

SPX Message Series



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small  groups
life is better together

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Advent is a season during which we prepare to welcome Christ at Christmas and in our lives. Mary's example teaches us that we prepare by **MAGNIFYING** God's glory in our lives. This series will help us to make Advent holy by putting into practice each day the values Mary **MAGNIFIED** in her life. Using Mary's Magnificat (which is Latin for "my soul magnifies the Lord," Luke 1:46 - 55) as our starting point, we will seek to learn from her example.



**We pray that this time together
helps us all to come to
a better understanding of
each other, ourselves, and our Lord.**

Week1: November 29

1st Sunday in Advent



Week 2: December 6

2nd Sunday in Advent



Week 3: December 13

3rd Sunday in Advent



Week 4: December 20

4th Sunday in Advent



Week 1: November 29



Scripture Focus

Jeremiah 33:14

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah.

Magnificat Focus

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant. From this day all generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

Key Points

Jesus reminds his disciples fatigue can happen if one becomes consumed by the anxieties of daily life.

Many families are familiar with the kind of fatigue Jesus refers to here. We may be concerned about a family member's health, our job security, our education.

Jesus does not promise an end to daily worries and fears, but he does teach his disciples that God keeps His promises. That we must stay focused on Him, remaining vigilant for His return.

Mary, too, was waiting for God to return, waiting for the Messiah. And in her song of praise the Magnificat she talks about being blessed because of the great things that God is accomplishing for her and through her.

Just like He did with Mary, God himself watches over us each and every day and will bless us if we allow God to work for and through us.

During this time of Advent we unite ourselves to Mary in watching and waiting for how God will use us to fulfill His promise of blessings to all.

Pray WITH Each other

SGL or member can lead with an intro prayer calling upon the Holy Spirit to be with the group. Then all join in together to close (Our Father, Glory Be, etc.)

Re-Cap

Briefly review the Scripture Focus & Key Points

Do Life Together

Did anything stand out to you from the homilies this weekend? What spoke to your heart?

What is an area of your life that causes you stress? Why? How do you cope with this stress? What role does your faith play in dealing with this?

How do you deal with times of waiting, whether it be in a long line at Target, or for an upcoming holiday, or for a call from the doctor? Are you patient and relaxed? Does the waiting cause you anxiety?

The Jews of Jesus' time were waiting for the coming of the Messiah. When Mary said 'yes' to God she knew that the time of waiting was coming to an end, but her personal 'wait' of pregnancy was just beginning. Her reaction: to praise God for the great things that He has and is doing. Do you turn to God in times of waiting? What difference could it make if you took Mary's example and praised God as you waited?

What are some of the blessings in your life? How has God blessed you in the past? What about today was a blessing? God wants to work in and through us. How has God used you to bless others? How does that make you feel?

During this time of Advent, identify 2 ways that you can, using Mary as your example, more actively participate in the waiting for Christ to come – at Christmas and at the end of time. How can this group support you?

Pray FOR Each Other

SGL or member lead in praying for the needs of each other, people can join in as desired. These could be needs shared during the discussion that evening. You can also take time to ask for specific intentions before starting.

Week 2: December 6



Scripture Focus

Philippians 1:6

"I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Magnificat Focus

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

Key Points

As John prepared the people for Jesus' 1st coming, Paul is preparing us for Jesus now and for when he comes again.

Paul speaks of our "partnership for the gospel" since the beginning of the Church. This Advent is an opportune time to sit and pray with some Scripture to prepare.

Paul says, "I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus." This is our journey as a disciple and Advent gives us the opportunity to reflect on the 'good work' God has begun in us, to discern our next step, and to be strengthened for the journey.

"Prepare the way of the Lord.." With 19 days until Christmas, how are you preparing? Not too late to start? Look to Mary's 'yes' and how she prepared to give us encouragement so that we might prepare for our Lord's coming.

How best to prepare? Seek mercy and be strengthened through the Sacrament of Confession. Been a long time? Hesitant? The priest is there to welcome you to the Sacrament, guide you through it, and affirm to you the grace, mercy and love Jesus Christ has given us through him.

Pray WITH Each other

SGL or member can lead with an intro prayer calling upon the Holy Spirit to be with the group. Then all join in together to close (Our Father, Glory Be, etc.)

Re-Cap

Briefly review the Scripture Focus & Key Points

Do Life Together

Did anything stand out to you from the homilies this weekend? What spoke to your heart?

What come to mind when you hear the word 'strong'? Is it physical? Emotional? Spiritual? Does a certain image or stereotype come to mind?

Who in someone in your life that you would describe as strong? What qualities do they have? How has their strength impacted your life?

Mary's Magnificat speaks of the strength of God. Does your image of God involve strength? What does it mean that God is strong? We are called to be in the image of God. How are you called to be strong in your faith?

St. Paul talks about how God will continue to work in and through us. During this season of Advent, how can you better allow God to strengthen you to continue to complete the 'good work' that He has already begun in you? What in your life needs God strength behind it?

