



A Mini Retreat for Yourself or in a Group
45 – 50 minutes • Dedicated to Deacons

The Grace of Mary in Our Hearts

Leader: As Advent dawns, we gather with my brothers, men ordained to serve, readying my spirit for the nearness of Christ. In these weeks of watching and waiting, we are invited to pause, to pray, and to be rekindled in my call. We turn to Mary, whose life was wholly offered in service to God's saving plan. Her

readiness, humility, and steadfast faith light the path of our own vocation as a deacon. May this retreat begin with her loving intercession and lead us to deeper joy in the service of Christ.

ALL: Lord Jesus, as I enter this time of retreat, open my heart to Your invitation to love and serve more deeply. Teach me to listen with the quiet strength of Mary, who reflected before she moved and obeyed before she questioned. May my Advent efforts follow hers.

Let her humility shape my thoughts and her courage shape my actions. May I grow in the grace to accompany Your people with mercy and truth. Stir in me a renewed passion for Your holy work and the joy of diaconal service. Help me to ponder, like Mary, and then to act with generous faith. I offer this retreat to You, Lord, trusting that every step draws me closer to Your heart.

I call to Holy Mother Mary, to walk with me as she walked with her Son, seeing the needs of God's people with a mother's heart. In my service to the poor, the wounded, and the weary, help me mirror her tenderness and resolve. Remind me that no act of charity is too small when offered with love and fidelity.

Leader: May the Mary guide us to speak less of ourselves and more of Christ, whom we are ordained to reveal. When our strength wanes, may Mary cradle our fatigue in her quiet confidence and God's providence. May she help form our hearts to recognize Christ in every person we are sent to serve. May we carry the light of Advent hope into every corner of God's family.

Meditate, Read and Discuss: Take some time to meditate upon a parallel course of service modeled by Mary and read the following and discuss your answers to the questions below.

- ◆ **1 Peter 4: 10** — *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."*
- ◆ **John 13:34** — *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."*
- ◆ **Galatians 6:9** — *"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up."*
- ◆ How do I answer my call to give vibrant, unceasing service, love, and faith?
- ◆ How do I use my gifts of service?
- ◆ Review the readings below to help me answer and reflect on these questions.

Reader 1: This Advent season ignites within me the sacred promise to serve God faithfully, with our heart ablaze in joyous devotion. Through Mary's example and guidance, we open our eyes wide to the horizon of His call, striving to become a living witness of service, love, and steadfast

faith. Through the trials and burdens of daily life, may we lift Christ's cross boldly and reverently, walking in His steps to the heights of glory.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. May my every act, every word, every prayer be a reflection of enduring love and a beacon to those I serve. Let this Advent awaken in me a courage that perseveres, a joy that radiates, and a love that transforms. May I, like Mary, be a vessel of Your light, so that my ministry may resound with Your holy presence.

The Humility of Mary

Reader 2: Luke 1:38 – *“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done to me according to your word.”*

Come, Lord Jesus. We enter this sacred time of Advent reflection. We seek to grow my heart to receive You more fully, inspired by Mary, whose life was wholly given to God's service. May her example awaken in us humility, faithfulness, obedience, and contemplative insight, as we dedicate ourselves anew as deacons to Your holy work. We will explore four sessions instrumental to our service as deacons.

We must first turn to Mary, the humble handmaid of the Lord. In her quiet submission to God's will, she shows us that true strength lies not in recognition, but in selfless service. We pray for the grace to set aside pride, to place God's work above my own, and to serve His people with a deacon's heart fully surrendered. We will not forget that we are here to serve and not to be served. This is what Advent calls for.

Meditate and Discuss:

- ◆ How does Mary's humility challenge the way I approach my own ministry as a deacon?
- ◆ How can I actively set aside pride in my daily ministry and personal life?
- ◆ What practical steps can I take to place God's work above my own ambitions or preferences?

Faithfulness Alongside Mary

Reader 3: Hebrews 11:1,6 – *“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for... without faith it is impossible to please God.”*

Mary trusted in God even when the path was uncertain and the promise unclear. May our hearts as a deacon be steadfast, every day an Advent Day, our spirit unwavering, and our life a testimony of faith in the God who never abandons His servants. We will remember this: in the face of obstacles, we must know that every challenge is a call to trust Him more deeply.

Meditate and Discuss:

- ◆ When have I faced uncertainty in my ministry, and how did I respond?
- ◆ How can I cultivate a deeper trust in God's plan, even when it challenges me?
- ◆ What can Mary's example teach us about staying faithful during times of doubt or difficulty?

Obedience in Service As Embraced by Mary

Reader 4: Scripture Reading: Luke 2:51 – *“He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was obedient to them.”*

Mary's life was a model of action rooted in obedience. We strive to respond with love to God's call and attend faithfully to the needs around us. Following her own Advent example, we

embrace our mission as deacons, ready to serve the poor, the suffering, and the faithful with courage, generosity, and joy.

Meditate and Discuss:

- ◆ How does Mary's obedience inspire me to serve more faithfully?
- ◆ Are there areas where I resist God's call or delay action?
- ◆ How can I discern the needs of those I serve and respond with attentive care?

Contemplative Reflection of Mary

Reader 5: Read: Luke 2:19 – *"But Mary treasured up all these things, pondering them in her heart."*

Mary pondered God's mysteries in her heart, reflecting before she acted, listening deeply before she spoke. We strive to cultivate a contemplative spirit, balancing our work with prayer, letting our diaconate ministry flow from insight as much as from action. May our heart treasure His word and discern His in every step of our service. May we live with a daily Advent purpose.

All: Amen.

Meditate and Discuss:

- ◆ What diaconate practices help me truly listen for God's guidance?
- ◆ How can contemplation improve the quality and depth of my service to others?
- ◆ How does pondering God's word help me respond more faithfully to my diaconate vocation?

Working With the Quiet Strength of Mary

ALL: I strive to move with the quiet strength of Mother Mary, not rushing, not fearing, but trusting the unseen will of God. Her silence does not weaken me. Instead, it steadies me, and her hiddenness does not diminish me. It refines me as a deacon. In her calm, I learn to act without noise and to serve with courage that the world need not applaud. She teaches me that grace is often unnoticed, that the holiest work is done without display, and that God speaks most clearly in hearts that do not clamor. May my Advent efforts be quiet, steady and sincere as I walk with Mary.

I commit to walk in Mary's footsteps - humble, faithful, obedient, and contemplative. May this retreat deepen my love for God and His people, inspire my service, and strengthen my resolve to accompany Christ in all that I do. Holy Mother, guide me, intercede for me, and help me shine the light of Christ into every life I touch as a deacon. Help me make every day a day of Advent. Amen.