



A Mini Retreat for Yourself or in a Group □ 45 – 50 min.
Dedicated to the Council of Catholic Women

Awaking Our Hearts

Leader: As we the Council of Catholic Women, walk through Advent, a season immersed in expectation and holy longing, we find no better companion than Mary, the Mother of God, who serves as a model for understanding the season's waiting. Please join me in praying for the patience that Mary has shown.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Gentle Mother Mary, the Mother of our Lord, our mother and Our Lady of Good Counsel, you who awaited the birth of Jesus with quiet trust and watchful hope, teach us to wait with hope, patience and trust.

In every season of uncertainty, help us to surrender our timelines and anxieties, just as you surrendered your days to God's unfolding plan. When we feel restless or burdened by the unknown, remind us of your calm acceptance and steadfast faith.

Grant us the grace to embrace each day's unfolding, to listen deeply for God's voice, and to welcome God's invitations with open hearts. May our patience, become an act of love, a gentle "yes" to whatever God is bringing to birth within us.

Walk beside us Mary, as we wait for the coming of Christ. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: She, who carried the Light of the World beneath her heart, Mary understands better than anyone, the profound meaning of Advent Waiting. Mary's nine-month wait for Jesus' birth was not passive. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke both highlight Mary, actively engaged in God's plan.

Remember that during December, our Church gives us two significant Marian feasts - the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, that enrich our understanding of how to prepare for Christ's coming, for we too carry Christ.

Meditate, Read and Share: Meditate on The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and how they have profound theological meanings that showcases our journey of faith and waiting for the coming of Christ, both in our hearts and in the world. Then, read the Gospels below, to answer and share the questions below.

- Luke 1:26-38, 1:46-55, 2:19 and 2:51
- Matthew 1:18-23
- How did Mary spend her time, while awaiting the birth of Jesus?
- How can Mary's example help you show patience and hope in your ministry?
- In which aspects of your spiritual journey have faith and patience been essential in helping you overcome challenges?

Reader 1: Advent is a season of longing—a time to awaken our hearts to the promise of Emmanuel, God with us. It is a season rich with meaning, filled with symbols and traditions that help us prepare to welcome Christ anew. Yet, amid the world's distractions and the rush of holiday preparations, it can be difficult to maintain a spirit of hopeful expectation. Here, the example of Mary becomes especially precious. She is the woman who waited with perfect trust, who carried the Word in her womb, and whose "Yes" reply, opened the world to salvation.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Blessed Mary, Mother of God, your life was a testament to unwavering faith and patient endurance. You accepted God's will with grace, even when it was difficult. Pray for me, that I may learn from your example and cultivate patience in my own life and ministry. Help me to trust in God's timing, even when I face delays and disappointments. Guide my thoughts to you, and help me to remain hopeful and steadfast, like you traveled to Bethlehem with Joseph. May your intercession bring me strength and peace as I strive to live a life and be of service to others in a way that is pleasing to God. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Annunciation—Welcoming God's Invitation

Reader 2: Scripture Reflection: Luke 1:26-38

Our Advent journey begins with the Annunciation. The angel Gabriel appears to a young woman in Nazareth, greeting her with words that echo through the centuries: "Rejoice, highly favored one! The Lord is with you." Mary's response is not automatic, but thoughtful—she is troubled and ponders what this greeting could mean. In this moment, Mary models for us the posture of Advent: openness to the unexpected ways God enters our lives.

Leader: Take time to imagine the scene. The simplicity of Mary's home, the startling presence of the angel, the weight of the message she receives. (Pause for a minute.)

God's invitation often comes when we least expect it, and like Mary, we might feel unworthy or afraid. Her question, "How can this be?" captures the human heart's honest response to God's mysterious plans. Yet, she listens, she trusts, and she gives her wholehearted YES: "Let it be done to me according to your word."

All: Amen!

Meditate, Share and Pray: Meditate on areas where God may be inviting you to say "Yes," whether it be within your CCW, personal life. Share what fears or doubts may arise? Pray and ask Mary to help you respond with trust and openness.