The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of mercy, that heals us and gives us the ability to start over. What is your experience of Confession? What role does it play in your faith life? What holds you back from going more frequently? *Consider going as a group in Advent (Thursdays, 6 – 7 pm at SPX) and then out to dinner to celebrate.*

Pray FOR Each Other

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Week 3: December 13



Scripture Focus

Philippians 4:4

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!

Magnificat Focus

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

Key Points

Mary's song of praise, the Magnificat, is such an example to us during this season. She was so filled with God's grace that she was able to respond 'yes' to what was seemingly an impossible task - to be the Mother of God.

If we allow ourselves to enter into a relationship with Jesus, he will fill us too with this grace. And we will then be able to overflow into others.

When we live in relationship with Christ, we are filled with joy and this spills over into all areas of our lives. The 1st and 2nd readings both attest to the joy that is found in God. And this joy overcomes all our earthly worries.

John the Baptist, in our Gospel, speaks of how this plays out in our daily lives - but sharing what we have been given with others. And this isn't just being a good person. Rather, we are giving to others out of the abundance that God has filled us with.

Let us look to Mary as our example during this season, that we might share the joy that we have been filled with - to bring Christ to others.

Pray WITH Each other

SGL or member can lead with an intro prayer calling upon the Holy Spirit to be with the group. Then all join in together to close (Our Father, Glory Be, etc.)

Re-Cap

Briefly review the Scripture Focus & Key Points

Do Life Together

Did anything stand out to you from the homilies this weekend? What spoke to your heart?

The third Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete, or Joy, Sunday. It is a reminder that we are halfway through our time of waiting. How is your Advent going? What growth have you experienced? What steps do you need to take to stay on or get back on track?

Mary's 'yes to being the mother of God was only possible because she was filled with grace. What is filling you right now? How do life's ups and downs affect what fills your soul? What are you unable to say 'yes' to because of other things than grace filling you?

"Joy is a gift from God. It fills us from within." (Pope Francis) Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit and the focus of the first two readings. What role does joy play in your faith life? Why can it be hard to be joyful? Is it possible to experience joy and peace even in the midst of darkness?

Pope Francis said "Everyone should be able to experience the joy of being loved by God, the joy of salvation. It is the gift that one cannot keep to oneself, but it is to be shared." Think about the last time you received really good news. Do we usually wait to share good news with others? Why is it, then, that we wait to share the good news of the Gospel with others? What concrete steps could your group take during these last 2 weeks of Advent to share God's joy with others? Pray about making a commitment to acting on one of these ideas.

Pray FOR Each Other

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Week 4: December 20



Scripture Focus

Hebrews 10:9

"Behold, I come to do your will."

Magnificat Focus

He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

Key Points

God extended an invitation to Mary. God gave her, us, the free will to choose to be a part of His story, or not. She accepted. Her 'yes' helped to bring about the salvation of the world.

God made a promise to be with His people for all time. From the very beginning, after the Fall in the Garden, God had a plan to save us. Mary's Magnificat is a retelling of that plan, that story, that promise.

We help fulfill that promise today by living our lives dedicated to God and others. St. Paul's letter to the Hebrews tells us that Christ said to the Father: "Behold I come to do your will." We must echo that response to what God is asking us to do.

Mary's whole life was about invitation and service. Her 'yes' reflects Christ in every way, that her entire life was about being part of God fulfilling his promises.

How can your Christmas be different this year? How can you do God's will? INVITE others to worship here at SPX on Christmas & SERVE in a ministry on Christmas.

Pray WITH Each other

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Re-Cap

Briefly review the Scripture Focus & Key Points

Do Life Together

Did anything stand out to you from the homilies this weekend? What spoke to your heart?

What does it mean to make a promise? Do you take promises seriously? What happens when someone breaks their promise to you? How does this impact your relationship with them? Have you ever broken an important promise?

God had a plan to save us from the beginning: He promised to send the Messiah. Through Mary's 'yes,' God is continuing the story and fulfilling this promise. Why is it important that God keeps His promises? What does this reveal about Him? How can we prepare ourselves to receive what He has promised to us?

Mary saying 'yes' to God's invitation demonstrates a life of service to Him, and His Son. How can we live by her example? What ways are you being called to continue God's story in our day and age by serving others?

Seriously consider inviting someone to worship at SPX this Christmas, by using the Christmas invite cards. What holds you back from inviting someone? What hesitations keep us from doing so? What could you do to help ease those fears or worries? If not Christmas, consider who you could invite to SPX in the new year. Take these names to prayer – pray for your courage to invite them, their openness to the invitation, and our parish's ability to meet them where they are.

Pray FOR Each Other

SGL or member lead in praying for the needs of each other, people can join in as desired. These could be needs shared during the discussion that evening. You can also take time to ask for specific intentions before starting.

Mary's Magnificat

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.
He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.
He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever.