

Advent for Busy Catholics

A Redemptorist Pastoral Publication



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My soul longs for you in the night.

For you alone do I thirst!

BASED ON PSALM 63:2



Introduction

Advent is a time of prayerful contemplation as we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ on Christmas Day. However, sometimes we get so caught up in preparing for the celebration of Christmas we forget to prepare ourselves to participate in it. The following meditations will give you the opportunity to meditate each week on the mystery of Christ's coming, to slow down from the demands of the holiday, and appreciate the miracle.

Each meditation has been taken from a best-selling *Daybreaks* booklet and formatted to be used as a weekly meditation that you can easily fit into an already busy Advent schedule. You may not have time to carve out of your week for prayer, but what better time to reflect on the mystery of

Advent than those times when you are already waiting? Take this pamphlet with you and use it when the opportunity arises, whether waiting in line to make a Christmas purchase, waiting to pick your kids up from school, waiting for dinner to finish cooking, or any other time you find yourself waiting with a few minutes to spare.

The daily prayer at the beginning of this pamphlet can be used before or after each week's meditation to further enhance your reflection, or you can say it every day to keep your Advent preparations at the top of your mind.

Daily Prayer

*That I live
That I breathe
That I see and hear, even a little
That I have a heart to feel
A mind to know and remember by,
I thank you most bountiful and close God
Made one with us in Jesus Christ
And present to us
Even in the million ways
I forget.*

First Week of Advent

Prayer is found on page 7

Born into the Ordinary

After the birth of Christ, we need not look to the extraordinary, the spectacular or the miraculous to find God. God is now found where we live—in our kitchens, at our tables, in our wounds, and in each other's faces. That is hard to believe and always has been. When Jesus was on earth, virtually no one believed he was the Messiah, precisely because he was so ordinary, so unlike what they imagined God to be. They had expected a superstar, a king, someone who would turn the world rightfully upside down.

Preaching meekness and gentleness, Jesus didn't live up to those expectations.

It is curious that Scripture refuses to describe what Jesus looked like. It never tells us whether he was short or tall, with a beard or without, had light or dark hair, had blue or brown eyes. Neither does it ever assign to him anything extraordinary in terms of psychological countenance. For example, it never tells us that when Jesus entered a room his eyes were so penetrating and his gaze so awesome that people knew they were in the presence of someone extraordinary. No. In terms of his appearance, Jesus apparently wasn't worth describing. He looked like everyone else. Even after the resurrection, he is mistaken for a gardener, a cook, a traveler.

Things haven't changed much in two thousand years. Seldom does Christ meet expectations. We, like his contemporaries, are constantly looking beyond the ordinary, beyond the gardener, the

cook, and the traveling stranger, to try to find a miraculous Christ. It is for this reason that we fly off to Fatima or Lourdes to see a spot where the Blessed Virgin might have cried, but fail to see the significance of the tears shed at our own breakfast table. We are intrigued by a Padre Pio who had the wounds of Christ on his hands, but fail to see the wounds of Christ in those suffering around us or in our own emotional and moral wounds.

We pray for visions, but seldom watch a sunset. We marvel at the gift of tongues, but are bored listening to babies. We look for Christ everywhere, except in the place where the incarnation took place: our flesh.

Love is a thing that happens in ordinary places—in kitchens, at tables, in bedrooms, in workplaces, in families, in the flesh. God abides in us when we abide there. Through the Incarnation, God crawls into ordinary life and invites us to meet him there.