

ADVENT REFLECTION SERVICE

Theme : Finding Peace and Hope in this Season

Opening Song: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel - # 312

(few moments of quieting)

Leader:

Advent is a season of "waiting" - when we look and watch expectantly for Christ's coming in glory. Henri Nouwen said "Waiting is essential to our spiritual life...waiting for God is an active, alert, yes, a joyful waiting."

Let us attempt to be active and alert in our waiting this Advent Season by trying to live fully the present moment in order to recognize the sign of the One for whom we wait. It may mean a call to "suffering", to recognize the pain of our own brokenness; a call to "forgiveness", a call to "real discipline" in dealing with the world's distractions and let GOD be.....

Letting God be manifested through us is the path to the TRUE joy, hope and inner peace which comes with the giving of ourselves to others through Him.

Reflect: What do I need to do this Advent to foster my growth in the Spirit?

Leader:

Consider ONE thing I need to get rid of to make room for the coming of the Christ Child. (eg. bigotry, self centeredness, pride, arrogance....) Write it on a paper strip.

Leader now invites each person to come forward, light the paper and place in container.

Prayer:

Lord, help us, the women of the Catholic Women's League and friends, to put aside our burdensome preoccupations and to open our hearts to you in childlike prayer in this Advent season. Let us see and appreciate the goodness and innocence in others - and in ourselves as well.

Scripture: Luke 1 : 26 -38

Reflection:

"A moment came and that is all, a moment came and passed
And in the passing left a young girl here who was NOT now alone."

Close your eyes, go to your imagination to be with Mary as she lives through this FEAR-FILLED, yet JOY-FILLED moment in her life. Share with someone next to you, some of your such moments.

Can you identify with Mary's TRUST?

What do I need to do in my life to revive my commitment to say "yes" to God as Mary did?

Prayer: WE WATCH and WAIT for YOU

Hidden God,
wherever you are in your own kind of space,
we watch and wait for you-
to startle us to wakeful newness
in this Advent season.

Come and trust into us
the spirit of daring and courage
to make flesh on earth
a bit of the kingdom of heaven.

Come and fulfill through us Mary's vision
of mercy stretching to all generations,
of the proud scattered, the powerful punctured,
of the rich emptied and the poor filled,
and our lives magnifying your grace.

Come lace our songs, our shopping, our celebrations
with your mystery and strange magnificence,
and let us sense it in the small, strange stirrings
of the earth and of our hearts, now and always. Amen

PSALM 25 (sing)

Response: To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul

O my God, in you I trust
Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame.
Do not let my enemies exult over me. (Response)

Make me to know your ways, O Lord
Teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me.
For you are the God of my salvation.
For you I wait. (Response)

O guard my life and deliver me.
Do not let me be put to shame for I take refuge in you.
May integrity and uprightness preserve me for
I wait for you. (Response)

BREAK

Scripture: Luke 1: 39 -56.

Reflect: How do I relate to Mary`s sudden need to visit Elizabeth.

Think about those you love and share your life with and how you can touch their lives this Advent.

Think about those you do not love and what you wish for them this Advent.

Magnificat of friendship Luke 1: 39 - 56

My soul flowers in the light of your love, my God,
and my spirit sings Alleluia in the reality of your joyful presence because you have chosen my
kinswoman and me with the summons of your eyes.
Yes, we are known now and for all time. We are known as women, blessed, Holy is your name.
The tenderness of your hand rests on us as we journey in your way.
Your power in my life has led me into the embrace of loving arms,
You have exposed my lonely pride that I might turn my head to your nurturing breast.
You have revealed the hollowness of achievements and have opened in my heart a space filled
with simple, loving moments.
My hunger you have satisfied, my excess you have ignored.
You are my help as I remember your tender love for me,
...for we have touched each other - you and I..and we have made promises...
I remember your tenderness for all you have begun in me
and in those with whom I walk
and I respond with all that I am becoming
in this hour and in all times to come.

Scripture: Luke 2 : 1 - 20

Reflect:

Place yourself with Mary and Joseph. Think about any thoughts, fears, sense of anticipation...that may have occupied their minds.

Again, try to identify with Mary`s TRUST. (how short-lived were all her concerns!...they immediately disappear with the glorious birth!)

Imagine you being there with the shepherds...what did you hear? feel? wonder?

Think about the special recollections you will carry with you for the rest of your life.

Think about how you can be a witness of God`s love in the encounters of your daily life.

Prayer: MARY

She is my strength, Most Holy Virgin, privileged one from birth
Her love restores the weakest to citadels of worth.

Without fear, I speak to her and even as I start
The words which seem the hardest are closest to my heart.
There comes a `captured` moment in the quietness of day
When through the healing silence, I somehow hear her say-
`Don`t worry, I am with you through loneliness and fear
I will be your confidence; remember I am here. `
And so, I do remember at any time or place
The power of my endurance is in her warm embrace.

STRETCH BREAK

Intercessions:

Leader: Let us pray now for all whose lives , like our own, need the healing and hope of your Son, Jesus.

Left: For the Church, the people of God,

Right: Keep them mindful of their call to bring about God`s kingdom of love, peace and hope.

Left: For Pope Benedict, Bishops, priests and all leaders

Right: May they follow Christ`s example of justice and service for all people.

Left: For all who have abundance

Right: May they be mindful of the world`s poor and be grateful to God for their gifts.

Left: For those who carry hurts, anger or other heartaches

Right: May God help them find the peace that only He can give.

Left: For the poor, the unemployed, and all who are burdened

Right: Gift them, Lord, with friends who care about them and help them see their blessings which are hidden.

Left: For those whose faith has grown dim and whose sense of Christ seems far away

Right: Raise in their hearts a great yearning for you, Lord, that will welcome your grace and leave them in peace.

Left: For the tired, weary and worn from the constant generous giving of their lives in love and service

Right: Be their energy and enthusiasm, Lord, and shed your light of joy in their lives.

Left: For those who grieve - grieve the loss of loved ones and for those whose hearts are lonely

Right: Touch them, Lord with good memories and transform their inner heartaches into a wisdom that lies beyond this life.

Left: For those whose lives speak of growing old
Right: Bless them, Lord, with peace and serenity; let them know what gentle witness they are to all of us who still ponder the meaning of life.

Left: For our children and young people
Right: Keep their hearts full of wonder, and thank you for slipping some of their delights and simplicity into our own hearts each time we celebrate the Christmas moment.

Left: For our deceased members of the Catholic Women`s League, our relatives and friends
Right: Grant them eternal life, O Lord, and may they rest in peace. Amen

Closing Prayer:

Loving God, lighten our hearts; help us to know Jesus` presence and gentleness and to approach His coming with hope-filled minds. We know you are with us as we wait for your coming. Open our minds and hearts to welcome you each day of our lives. Amen.

Blessing:

May the blessing of God`s promise be upon us. May the gift of joyful expectation and eager awaiting be ours, so that we may prepare ourselves for the coming of the Prince of Peace.

May the Light of the One who comes shine on our pathways and enable us to see the Presence of our God who walks with us.

And may God who is Creation – Love - Redeeming - Presence and Sanctifying Spirit come into our hearts and our lives to remain with us forever.
Amen.

Song: O Come Divine Messiah CBW No. 310

***Prepared by Life Member Philomena Carroll
October 2009***