grace,” Jesus is always with us.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Whenever you see mutual support—two birds flying, a mother and child, two people working as a team—recall that Jesus is with you.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Lord, you said, “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Please keep me conscious of that, at least until the end of this day!*

**DECEMBER 2 • WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK**

Isaiah 25:6–10a; Matthew 15:29–37

# God promises— personalized blessing

*Blessed are you among women.*

Mary was blessed personally, individually, by the way she was used by God. And each of us is blessed personally, individually, because God has also promised to use every one of us for something great and beautiful—even though we may never recognize what it is while we live.

Mary was blessed because she believed that “what was spoken to her would be fulfilled” (Luke 1:45). We need to believe every minute of our time on earth is precious, because Jesus, conceived in our bodies, wants to act *with us, in us, and through us* in everything we do—all day, every day—to continue his mission. We are “chosen to proclaim the mighty acts of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light” (see 1 Peter 2:9). If we try to be a blessing to others we will be.

Advent is expectation. We should expect God to use us, and notice when he does.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** When you go anywhere—to work, back home, out to dinner—believe that what was spoken to you by the Lord will be fulfilled.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Lord, I believe you promise to make me blessed and a blessing to others. Please help my unbelief. (See Mark 9:24.)*

**DECEMBER 3 • THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK**

Isaiah 26:1–6; Matthew 7:21, 24–27 • FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

# God promises— fruitfulness

*Blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.*

The fruit of Mary’s womb was Jesus—and everything he said and did in his body on earth. Baptism made me the fruit of her womb also, the body of Christ. Everything I say and do as his body is a blessing for me and others. Blessed is the fruit of my life.

Jesus himself promised my life would be fruitful. “You did not choose me but I chose you... to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last” (John 15:16). If I believe this “word that was spoken to me,” I will believe the body to which Mary gave birth is risen, living, and still bearing fruit in me. “It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right.” Advent is a time to look forward. “We will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Remember the promise, “Blessed is the fruit of your life!” When you do anything good, remember it was promised. When you feel discouraged, remember the promise. If you are trying, you are bearing fruit. Trust in the promise.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** “*Lord, in me the ‘fruit of the earth and work of human hands’ is made divine. Blessed be the fruit of your promise.*”



**DECEMBER 4 • FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK**

Isaiah 29:17–24; Matthew 9:27–31

# God promises— to use sinners

*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now...*

What did Mary pray for beneath the cross?

She saw her Son, “who knew no sin,” made to *be sin* so that in him “we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Baptism, by making us Christ’s body, made our sins the sins of his own flesh. For those sins to be “taken away,” not just “forgiven” or “overlooked,” that sinful flesh had to be annihilated. That is why Jesus had to die: so that we, with our sins, could die in him. And rise as a “new creation.”

Christ’s Mother loved sinners enough to *co-offer* her Son to death so that, in the end, he might “present the church to himself... holy and without blemish... blameless and irreproachable before him” (Ephesians 5:27, Colossians 1:22). But she “prays for us sinners” *now*, while we are still sinful, so her Son might continue his mission by acting *with, in, and through* our bodies as they are *now* in every way he can.

That is a “mystery of waiting” to ponder during Advent.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** If you wear a cross, when you put it on say, “I offer my body as a living sacrifice to God, my flesh for the life of the world.” Otherwise, look at a crucifix and say it.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Save us, Savior of the world, for by your cross and resurrection you have set us free.*

**DECEMBER 5 • SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK**

Isaiah 30:19–21, 23–26; Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6–8

# God promises— final perfection

*... and at the hour of our death.*

“Pray for us now” promises we can do God’s work now, even as sinners. We were not conceived without sin or preserved from sin all our life, as Mary was. We are what we are. So we do what we can now, while we keep growing into more surrender, letting Jesus act *with us*, *in us*, and *through us* as his still-imperfect body on earth.

But God promises that, in the “graduation ceremony” of death, we will surrender ourselves totally, as Jesus did, saying, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Now we offer our lives daily, so that, at the hour of our death, all of God’s promises will be fulfilled.

