

Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2014, Week 1

Reader 1: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 13:33-37)

Stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader: Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone: A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader: Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2: Reflection on the Gospel

How do you feel about this time of year? As the world around us prolongs its celebration of Halloween and the supermarkets advertise for Christmas, the message of this Gospel is sharp. Be watchful! Be alert! When I was a seminarian an eminent theologian once told us that we are living in the "tension between the already and the not yet". I associate his words with Advent. In a world where the prevailing mood is "I want it all, and I want it now!" Advent demands work. In fact we fly in the face of the world around us by even talking about the waiting mood of the Advent season.

Perhaps this will be the year when we shall speak out loudly about the spirit of waiting and its importance in any preparation. During the weeks ahead we wait for our celebration of the Incarnation - an event which brings us light and hope in a confused world. Jesus comes from the Father to gather us together in the Holy Spirit and to bring us safely to Heaven.

This Advent let us challenge the headlong rush that would have us gallop from year to year. In our minds and hearts let us foster a spirit of watchfulness, an alertness that waits in reverence for the Word made Flesh.

Silence

Leader: I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader: Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

Group returns to page 20 of Advent booklet

Dioceses of

Achonry, Ardagh & Clonmacnois, Armagh, Clonfert, Elphin, Kerry, Killala, Kilmore, Limerick, Ossory, Tuam & Waterford & Lismore.

Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2014, Week 2.

Reader 1: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 1:1-8)

Make his paths straight.

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

"Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;
he will prepare your way.
A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight,

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader: Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone: A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader: Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2: Reflection on the Gospel

Today's gospel opens with the words 'The beginning'. What do these words evoke for you? Beginnings carry freshness, vitality and promise. There is something deep in us that 'insists that we forever begin'. (Brendan Kennelly)

These two words, relate to the first words of Genesis, "In the beginning" when God's creative life-giving Spirit hovered over the empty void to bring forth life. That same Spirit, hovering over Mary's womb brings forth the new creation, 'Jesus Christ, Son of God'. There is an icon in a monastery in Sinai showing Christ in such a way that one side of his face shows forth his humanity, while the other depicts his divinity.

The figure of John the Baptist with his unconventional dress and diet looms large in this gospel. He is the preparer, the messenger, the proclaimers of repentance, the preacher, the wilderness prophet, but one who has a clear sense of his own identity and his relationship to Jesus the 'one who will baptise you with the Holy Spirit'.

Can we 'Go back to the very beginning' as the song says and pray that this Advent will open us further, to the mystery of the identity of 'Jesus Christ, Son of God' and the good news that He brings?

Silence

Leader: I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader: Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

(Go to page 28)

Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2014, Week 3

Reader 1: A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (Jn 1:6-8,19-28)

There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.

A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" he not only declared, but declared quite openly, "I am not the Christ". "Well then", they asked "are you Elijah?" "I am not" he said. "Are you the prophet?" He answered "No". So they said to him "Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?" So John said, "I am as Isaiah prophesised:

a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight path for the Lord.

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, "Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah and not the prophet?" John replied, "I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo this sandal-strap". This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader: Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone: A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader: Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2: Reflection on the Gospel

Next Sunday's Mass invites us to prepare to celebrate with joy the birth among us of the Son of God. The witness of John the Baptist is given to help us.

When John the Evangelist wrote his gospel at the end of the first century, he and his community were suffering persecution. The Jews who believed in the divinity of Jesus were being expelled from the synagogues. This left them vulnerable and asking "Where is the Risen Christ?" John sought to reassure them that the Risen Christ was in their midst.

Have you noticed how the word "witness" is used four times here to describe who John the Baptist is, e.g. "a witness to speak for the light"? Have you noticed too how his witness leads to him being questioned by the men sent by the Pharisees, men who want to deter him from witnessing to the light?

As baptized Christians we have been anointed to bring the good news of Jesus to others. Each of us is also called to be "a witness to speak for the light", a joyful witness to the presence of Jesus here in our midst. Mindful that our salvation has already begun let us pray for the grace to give joyful witness and for a deeper conviction that there stands among us the One who will come in glory.

Silence

Leader: I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader: Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

Group returns to page 44 of Advent booklet.

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Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2014, Week 4

Reader 1: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (Lk 1:26-38)

“Listen, you are to conceive and bear a son.”

The Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her "Rejoice so highly favoured. The Lord is with you". She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, "Mary, do not be afraid. You have won God's favour. Listen, you are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the house of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end. Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" the angel answered "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God". "I am the handmaid of the Lord" said Mary "let what you have said be done to me". And the angel left her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader: Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone: A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader: Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2: Advent Summons by Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C.

Come forth from the holy place, Sweet Child,
Come from the quiet dark where virginal heartbeats tick your moments.

Come away from the red music of Mary's veins.
Come out from the Tower of David Sweet Child, from the House of Gold.

Leave your lily-cloister, leave your holy mansion,
Quit your covenant ark. O Child, be born!

Be born, sweet Child, in our unholy hearts.

Come to our trembling, Helpless Child.
Come to our littleness, Little Child,
Be born unto us who have kept the faltering vigil.
Be given, be born, be ours again.

Came forth from your holy haven, come away from your perfect shrine,
Come to our wind-racked souls from the flawless tent, Sweet Child.

Be born, little Child, In our unholy hearts.

Silence

Leader: I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

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