



A Mini Retreat for Elderly □ For Yourself or in a Group

25 – 30 minutes

## Awaken Our Hearts

**Leader:** We walk through Advent, a season immersed in expectation and holy longing, as we've done so many times before, finding no better companion than Mary, the Mother of God, who serves as a model for understanding the season's waiting. Let's pray for patience like Mary.

**All:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Gentle Mother Mary, you who awaited the birth of Jesus with quiet trust and watchful hope, remind us to wait with patience, as we have done for many years.

In times of uncertainty, help us to surrender our worries and anxieties, just as you surrendered to trust and faith in God's unfolding plan. When we feel restless, frightened or burdened by loneliness or the unknown, remind us of your calm acceptance and steadfast faith.

Like Mary, may we await Your coming with joyful anticipation, finding peace in our hearts and patience in our days. Grant us the strength to embrace each moment, the courage to say "yes" to Your guidance, and the humility to accept the gifts of age and wisdom. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Reader 1:** She, who carried the Light of the World beneath her heart, Mary understands better than anyone, the profound meaning of Advent Waiting. Mary's wait for Jesus' birth was not passive. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke both highlight Mary, actively engaged in God's plan.

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.

**Reader 2:** 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" command, 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. Help me to trust in God's timing, and not my own, even when I face difficulties and disappointments. Guide my thoughts to you, and help me to remain hopeful and steadfast, like you were beneath the cross. May your intercession bring me strength, hope and peace as I continue to strive to live a life 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 3:** 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.

**Reader 4:** 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.

With our experience, we know that God's invitation often comes when we least expect it, and like Mary, we might feel unworthy, apprehensive 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 and Pray:** Meditate on areas where God may be inviting you to say "Yes." What fears or doubts arise? Pray and ask Mary to help you respond with trust, faith and openness.

## The Visitation—Carrying Christ to Others

**Reader 5:** 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.

**Meditate, Remember and Pray:** Meditate on times when you have traveled to reach out in charity and/or solidarity? Remember those that you've reached out to physically or on the phone. Pray for those in need.

## The Magnificat—Rejoicing in God's Promises

**Reader 6:** 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 Pray:** Meditate on a memory of when you've rejoiced in God. What happened in your life that resulted in such a rejoice? How did you feel? Like the Mary song in the Magnificat, pray to the Lord in gratitude, for all he has done for you through the years.

## The Nativity — Receiving Christ with Mary

**Reader 7:** 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.

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 and Pray:** In meditation, imagine yourself beside Mary in the stable. What do you see, hear, or feel? Pray and ask her to help you welcome Jesus and others into your heart, life and home, just as she did.

## Walking with Mary Beyond Advent

**Leader:** After Advent, 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 throughout the year.

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 of waiting and hope.

**All:** Loving God, as the season of Advent soon begins, we remember the journey of Mary, whose heart was open to Your will and whose spirit radiated hope. We ask that You bless us with her grace, patience and trust during this sacred time.

Help us to be mindful of Your presence in our lives, especially as we make room in our hearts and prepare for the birth of Your Son. May we bring comfort and warmth to those around us, opening our hearts, sharing our stories, faith, and prayers. Let our hearts, like Mary's, magnify Your love and reflect Your grace.

When we light the candles of Advent, may faith, hope and patience be rekindled within us. May our prayers be filled with praising You for all Your blessings. Watch over us, guide us and fill us with the peace that comes from trusting in Your promises. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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.

