



A Mini Retreat for Yourself or in a Group

45-50 minutes

Designed to Embrace Reconciliation

Leader: Welcome to this mini prayer retreat, where we will prepare to journey through the blessed season of Advent with Mary, our guiding star, and embrace the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Let us open our hearts to the grace and peace that God offers us, as Mary leads us closer to her Son, Jesus Christ.

Opening Prayer

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Almighty God, we come before You with open hearts, seeking the peace and joy that only Your Son can provide. As we journey through Advent, let us walk with Mary, our Blessed Mother, who leads us to the light of Christ. May this retreat prepare our hearts to welcome Advent and receive Your love through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mary's Example of Forgiveness

Reader 1: Advent is a cherished time in the Catholic Liturgical Calendar, marked by anticipation and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. During this period, many of us turn to Mary, the mother of Jesus, as a model of faith and grace. Mary's role during Advent offers profound lessons on forgiveness and reconciliation, guiding us toward healing and peace.

Mary's life was filled with moments that required deep faith and strength. From the Annunciation, when she accepted her role as the mother of the Messiah, to the challenges she faced throughout Jesus' life, Mary consistently demonstrated a capacity to trust in God's plan and forgive those who ridiculed her.

Reader 2: The miraculous gift to humanity from God, that Mary carried in her womb was Jesus, who is the source of reconciliation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation brings forgiveness, reconciliation with God and the Church, and peace of conscience. That forgiveness is a path to personal liberation and spiritual growth.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is important during Advent because it is a time for spiritual preparation and renewal before celebrating Christmas. Reconciliation allows us to receive God's forgiveness, cleanse our hearts, and mend our relationship with God and the Church, making each of us more worthy to receive Christ at Christmas. We need to make room for Jesus this Christmas!

Meditate and Share:

- ◆ How can I emulate Mary's grace and forgive in my own life?
- ◆ Along with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, how can I make room for the coming of Jesus in my life?
- ◆ In what ways can forgiveness bring peace to my heart and relationships, especially during the Advent season?

Reconciliation Through Mary's Journey

Reader 3: Embracing forgiveness as we prepare for Advent and Christmas, the Sacrament of Reconciliation offers us the opportunity to receive God's forgiveness and grace. Mary, who was without sin, still understands our struggles and guides us towards repentance and renewal.

Mary's journey is also one of reconciliation. She reconciled her own fears and uncertainties with her faith in God. By accepting her role in the divine plan, Mary teaches us the importance of reconciling our own internal conflicts and aligning our actions with our values. Her story reminds us that reconciliation is not just about mending relationships with others but also about finding harmony within ourselves.

Remember that you are not alone! The USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) has highlighted the phrase "Am I not here, I who am your Mother?" as a key message said by Mary in the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe to Saint Juan Diego in 1531. She was there for them, and she is here for you too!

Meditate and Share:

- ◆ What internal conflicts do I need to reconcile as I prepare for the coming of Christ?
- ◆ How can I bring more alignment between my actions and my values during Advent?
- ◆ What steps can I take to promote reconciliation in my relationships as Mary did in hers?

Leader: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." (Matthew 5:7)

All: Holy Mary, Mother of God, you stood by your Son even unto the cross. Guide us, your children, as we prepare for Advent, to the path of reconciliation and peace. May we approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation with a humble heart, seeking the mercy and love of your Son, Jesus. Help us to forgive others as we ourselves are forgiven. Amen.

The Magnificat: A Song of Hope and Justice

Reader 4: (Read Luke 1:46–55 to everyone)

Mary's Magnificat, her song of praise recorded in the Gospel of Luke, is a powerful testament to her faith and vision of a just world. It speaks of God's mercy and the promise of lifting the lowly while bringing down the mighty. This message encourages us to work toward justice and reconciliation in our communities, reflecting Mary's hope for a world transformed by love.

Meditate and Share:

- ◆ As I prepare for Advent, how can I contribute to creating a more just and reconciled world?
- ◆ In what ways can the message of the Magnificat inspire my actions during Advent?
- ◆ How does Mary's vision of justice resonate with my personal beliefs and community efforts?

Reader 5: Let's meditate on the idea that Mary teaches us that forgiveness begins with surrender to God's will and the following

- ◆ Her Fiat — "Be it done unto me according to your word" — is not only acceptance of joy, but of pain, misunderstanding, and betrayal.
- ◆ She forgave before the hurt even came, because she had already surrendered everything to God.

Meditate and Prayer:

- ◆ Take a few minutes to meditate on any areas of your life where you seek forgiveness so you will experience peace during Advent
- ◆ Ask Mary to intercede for you, helping you to open your heart to God's mercy.
- ◆ How can Mary's influence strengthen your connection with Jesus?

Closing Prayer

All: Loving Father, we thank You for this time of reflection and prayer. May the example of Mary inspire us to live our lives with faith, hope, and love. As we prepare for the coming of Your Son, fill our hearts with joy and peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

May Mary's example during Advent be our beacon of hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation. By reflecting on her life and teachings, we may find inspiration to forgive others, reconcile our internal conflicts, and work toward a more just and harmonious world. As we conclude this retreat, and prepare to welcome Advent, let us carry Mary's spirit of grace and peace into our own lives. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Leader: May this retreat be a steppingstone towards a more profound experience of Advent and a renewed spirit as we receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.