



Bringing Home the Word

Second Sunday of Advent
December 9, 2018

Get Ready to Invite Jesus In

By Mary Katharine Deeley

One of the most memorable questions I have ever been asked came during a conversation with a spiritual director. During my marriage-preparation retreat, he asked about the upcoming wedding. I told him about all the preparations and how I felt I was on top of things. He gently asked, "I know you're prepared, but are you ready?" It was the first time I really thought about the difference. We were certainly prepared. The flowers had been ordered, the ceremony set, and the caterer knew exactly what we wanted. We were in control. But being ready for the great

unknown of marriage, a lifelong vocation, was another thing altogether. Being ready suggested that we won't always be in control and that, no matter what happens, we were in it for life and would face whatever comes together.

The prophet Isaiah describes the one (John the Baptist) who prepares the way of the Lord. He will do this by preaching to and baptizing those who come to him. The preparation for the coming Messiah is in his hands. He poses the question, "Are you ready for the one who is to come?" Thinking beyond our religious practices and Christmas preparations, what does that really mean for us? Maybe this year it means looking into our own hearts for the longing for Christ. Perhaps we'll make room for him in our busy lives and our busier thoughts. We might even stop our preparations long enough to remember just who is coming and invite him in. Are you ready? +

Sunday Readings

Baruch 5:1-9

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on forever the splendor of glory from God.

Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception.

Luke 3:1-6

[The prophet Isaiah wrote,] "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."

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A Word from Pope Francis

The Immaculate Conception leads us to contemplate Our Lady who, by unique privilege, was preserved from original sin from the very moment of her conception. Even living in a world marked by sin, she was not touched by it: Mary is our sister in suffering, but not in evil or in sin.

—Angelus, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 2015



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I able to give up some control in life to follow God's plan for me?
- Have I taken a break in Christmas preparations and searched my heart for a longing for Christ?

Why Truth Is Sacred

By Kathy Coffey

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Exodus 20:16).

Aunt Martha sports a hideous new dress that accentuates her bulges. What do you say? Perhaps you cop out: “Fuschia is certainly your color!” Maybe you describe the hidden reality: “You’re so cheerful!” But in this case the truth, “That’s the ugliest dress I’ve ever seen,” is cruel. Even the most honest person wouldn’t insult his or her aunt.

The example may oversimplify the complex situations in which we find ourselves today. We’ve recently seen deception by people we have placed our trust in. Countries go to war based on wobbly intelligence. Priests with a history of child abuse have been placed in parishes without sufficient concern for the need to protect possible new victims.

But we can’t point our fingers at others until we turn it on ourselves. As children we may have figured out that small lies were OK, as long as we didn’t get caught. As adolescents we learned to protect our fragile egos by broadcasting the positives and concealing the negatives about ourselves. As adults we struggle to maintain a balance between privacy and intimacy. We don’t want to “tell all” as on a talk show. But we also know that those we love deserve the full truth about



ourselves, even when it’s painful to reveal.

The Whole Truth

Here are two examples. Brendan is the life of the party, an Irish storyteller. No one minds when he exaggerates; it makes the stories better. Unfortunately, that strategy carries into his personal life. His ideas

about himself grow grandiose and far from reality, but sadly, he believes them. Brendan gets caught up in the fiction. He always stars in the latest exploit. But by now, no one is sure it really happened.

Molly, on the other hand, gives flesh to the saying, “She knows who she is.” People needing an honest opinion count on her to give it. She trusts them with the truth because she believes they can handle it. She openly admits that she’s done her time in therapy. Without boring people too much, she’ll explain that alcohol is poison for her system. She knows her dark side as well as her assets and conveys a hard-won authenticity.

So this business of truth-telling gets more complex than Aunt Martha’s dress. The biblical origins of our tradition show why truth is revered as sacred.

Jesus, Our Model

The perfect example of inner solidity comes from Jesus. When the soldiers approach him in the Garden of Olives,

he doesn’t hide. In fact, he initiates the conversation: “Whom are you looking for?” When they answer, “Jesus the Nazorean,” he says simply, “I AM” (John 18:4–5). What if Jesus had fudged? Suspecting what was ahead, he could have said, “Oh no, you’ve got the wrong guy. I just look like him.” He might have escaped. Instead, he stands in his truth, despite what that will cost.

What does Jesus model for us? When, like Brendan, we create myths about ourselves to impress others, we deny what is far more wonderful about us: our likeness to God. When we perpetuate the falsehoods of advertising, we prefer appearance to reality. When we tolerate phoniness, we refuse God the praise that even a blade of grass or an honest dandelion can give.

Thomas Merton says that our response to God’s initial word is to become God’s words: God’s answer and echo. To do that, we must hone our words to the most honest, accurate ones we can find. Thus, we honor the Eighth Commandment. +



Lord, you are always patient with me and do great things for me. Teach me to be more patient in life and grateful for all that has been given to me.

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

December 10–15

Monday, Advent Weekday:
Is 35:1–10 / Lk 5:17–26

Tuesday, Advent Weekday:
Is 40:1–11 / Mt 18:12–14

Wednesday, Our Lady of Guadalupe:
Zec 2:14–17 or Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab /
Lk 1:26–38 or Lk 1:39–47

Thursday, St. Lucy:
Is 41:13–20 / Mt 11:11–15

Friday, St. John of the Cross:
Is 48:17–19 / Mt 11:16–19

Saturday, Advent Weekday:
Sir 48:1–4, 9–11 / Mt 17:9a, 10–13