Then our waiting will be over. Advent will be Christmas forever. The Word will be made flesh throughout creation. “Every valley shall be filled, every mountain and hill made low, the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:5).

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Whatever you do, see it as a moment of building up to the total gift of yourself at the hour of final surrender, loving God with “all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.”

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Mary, pray that at the hour of my death I will love God with all my being, as you did all your life.*

**DECEMBER 6 • SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Isaiah 40:1–5, 9–11; 2 Peter 3:8–14; Mark 1:1–8

# Surrender is the secret

*“Behold the handmaid of the Lord.  
Be it done unto me according to your word.”*

Mary shows us the only way to let God’s promise be fulfilled. The secret is surrender. Through grace, Jesus “grows to full stature” in each of us (Ephesians 4:13), in the measure that we surrender to what God wants to do *with us, in us, and through us*.

God does not choose to save us like inert matter. God became human in Jesus “so that we might be saved by one like ourselves.” The human nature that in Adam was “the cause of our downfall” became, in Jesus, the instrument of our salvation. It still is. Jesus is acting now in and through our human words and actions to bring the whole human race together in himself, sharing his Truth, Goodness, and Being. This is “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 13:14).

To make God’s promise come true, each of us has to keep saying, “Be it done unto me according to your word.” Advent is a time to look forward to the fulfillment of God’s promise, a time to focus on surrender, the response that makes it happen.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** All day, as frequently as you can remember, bow your head discreetly as a sign of loving surrender to God—one only you will recognize.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *“Be it done unto me according to your word.”*

**DECEMBER 7 • MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK**

Isaiah 35:1–10; Luke 5:17–26 • FEAST OF ST. AMBROSE

# Surrender fills us

*Hail, full of grace!*

The angel actually said, “Hail, highly favored one!” But the insight given to God’s People—the “consensus of believers”—spontaneously translated that into “Hail, full of grace!”

“Grace” is sharing in God’s divine Life. To be “full of grace” is to live divine Life completely, overcoming the inertia of human nature, attached to its own orbit, guidance system, and laws.

The key is surrender. We can’t fill ourselves with grace. We can only say, “Yes, be it done unto me” when God himself invites us to live more completely his divine Life. To grow in grace, we just have to be willing to surrender.

But surrender is not just going limp. We surrender by letting Jesus *express himself* through our human words and actions. We let his words take flesh in us. When we say “be it done unto me,” we do it.

When everyone on earth is fully surrendered to doing God’s will, the promise of the Incarnation will be complete. The world will be “full of grace.”

Advent is actively waiting for that.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** All day, let anything that is not completely full—your coffee cup, gas tank, the charge on your cell phone—remind you to keep surrendering.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** Join “*Hail Mary, full of grace,*” and “*Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.*” Ask God to “*renew the face of the earth!*”

**DECEMBER 8 • TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK**

Genesis 3:9–15, 20; Ephesians 1:3–6; Luke 1:26–38

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

# We surrender “with”

*“The Lord is with you.”*

The angel knew Mary would be “greatly troubled” by his message. So he said “The Lord is with you” to give her confidence. Knowing Jesus is with us—to guide and support us—helps us surrender.

More than that, John said *this* was his reason for evangelizing—that we might be consciously *with Jesus* and one another in sharing divine Life: “We declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have *fellowship* with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

Advent focuses us on the Incarnation, the mystery of “Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us” (Matthew 1:23). Surrender is the key to being *with Jesus* and with all humanity forever as the fruit of salvation. So we pray to believe the Lord is with us and to surrender without fear to every word he has spoken and is speaking to us now.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** In temptation, or when doing God’s will seems hard, imagine Jesus standing by your side. Act in union with him and surrender.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *“To do your will is my delight, for you are within my heart.”*  
(See Psalm 40:8.)

