

PAX CHRISTI USA COMMUNITY ADVENT SERVICE – week 2

First week of Advent – [Readings are from Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Wednesday, December 8th](#)

Welcome

Opening song

Singer will be the only one unmuted but feel free to sing along wherever you are!

Lighting of candles on the Advent wreath

From their home, the O’Gorman family in St. Louis, MO will light the Advent candles tonight on behalf of us all. We invite everyone on the call to light their own candles wherever they are.

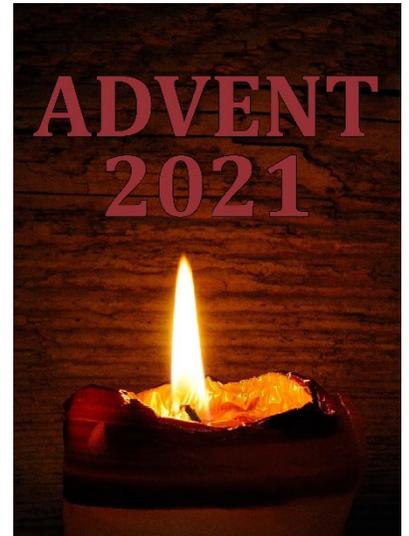
First reading: From the book of Genesis...

After Adam had eaten of the tree,
God called and asked him, “Where are you?”
He answered, “I heard you in the garden;
but I was afraid, because I was naked,
so I hid myself.”
Then God asked, “Who told you that you were naked?
You have eaten, then,
from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!”
The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me,
she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.”
God then asked the woman,
“Why did you do such a thing?”
The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.”

Then God said to the serpent:

“Because you have done this, you shall be banned
from all the animals
and from all the wild creatures;
on your belly shall you crawl,
and dirt shall you eat
all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
they will strike at your head,
while you strike at their heel.”

The man called his wife Eve,
because she became the mother of all the living.



The word of God.
THANKS BE TO GOD.

Gospel reading: From the gospel of Luke...

The angel Gabriel was sent from God
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,
of the house of David,
and the virgin's name was Mary.
And coming to her, the angel said,
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."
But she was greatly troubled at what was said
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
Then the angel said to her,
"Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.
Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,
and God will give him the throne of David his father,
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his reign there will be no end."
But Mary said to the angel,
"How can this be,
since I have no relations with a man?"
And the angel said to her in reply,
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.
Therefore the child to be born
will be called holy, the Son of God.
And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,
has also conceived a son in her old age,
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;
for nothing will be impossible for God."
Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word."
Then the angel departed from her.

The gospel of our God.
PRAISE TO YOU LORD JESUS CHRIST.

A reflection from this year's Advent-Christmas reflection booklet, by Sr. Anne-Louise Nadeau, SNDdeN. Sr. Anne-Louise is the former Program Director of Pax Christi USA. Sr. Anne-Louise spent many years in higher education as a campus minister, counselor, Director of the Personal Counseling Center and as Associate Dean of Students at Sacred Heart University, Bridgeport, CT. She also served on the Connecticut Leadership Team as well as co-coordinator of the SND/USA Anti-Racism Team. She continues to work on a bi-racial team presenting, facilitating and consulting with religious communities on dismantling racism within their congregations.

Mary, what are we to believe about you? How do we strip away the myths, the folklore, the falsehoods, and the mysteries surrounding your personhood? How do we look under the cultural and theological accoutrements that you have been veiled in for centuries and find the real you? How do we today relate to you as woman and sister; not by the titles that have accumulated over the years that attempt to define you?

You are a woman who said, “Yes” to God in your life. You are a woman who loved and trusted Joseph enough to raise a child with him. You are a Middle Eastern woman, brown-skinned, veiled, and sandaled. The only aura you had around you was from the dust storms that came upon Nazareth during the dry season.

We surmise that you were a widow, since we know that Joseph would have been with you when Jesus died. You grew to love the men and women that traveled with Jesus before and after his death, becoming a companion and wisdom figure to them. You lived, you loved, and you cared. Were you conceived without sin as today’s feast celebrates? Does it matter? Does it take anything away from you or add anything to you? You are a woman who knew how to believe, to love your God, and to find the goodness of God in the people and the world in which you lived. Can we do any less?

*> **Has your relationship with Mary grown and evolved over the years? If so, how?***

Silent reflection

We invite you to quietly reflect on tonight's reading and the question: **Has your relationship with Mary grown and evolved over the years? If so, how?** After our prayer service is over, we encourage you—if you are with others—to share your answer to tonight's question. If you aren't with others but would like to share in a small group after tonight's prayer, we'll send everyone who stays on the call into breakout rooms with a few other people to share for about 20 minutes immediately following the prayer service.

(In preparation for the Prayers of the Faithful, feel free to enter into the chat any prayers you have that you want those of us on this call to lift up over the coming week.)

Prayers of the faithful

Our response is: God of mercy, hear our prayer.

Closing prayer

(In 1-2 minutes everyone who wants to stay on the call will be sent to breakout rooms to discuss tonight's reading, reflection and Advent question. Breakout rooms will automatically close after 20 minutes.)