The Visitation—Carrying Christ to Others

Reader 3: Scripture Reflection: Luke 1:39-45

No sooner does Mary say yes to God than she sets out in haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Her journey across the hills of Judea is not just a physical act, but a spiritual one. She brings Christ, hidden within her, to another who is also experiencing a miraculous pregnancy. The encounter bursts into joy as Elizabeth greets her: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb!"

During Advent, Mary teaches us not to turn inward in our waiting, but to reach out in charity and solidarity. The joy that comes from Christ within us is not meant to be kept to ourselves, but shared, especially with those in need or in difficulty.

Meditate, Pray and Share: Meditate on who might need a visit, whether in person, by phone, or through a note of encouragement. Pray for the grace to bring Christ's joy to others this Advent. Share what you are going to do to put your prayer into action?

The Magnificat—Rejoicing in God's Promises

Reader 4: Scripture Reflection: Luke 1:46-55

Mary's song, the Magnificat, rises like a hymn of hope in the wilderness. "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior." Her words overflow with gratitude, humility, and awe at the marvels God has done—not just for her, but for all who are lowly or hungry or forgotten. In the Magnificat, we hear the voice of one who knows God's faithfulness intimately, who trusts that the promises of old are being fulfilled.

Advent can be a season of quiet rejoicing, punctuated by moments of gratitude. In Mary's canticle, we find a pattern for our own praise, even when circumstances are uncertain or the world feels heavy. Her joy is rooted in her trust in God's mercy and her awareness of the unfolding story of salvation.

Meditate and Share: Meditate on how you would add to your Magnificat. Share a prayer or song that expresses your gratitude for God's blessings and hope. Why did you pick that one?

The Nativity—Receiving Christ with Mary

Reader 5: Scripture Reflection: Luke 2:1-20

At last, the journey of Advent leads us to Bethlehem, to the humble stable where Mary and Joseph welcome the newborn Savior. Mary's experience at the Nativity is marked by simplicity and wonder. She wraps the Infant in swaddling clothes, lays him in a manger, and treasures all these things, pondering them in her heart.

Here, Mary teaches us how to receive Christ—by making room in our hearts, by embracing humility, and by contemplating the mystery of God's love made flesh. At Christmas, as we behold the Child with Mary, we are invited to gaze with wonder, to treasure, and to rejoice in the gift of Emmanuel.

Meditate, Share and Pray: In quiet meditation, imagine yourself beside Mary in the stable. Share what you see, hear, or feel? Ask her, in prayer, to help you welcome Christ into your life with openness and love.

Conclusion: Walking with Mary Beyond Advent

Leader: As Advent comes to its close, Mary's presence continues to inspire. She is not only the mother of Jesus, but the mother of all believers, a wise and gentle guide who points always to her Son. Her example encourages us to remain attentive to God's voice, generous in love, and steadfast in faith—not only during Advent, but within our CCW and throughout the year and.

Let us walk with Mary, trusting that as she guided the Church in its earliest days, so too she will journey with us through every season with hope, love and patience.

All: Loving God, as this retreat comes to an end, we are more prepared to begin our Advent journey, to behold the miracle of Christmas. Thank you for the gift of Mary, our companion, our guide, and our example of faith. With grateful hearts, we ask you to help us walk with Mary beyond Advent, carrying her spirit of trust, humility, and steadfast love into our homes, ministry and every day of our lives. May her openness to your will inspire us to welcome Christ anew, not just in this holy season, but always.

Grant us the grace to listen for your voice, to serve with generosity, and to hope with unwavering faith. As Mary pondered your wonders in her heart, may we treasure your blessings and share your love with the world. Amen.

Further Resources

- Pray the Rosary, especially the Joyful Mysteries, which trace Mary's Advent journey.
- Practice Mary's habit of pondering God's Word in your heart through Lectio Divina.
- Reflect daily on Mary's "Yes" to God and what it teaches about trust.
- Imitate Mary's readiness to serve by reaching out to those in need.
- Keep a Mary Corner in your home during Advent.

May this mini retreat, guided by Mary's example, help you to prepare your heart for the coming of Christ. May you live Advent with renewed hope, and welcome the joy of Christmas with a spirit made ready by faith.