**DECEMBER 9 • WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK**

Isaiah 40:25–31; Matthew 11:28–30

# Surrender is blessing

*Blessed are you among women.*

It is a blessing to be used by God as Mary was used. But to be used we have to surrender.

Mary surrendered first by believing “that what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

Then she surrendered by acting. Belief, like love, is sterile until expressed in action. “Faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (James 2:17). But likewise, no human work has eternal value if it is not a surrender to Christ acting *with us, in us, and through us*.

Mary was blessed because she surrendered in faith and action. We ask God to give us that blessing: “Let it be done unto us” according to every word he has spoken, is speaking, and will speak to our hearts.

Jesus says, “*Blessed are you*, and you are a blessing to others—if you just surrender.”

During Advent we look forward to the Incarnation made visible in Jesus and in us. We believe that we ourselves are the body of Christ. We are blessed and a blessing if we live out that belief in action as his visible body every moment of our lives.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Whenever you feel you are doing something good, pause. Surrender consciously to Christ doing it *with you, in you, and through you*.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Lord, let me think with your thoughts, and speak with your words, and act as your body on earth.*

# Surrender bears fruit

*Blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.*

Elizabeth could have said to Mary, “the fruit of your womb is the fruit of your surrender.” This was her blessing to the world. This is the fruit of our surrender today: the Incarnation extended—Jesus made flesh in us, speaking and acting visibly in our human bodies.

Surrender is everything. Through Mary’s surrender, God was made flesh. Through our surrender, God continues to take flesh in us until the end of time, acting *with us*, *in us*, and *through us*. What greater fruit can we hope to bear during our few years on this earth than to give our “flesh for the life of the world”? (John 6:51).

Like Mary, we carry within us the seed of God’s divine Life—received through surrender, watered by surrender, growing to maturity through surrender, blossoming and bearing fruit through surrender, and finally coming to fulfillment in the total surrender of ourselves to God in death.

Mary has shown us the way. “Be it done unto me according to your word!” Advent invites us to follow this way all the days of our life.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Whatever you try to do today, ask yourself how its lasting fruit depends on surrender to Jesus living within you. Do it with him.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Lord, through our surrender, may the kingdom, the power and the glory be yours now and for ever!*

**DECEMBER 11 • FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK**

Isaiah 48:17–19; Matthew 11:16–19

# Surrender is sinlessness

*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners...*

Because Mary was to be the Mother of God, she was conceived without sin and preserved from all sin during her whole life. In this, she was very different from us. We are sinners.

But one thing we have in common. For Mary and for us, the only way to be free of sin is to surrender to doing God's will. Complete surrender is complete sinlessness.

“Free of sin” means “perfectly one with God” by sharing fully in God's divine Life—which is the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit. Jesus prayed that we might be One with the Three Persons as they are One with each other: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us” (John 17:21).

When our relationship with the Three Persons is total surrender to the Father as Source of all Being, to the Son as Head of the Body and Bridegroom, and to the Spirit as indwelling Light, Empowerment, and Love, we will be free of sin.

For this Mary “prays for us sinners”—that we will be one with the Father, Son, and Spirit through total, loving surrender, now and forever.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Whenever you become aware of your sinfulness, ask how a more complete surrender to God could change that.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Mary, pray everything in my life will be done unto me according to God's will.*



**DECEMBER 12 • SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK**

Zechariah 2:14–17 or Revelation 11:19a, 12: 1–6a, 10ab; Luke 1:26–38  
or Luke 1:39–47 • FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

# Surrender is choosing death

*Now, and at the hour of our death*

Death is the Great Surrender. The price of Eternal Life is surrender of all we have and are “at the hour of our death.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. On finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.” (Matthew 13:45)

But we can purchase the Kingdom on the installment plan. Paul wrote: “The promised Holy Spirit... is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s possession” (see Ephesians 1:13, 2 Corinthians 1:22). The more we surrender, the more we are filled with the Spirit, until, little by little, “we all become one in faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, and form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature” (Ephesians 4:11).

