

# Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

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Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2017.

## WEEK 1

**Reader 1:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 13:33-37)

*Stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming.*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

**Everyone:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel ....

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection on the Gospel

Advent, meaning "coming", reminds us that we live between two comings – the coming of Christ that was the first Christmas and His coming again at the end of time. It's a penitential season, that when entered humbly and sincerely, encourages us cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He seeks to draw us gently and ever more deeply into the divine life of the Blessed Trinity. Indeed the Holy Spirit knows our need of experiences of spiritual homecoming these days, especially amidst the material frenzy.

Does your store of childhood memories incorporate any of staying awake so that you wouldn't miss a much anticipated guest or event? Can you recall a time when your heart was laden with joyful expectation?

Christ's invitation to us to stay awake is as much rooted in gifting the Father with our love and anticipation as it is with encouraging any moral endeavour on our part. Through this gospel we are being encouraged to be receptive, not of duties and responsibilities, but of the love the Father has for us His children. Sadly such receptivity doesn't come as naturally to us as to children but we can still prepare to offer the warmest of sincere welcomes to our Lord this Christmas ... and this Advent.

**Silence**

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

**Sharing**

**Leader:** Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

*Group returns to page 20 of Advent booklet*

# Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

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Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2017.

## WEEK 2

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 1:1-8)

*Make his paths straight.*

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

“Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;  
he will prepare your way.  
A voice cries in the wilderness:  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight,

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, “Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

**Everyone:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel ....

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection on the Gospel

Gospel of Second Sunday of Advent 2018

Mark begins his gospel with a clear focus of what his gospel is about. The beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ, Son of God. He stresses that this is only the beginning of the Good News and our praying with it this Advent will hopefully help us to enter further into the Good News and to the enfolding of Good News in our lives. The figure most associated with preparing for the Good News is John the Baptist, the messenger sent to prepare...the way for the Lord. John's place of ministry is the inhospitable wilderness, where his voice proclaims a baptism of repentance. “The desert is outside the circle of the village and the gates of the town, far from the support of civilization. It is the place...to return to essentials.” (John Shea) John's un-tailored camel hair skin and unusual diet, his preaching brought, all Judaea and the people of Jerusalem... to him. John is clear on his role and points to Someone ... following me...he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit. Can we make desert space for ourselves this Advent to listen, to repent and to prepare for the Lord?

**Silence**

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

**Sharing**

**Leader:** Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

*Group returns to page 28 of Advent Booklet*

# Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

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Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2017.

## WEEK 3

**Reader 1:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (Jn 1:6-8,19-28)

*There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.*

A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" he not only declared, but declared quite openly, "I am not the Christ". "Well then", they asked "are you Elijah?" "I am not" he said. "Are you the prophet?" He answered "No". So they said to him "Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?" So John said, "I am as Isaiah prophesised:

*a voice that cries in the wilderness: Make a straight path for the Lord.*

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, "Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah and not the prophet?" John replied, "I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo this sandal-strap". This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord.

*Silence*

**Leader:** Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

**Everyone:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel ....

*Silence*

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection on the Gospel

Each day the space that surrounds us is filled with voices - family members, radio, television, people we meet throughout the day. How often have we stopped and realised that while we were listening, we missed some point that was being made? We have actually not heard what was said.

John the Baptist came as one pointing the way to Christ, to a people who had failed to hear the way of the prophets, he was *a voice that cries in the wilderness*.

In the wilderness of life Christ's voice needs to be heard, as Pope Francis says, in the market places of life. People need to "hear" the voice of the Lord and each of us is called on to be that voice to each other.

In the hustle and bustle of the cries of distractions about what we need for Christmas, Christ and the meaning of Christmas can become dim and distant. In this Advent season let us be John the Baptist to others so that the call of God to the manger of his love this Christmas can be heard and experienced.

*Silence*

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

*Sharing*

**Leader:** Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

*Group returns to page 36 of Advent booklet.*

# Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Advent 2017.

## WEEK 4

**Reader 1:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (Lk 1:26-38)

*"Listen, you are to conceive and bear a son."*

The Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her "Rejoice so highly favoured. The Lord is with you". She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, "Mary, do not be afraid. You have won God's favour. Listen, you are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the house of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end. Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" the angel answered "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God". "I am the handmaid of the Lord" said Mary "let what you have said be done to me". And the angel left her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

*Silence*

**Leader:** Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

**Everyone:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel ....

*Silence*

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection

Here we have, without fanfare, the most stupendous event to take place in the salvation of the human race, an event prophesied for centuries by the Old Testament Prophets, an event borne in the hearts of generations of people. Though taken by surprise Mary said 'Yes' to the angel despite what her own life plans might have been and in the process paved the way for the Incarnation. What might we learn from God's invitation to Mary and the manner of her response?

- \* that God's invitations are often quiet and modest, without fanfare?
- \* that God does not impose Himself on us – we are free agents, but our choices can carry huge responsibilities for both ourselves and others?
- \* that we must be prepared to say 'Yes' to God's plans, despite their inconvenience for us?
- \* that there is an onus on us to cooperate with God's plan by the proper study of our Faith?
- \* that a core part of our calling is to trust the Holy Spirit and to be mindful of the messages of the angels that cross our paths?

*Silence*

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

*Sharing*

**Leader:** Let us return to our Advent Prayer.

*Group returns to page 44 of Advent booklet.*

Dioceses of

Achonry, Ardagh & Clonmacnois, Armagh, Clonfert, Elphin, Kerry, Killala,  
Kilmore, Limerick, Ossory, Tuam & Waterford & Lismore.