



Mary, Our Guide Through Advent

A Mini Retreat for Yourself or in a Group □ 45 – 50 min.
Dedicated to Parishioners

Mary, Serving Christ in the Heart of Each Parish

Leader: Our beloved parish family, today we pause from the rush of life to rest beneath the loving gaze of our Blessed Mother, the first disciple and the heart of faithful service. In her quiet “Yes,” the Word became flesh, and through her, God’s love took root in our world. Mary teaches us that holiness is not distant or

unreachable; it is found in the humble offering of our daily lives to God’s will. Through Advent, we are also called to help bring Christ into the lives of others.

As she once bore Christ into the world, we too are called to carry Him into our parish community. The Church depends on the faith and service of people like us—the laity—who are the living hands and heart of Christ in today’s world. Together, we come to be renewed, inspired, and sent forth to serve as Mary did.

ALL: Mother Mary, your life is a living Gospel — each moment shows me what it means to belong entirely to God. When you said, “Let it be done to me” (Luke 1:38), you opened the door of salvation for all humanity. Your life was never about recognition, but about surrender. You served quietly, yet powerfully — nurturing, interceding, and walking with your Holy Son from the cradle to the Cross. Help us help others to fully understand our Advent call.

Like you, I am called as a parishioner to live the Gospel not just through words, but through action — with kindness, forgiveness, and faithful service within my parish and beyond. Every time I serve - whether as a lector, catechist, choir member, greeter, or volunteer - I must mirror your gentle, maternal care, bringing Christ’s presence into our parish. Amen

Leader: Blessed Mother, fill us with your courage and gentle strength, so that our service to parish, family, and community may flow from love and not duty alone. Inspire our hearts to see Christ in every parishioner, and to respond with compassion as you responded to God’s call. Guide our hands to care, our words to console, and our presence to bring comfort. May all of us be the dawn of Advent to many lives.

Teach us that even the smallest act, offered with faith, can ripple outward to transform lives. Remind us that perseverance in love bears eternal fruit. Walking beside us, may our lives become a reflection of Christ’s mercy, grace, and light in our parish and the world.

Mother Mary, open your heart to ours, that we may be transformed by your example of perfect love and surrender. Let your grace shape our thoughts, our words, and our deeds, so that we may serve with true generosity and humility. Fill us with your Advent spirit, that through your intercession, we may become living witnesses of Christ’s love in every part of our lives.

ALL: Amen.

Read and Meditate:

I must know that we must all live our parish mission together. I must remember that the parish is not just the priest alone. We are all the parish community – the Body of Christ- where every member is called to holiness and mission. Our priests guide and sanctify, but it is we, the people of God, who carry Christ’s light into every corner of the world.

As Mary accompanied Jesus in His ministry. I too am called to accompany others as a vibrant parishioner. Let me help awaken an Advent attitude in the lives of others. I can help strengthen the Church through my prayers, my participation in the sacraments, and my witness of mercy and forgiveness. When I live in love, the parish flourishes; when I forgive, the Church heals; and when I serve, the world sees Christ.

Reader 1: In the quiet of our hearts, we look to Mary, the first and most faithful disciple, who knew the depths of love, sacrifice, and trust in God. Her life invites us to reflect on our own journey of faith and service, and to ask how we can make Christ more prominent in our lives this Advent and bring Christ more fully into our parish life. In Mary's patience, humility, and courage, we find a mirror for our own hearts—a guide for our ministry.

ALL: Heavenly Father, fill my heart with Your love and guide my steps in faithful parish service. Blessed Mother Mary, handmaid of the Lord, inspire me with courage, humility, and steadfast devotion. Lord Jesus, strengthen me in Your presence, that every word, deed, and prayer and may Your Spirit move within me, that I may bring Christ's love into my parish.

Help me to serve my parish with joy, not for recognition, but with a heart wholly surrendered to God's will. Mother Mary, teach me to persevere in love, to act with patience, and to embrace every Advent opportunity to serve as you did. Together, Lord and Mother, guide me to be a living witness of Your grace, mercy, and compassion and build up the Body of Christ. Amen

MARY'S "YES" TO GOD – ECHO'S OUR "YES" TO SERVE OUR PARISH

Reader 2: Our "yes" to serve our parish echoes Mary's "yes" to God, reminding us that faithful service begins with a willing heart. Just as Mary brought Christ's love into the world through her obedience and devotion, our own actions can bring His presence to our parish, our families, and our community. May our voices speak to Advent, to preparation for our Christ.

Reader 3: Every act of love, every moment of forgiveness, builds up the Body of Christ. Like Mary, we are called to trust God's plan, even when it is uncertain or challenging. True discipleship begins with willing hearts that say "yes" to God's will in every moment. Being prepared for Christ is developing a full Advent purpose in all our hearts.

Mediate and Share:

Meditate on: *"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word."* - Luke 1:38

Share your response to the following:

- ◆ How does Mary's "yes" inspire my own willingness to serve in my parish?
- ◆ In what ways can I bring Christ into my home and workplace?
- ◆ How do I experience Mary's presence when I pray or serve others?

Reader 4: We are essential parts of Christ's Church, called to use our gifts in service to others. Our actions, prayers, and service contribute to the strength and unity of the parish community. Just as each member matters, every act of love and faithfulness helps build up the Body of Christ.

Mediate and Share:

Meditate on: *"Now you are the Body of Christ, and individually members of it."* — 1 Corinthians 12:27

Share your response to the following:

- ◆ What part of my parish life needs renewal through faith and unity?
- ◆ How can I help new or struggling parishioners feel welcomed and loved?

- ◆ When has forgiveness restored my sense of peace and community?
- ◆ Can Advent help me prepare?

Reader 5: Serving those in need is serving Christ Himself. Every small act of kindness has eternal significance. Mary helps transform both us, the givers, and those we serve.

Mediate and Share:

Meditate on: *“Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”* — Matthew 25:40

Share your response to the following:

- ◆ How do I see the Mass as the center of my daily service?
- ◆ What sacrament most strengthens me to love and serve?
- ◆ In what ways do I feel called to share my gifts more fully with my parish?

Reader 6: Our actions can reflect God’s love to everyone around us. Living with integrity and kindness inspires others to seek God. Every good deed is an opportunity for us to glorify the Father.

Mediate and Share:

Meditate on: *“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”* — Matthew 5:16

Share your response to the following:

- ◆ What obstacles make it difficult for me to say “yes” to God’s will?
- ◆ How can my service mirror Mary’s humility and courage?
- ◆ What is one concrete step I will take this week to bring Christ to others?

UNITED WITH MARY IN OUR PARISH

Leader: Mother Mary teaches us as parishioners to stay close to her Son—through prayer, the Eucharist, and daily faithfulness. In the Mass, we meet Jesus as she once did in Bethlehem: truly present, body and soul. Advent is preparing us for the same, as we prepare for her Holy Son. In Reconciliation, we rediscover the mercy that renews our hearts. In the Eucharist, we are strengthened to become living tabernacles of His love. These are all vibrant parts of our parish community.

ALL: Blessed Mother Mary, handmaid of the Lord and Mother of the Church, I stand beside you with my heart open to serve. Help this Advent be our first effort. Help me to echo your faithful “yes” each day, bringing Christ’s presence into my home, my parish, and my world. Teach me to love with tenderness, to forgive with mercy, and to serve with joy. Unite my prayers and efforts with your own, so that together we may build up the Body of Christ with strength and faith. May our every act of love, every moment of forgiveness, builds up the Body of Christ. Amen.