Mary was totally surrendered to God from the first moment of her existence. We ask her to pray for us sinners, that we will surrender as much as we can “now,” and continue surrendering until we surrender totally, without reserve, “at the hour of our death.”

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Welcome every chance to surrender as a trial run for death.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit—now and forever.”*

**DECEMBER 13 • THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

Isaiah 61:1–2a, 10–11; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24; John 1: 6–8, 19–28

# The Incarnation extended

*And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.*

Mary saw God’s promise fulfilled exponentially as Jesus emerged from her body, grew to maturity, began his ministry, and finally revealed the full mystery of his love through death and resurrection. She saw the Word made flesh progressively more and more, and saw how good it was.

Today she sees the multiple manifestations of the Word made flesh in us, as we make Jesus visible in the world, revealing his mind and heart in our physical words and actions.

This is the undreamed-of realization of the angel’s promise, “You will conceive in your womb and bear a son.” In all who have “become Christ” as members of Christ’s body, the fruit of Mary’s womb has become a blessing beyond imagination. The Word is made flesh in us. We are the “aroma of Christ” in the world (2 Corinthians 2:14).

This is “Christ in us, the hope of glory!” (Colossians 1:27).o

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Whenever you encounter someone with whom you have the kind of relationship that allows it, smile and quote St. Paul, “Christ in you, the hope of glory!” Why not make a habit of it?

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** Pray all day, as often as you can remember, “*Lord, I am your body. Do this with me, do this in me, do this through me.*”

# The fulfillment is— a world full of grace

*Hail, full of grace!*

The world is being filled with grace. Every baptism, every new acceptance of the Good News, expands throughout the world the divine life of God. With every conversion to live his divine Life more authentically, the Word is made flesh more extensively on earth “until we all become one in faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, and form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature” (Ephesians 4:13).

This is the realization of God’s “plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things” in Christ, and make him “the head over all things for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Ephesians 1:10–23). This is the mystery of the Incarnation extended, the mystery of a world “full of grace.”

The world will be full of grace when all the members of his body are totally surrendered to Christ our Head—as Mary was. Then the Word will be made flesh as the glory of God shining through all humanity. That is the fulfillment of the promise.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Every time you see any human activity, see Jesus acting in all the people involved.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *“Hail Mary, full of grace, pride and preview of our race, let my only longing be, that he might live his life in me.”*

**DECEMBER 15 • TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK**

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28-32

# The fulfillment is— Jesus with us

*The Lord is with you.*

The Lord was with Mary in the way unique to Christianity. He was made flesh in her. But he did not just dwell in her womb. By grace her whole body became his body.

Jesus takes our bodies to be his body. We are literally two in one flesh. There is no way he could be with us more closely, more intimately.

I used to feel sad, thinking that, had I followed Jesus as one of his seventy-two disciples, I would have been at the end of the line, far from him, not one of his special friends. I finally realized that, on earth, what limited access to Jesus was space and time. Physically, only a few people could stand next to him, or speak privately to him in a day. But now we all have equal access. Jesus is “with” each of us—personally, individually, intimately.

He even dwells in each of us. He could not be “with us” more. As the Lord was with Mary, he is with each of us—as closely, as intimately as our heart and soul.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** When people are together, notice what their body language tells you, their facial expression. How many are really “with” each other as God is with us?

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** “*The Lord is with me.*” Say it with your hand on your heart.

**DECEMBER 16 • WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK**

Isaiah 45:6b–8, 18, 21c–25; Luke 7:18b–23

# The fulfillment is— a blessed world

*Blessed are you among women*

The blessing of Christianity is the Word made flesh—in Jesus and in us.

The Word made flesh in us makes us the “aroma of Christ” in the world, “the fragrance that comes from knowing him...a fragrance of life leading to life” (2 Corinthians 2:14). We want to be a blessing to everyone who encounters Jesus acting *with us*, *in us*, and *through us*—not just in special moments, but all day, every day.

