

ADVENT REFLECTION 2019

Week 4: Saying 'yes' to God's plan

SCRIPTURE

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the power of the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.'

Matthew 1:18-21

*The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,
the world and all its peoples.
It is he who set it on the seas;
on the waters he made it firm.*

Psalms 24:1-2

The psalmist reminds us that every living thing is part of God's creation; without him nothing would exist. As we pray Mary's great hymn of praise we are reminded of our responsibility to care for those less fortunate than ourselves and to nurture the world God has created for us all to share.

PRAYING THE MAGNIFICAT

*Mary, advocate for the lowly and the outcast
Mary, advocate for the marginalised and disadvantaged
Mary, advocate for the undervalued and unloved
Mary, advocate for those who are displaced, dispossessed, forced to flee, living in fear
Mary, advocate for those who suffer prejudice due to ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality or creed
Mary, advocate for those who do not know where the next meal is coming from
Mary, advocate for those who lack clean water and proper shelter
Mary, advocate for those who sleep in shop doorways
Mary, advocate for those who only know poverty and despair
Mary, advocate for those who are in debt to loan sharks
Mary, advocate for those who are tired, lonely and depressed
Mary, advocate for those who find each day an unbearable burden*

*Mary's Magnificat – a joyful song of praise to God – announces a better way
Mary sings praise to God whose mercy is boundless
Mary sings praise to God who is constant in his love from generation to generation
Mary sings praise to God who has a special love for the poor and lowly
Mary sings praise to God who fills the hungry and sends the rich away empty
Mary sings praise to God who has promised to love and care for his people
Mary sings praise to God for whom nothing is impossible*

*Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us
Pray for us*

*Blessed be God
Blessed be God
Blessed be God
Blessed be God
Blessed be God
Blessed be God
Blessed be God*

REFLECTION

For the past three weeks we have tried to make space for quiet reflection amidst the hurly burly of the Christmas season with all its pulls on our time and our purse-strings. Our modern world is so immediate that we have lost the joy of waiting patiently. The build-up to Christmas can be so frenetic that it's easy to lose sight of its true meaning. It's great to buy gifts for our loved ones, but do we need to spend so extravagantly?

As we get ready to welcome the Christ child we are challenged to reflect on the truth Jesus brings and to consider our response, inspired by Mary's unconditional 'Yes' to God's plan. May we too say 'Yes' to his message and respond to his calling with joyful and willing hearts.

In this final week of Advent we remind ourselves of what Christmas really means for us as people of faith: the birth of the promised Saviour. To prepare well for the Christmas celebration it can be helpful to make space to sit quietly for a few minutes in the presence of God; to take time to wonder at the beauty of creation and to give thanks for all that is good.

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