For this, we need to be aware, conscious of his presence in us. Finding concrete ways to foster this awareness can be a project to crown Advent.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** I can fill my house with sounds, fragrances and sights, with music and incense, symbols and songs that tell me, “This is holy ground. God is here.” I can adorn my body as a temple of the Lord, the dwelling place of God. I can touch my knees and even my forehead to the floor when I pray. I can become used to the texture and weight of the Bible in my hand. I can touch my spouse and children as reverently as I hold the host at Communion. All this incarnates my divine life creatively, in words and actions that give flesh to God.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *This is holy ground, for I am holy. Christ is in me.*

**DECEMBER 17 • THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK**

Genesis 49:2, 8–10; Matthew 1:1–17

# The fulfillment is— the fruit of our womb

*And blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus.*

The fruit of my womb is also blessed. It is myself! I am the net result of all my free choices in life.

St. Gregory preached, “We are in a sense our own parents. We give birth to ourselves by our own free choice of what is good.” Like the bread we put on the altar at Mass, we are “the fruit of the earth and the work of human hands.”

Gregory focused specifically on the choice we make to “become Christ.” “Such a choice becomes possible for us,” he says, “when we have received God into ourselves and have become children of God.” By accepting to be born again “of water and Spirit” (John 3:5), we “give birth to ourselves” as the body of Christ. We “become Christ.”

Gregory reminds us we “must reach maturity.” The birthing continues until we all “become one in faith and in the knowledge of God’s Son, and *form that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature*” (Ephesians 4:12–13). Then each of us can say with Mary, “blessed is the fruit of my womb!”

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Every time you make even the smallest choice, be conscious it is an act of self-creation.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Lord, I give you my body. Be in me all you can be.*

# The fulfillment is— a work in progress

*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners...*

When Jesus took flesh in Mary, not only was he perfect in her womb, but also in her body that revealed him as a woman. Mary was already what we become by baptism—the visible body of Christ on earth.

Because Mary was “full of grace,” had she actually been God made flesh as a woman instead of as a man, we would not have seen in her behavior any difference at all! “Full of grace” means fully surrendered to living divine life. In Mary the Word was able to express himself without distortion. Not so in “us sinners.”

But we will grow. God’s promise will be fulfilled. One day we will all be “full of grace.” In Christ, the whole Church is “joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord.” In him we are being “built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God” (Ephesians 2:19).

The fulfillment of the promise is a work in progress. We ask Mary to pray for us sinners now, while we are still on the way.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Whenever you think, say, or do anything imperfect, think of what you will be and rejoice.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Lord, let me be transformed by the renewal of my mind, so I may judge what is good, pleasing to God, and perfect. (See Romans 12:2.)*

**DECEMBER 19 • SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK**

Judges 13:2–7, 24–25a; Luke 1:5–25

# The fulfillment is— flesh made Word

*Now, and at the hour of our death*

In Jesus, the Word became flesh “and we have seen his glory” (John 1:14). In us, flesh becomes Word, “and he has been glorified in us.”

The words the Father “gave to Jesus, he has given to us.” And when we give flesh to his words, Jesus is glorified in our flesh (see John 7:8).

This is part of the mystery of sharing in the divine life of God. We won’t understand it until all have risen from the dead, but already it changes our view of the body:

So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, a physical body. What is raised is imperishable, a spiritual body.... “The first man, Adam, became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (See I Corinthians 15:42.)

God uses our flesh to give divine life to others. We need to venerate our flesh, as we do the flesh of Jesus and Mary.

During Advent we pray—and ask Mary to pray—that our flesh will be “made word” as the undistorted expression of the Word of God “Now, and at the hour of our death.”

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Be aware your body is divine. Everything physical is also spiritual. Let Jesus do everything you do *with you, in you, and through you.*

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** “*This is my flesh for the life of the world.*”



**DECEMBER 20 • FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Romans 16:25–27; Luke 1:26–38

## “The religion of promises”

*Pray for us, O holy Mother of God  
That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.*

Could this be a new definition for Christianity: “‘The religion of promises’”? It is thought-provoking.

That would make *hope* a constant motivation for living as followers of Jesus: “that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.”

This hope is not just “pie in the sky.” We experience its promises realized already in that special love, joy, and peace—in all the “fruits of the Spirit”—that can only be explained by the divine life Jesus gives (Matthew 19:29, John 3:15).

But, above all, we measure our appreciation for what is promised by what we are willing to give for it. Jesus taught this in the parable about “the pearl of great price” (Matthew 13:46). The more we are willing to give, the more we know our hope is real.

How do I know I am “worthy of the promises of Christ”? What am I willing to give to know I really want to live Christianity to the full?

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Notice how many promises you hear every day, mostly in advertisements. What shows you believe in them? What shows you believe in Christ’s promises?

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *“Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.”*

**DECEMBER 21 • MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK**

Song of Songs 2:8–14 or Zephaniah 3:14–18a; Luke 1:39–45

# The promise is life to the full

*Pour forth, O Lord, your grace into our hearts!*

All the promises of Jesus can be summed up in two words: “eternal life.”

This is “the grace” we ask God to pour into our hearts, the gift of taking part in the divine interaction of Father, Son, and Spirit, experiencing with them the Oneness of all that is Good and True and Beautiful, Being Itself. Forever.

It begins on earth. God has poured forth his grace into our hearts! We know the Father as only the Son can know him—because “God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Matthew 11:27, Galatians 4:6).

Of course, “now we see in a mirror, dimly. But then we will see face to face.” And “when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is” (1 Corinthians 13:12, 1 John 3:2).

That is the promise of Christianity. Think what it will be like to share with the Three Persons in experiencing completely all that is True and Good and One in God and all creation, for all eternity. Heaven is simply Christianity come true.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Notice the joy you take in knowing something true, appreciating something good, recognizing unity in things. How will it be to see fully the Truth, Goodness, and Oneness of all things, created and Uncreated?

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Lord, let me know as you know.*

# Fullness is Incarnation

*That we to whom the Incarnation of Christ, your Son,  
was made known by the message of an angel...*

The “message of the angel” was Incarnation—extended to “Christ in us, the “hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). The hope of glory is, first, God made flesh in Jesus; then, “Christ in us,” his body on earth. The Word made flesh is the key to everything: the key to living the divine life of God, the secret of being divine, the mystery of being Christian.

To be Christian is to continue the Incarnation of Jesus by living divine life in human flesh. What is not both divine and “in the flesh” is not Christian. To be Christian is to let Jesus express himself in and through our physical actions.

Incarnation is fullness: “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace” (John 1:16).

To all who received him...he gave power to become children of God, who were born...of God.

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son. (John 1:4–14)*

This is what we celebrate at Christmas.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Practice “giving flesh” to Christ’s words and love in all your interactions with others. Let divine hope be obvious in all the goals you pursue.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Lord, in all I do, let me “give flesh to Life, Life to the full” (John 10:10).*

**DECEMBER 23 • WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK**

Malachi 3:1–4, 23–24; Luke 1:57–66

# Passion leads to glory

*May, by his passion and cross, be brought to the glory...*

“Glory” is a passionate word. Only the passionate experience glory.

Jesus came to glory through his passionate act of offering himself for us on the cross. We, too, surrender to the crosses we bear, not just with resignation, but with passion (a passion of will, because emotions aren’t free). Christians don’t just accept the cross; we embrace it. And our “crosses” are any results of the sin of the world—from inconveniences to serious grief—that fall on our shoulders. We bear them with all the love we can to redeem the world.

But it is *Christ’s* passion that brings us to glory, not ours. When Paul says, “in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” (Colossians 1:24), all that is lacking is Christ *visibly* suffering in our time. That he does in us, his body. We simply unite ourselves to him to express his love visibly in our flesh today.

If we try to be passionate about letting Jesus express himself in our bodies, we will keep bearing our crosses with more understanding, more love, and a greater sense of glory.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** All day, do everything you do with the quiet passion of love. When it is difficult, join yourself to Jesus carrying his cross.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** “*Lord, give me your passion, so I might know your glory.*”

**DECEMBER 24 • THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK**

2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67–79

# We are his glory

*The glory of his resurrection.*

We are the glory of Jesus. Jesus said to the Father, “All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them” (John 17:10).

As Christ’s risen body, we are the “sign of Jonah” (Luke 11:29), the only visible sign and proof on earth today of his resurrection. We are this when our lifestyle cannot be explained unless Jesus is risen and living in us.

Paul wrote: “We always pray for you, asking that... Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him” (2 Thessalonians 1:12). “For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:11).

And, “Since you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above” (Colossians 3:1). To do that is to experience the risen life every day—and make it visible to others. That is how we become “the glory of his resurrection.” It is for this that “we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Glorify God consciously, all day long. Whether putting on your clothes in the morning or solving a problem at work, keep asking, “By doing this, how do I glorify God?”

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *Father, I have been buried and raised with Christ. Let me walk in newness of life.*

**DECEMBER 25 • THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD**

(Mass during the day) Isaiah 52:7–10; Hebrews 1:1–6; John 1:1–18

# Promise, response, fulfillment

*“The blessed hope...and manifestation of the glory”*

Christmas Mass is a final cymbal crash to climax Advent. Isaiah sings the joy of the *promise*, Hebrews the imperativeness of our *response*, and John the glory of its *fulfillment*.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet that bring glad tidings...

All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.

Hebrews insists our response is imperative. God has become flesh. His word must not be ignored:

He has spoken to us through the Son...heir of all things, through whom he created the universe...the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, who sustains all things by his mighty word...for to which of the angels did God ever say: “You are my son; this day I have begotten you”?

And John says our response is not just human. Its effect and its cause are divine.

To those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, reborn...not by human choice or decision but of God.

For in the mystery of the Word made flesh a new light of your glory has shone... God made visible, that we may be caught up through him in love of things invisible (Christmas Preface).

Christmas is the mystery, the glory, and fulfillment of the Incarnation.

**A PRACTICAL SUGGESTION** Be Christ—consciously.

---

**ADVENT PRAYER** *“I am your body; this day you have begotten me.”*



LITURGICAL CALENDAR FOR

# ADVENT 2020

NOVEMBER

**29 SUN** **FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**30 MON** **St. Andrew, apostle**

DECEMBER

**1 TUE** Advent Weekday  
**2 WED** Advent Weekday  
**3 THU** **St. Francis Xavier, priest**  
**4 FRI** Advent Weekday  
*St. John Damascene, priest & doctor of the Church*  
**5 SAT** Advent Weekday

**6 SUN** **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**7 MON** **St. Ambrose, bishop & doctor of the Church**  
**8 TUE** **THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**  
**9 WED** Advent Weekday  
*Juan Diego Cuauhtlatatzin*  
**10 THU** Advent Weekday  
*Our Lady of Loreto*  
**11 FRI** Advent Weekday  
*St. Damasus I, pope*  
**12 SAT** **Our Lady of Guadalupe**

**13 SUN** **THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**14 MON** **St. John of the Cross, priest & doctor of the Church**  
**15 TUE** Advent Weekday  
**16 WED** Advent Weekday  
**17 THU** Advent Weekday  
**18 FRI** Advent Weekday  
**19 SAT** Advent Weekday

**20 SUN** **FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**21 MON** Advent Weekday  
*St. Peter Canisius, priest & doctor of the Church*  
**22 TUE** Advent Weekday  
**23 WED** Advent Weekday  
*St. John of Kanty, priest*  
**24 THU** Advent Weekday  
**25 FRI** **THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD**

✠ COURTESY OF ✠  
**Living with Christ**  
 YOUR DAILY COMPANION FOR  
 PRAYING AND LIVING THE EUCHARIST  
[www.livingwithchrist.us](http://www.livingwithchrist.us)

