

# Turning Our Hearts to the Lord

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Advent Scripture Sharing Resource 2018

## WEEK 1

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (21:25-28, 34-36)

*That day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap.*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.

'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'

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

There have been quite a few changes in our housing estate / village this past year. One of our teenage girls has become a single mum. A young couple who are only in the process of getting to know one another have opted to go ahead with a pregnancy. A bullying issue in our local school have received some prominence and some families have been visited by chronic illness, cancer, unemployment, a serious accident and grief.

Some of these changes we could see coming. Others have come upon us as a thief in the night. I can't say anyone has been coarsened with debauchery or drunkenness ... truth be told we don't have the money for that ... but I think it's fair to suggest the cares of life impact upon us all.

This Advent my prayer simply is "Come Lord Jesus" ... and not just to me but to all of us. Behind our brave masks and upbeat words there is frequently a hunger for the peace that only you can bestow. You are no stranger to difficulties or hard times. Come Lord Jesus, come to every member of our housing estate / village and every community like ours.

**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.

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Advent Scripture Sharing Resource 2018

## WEEK 2

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (3:1-6)

*The call of John the Baptist*

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

*A voice cries in the wilderness:  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight.  
Every valley will be filled in,  
every mountain and hill be laid low,  
winding ways will be straightened  
and rough roads made smooth.  
And all humankind shall see the salvation of God.*

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

Journey time to and from work increased lately while some dangerous bends were replaced with a straight stretch of road. As I paused at the temporary traffic lights I was struck by all the heavy machinery, bulldozers, lorries and steam rollers, expertly managed by their drivers. They came to mind again as I read the line "Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight".

Sometimes major human undertakings in the natural world have spiritual parallels, especially in relation to "rough roads made smooth". Think for example of the work of fundraising for hospices around the country, the work of small dedicated groups to renew their parishes as faith communities, recent efforts to accommodate refugees or get a good youth initiative going where teenagers are at risk owing to exposure to illegal drugs etc..

In our prayer today let us give thanks that the Holy Spirit continues to inspire and encourage people to 'prepare the way of the Lord' and that He affords us opportunities to partake through our prayer, acts of sacrifice, words of encouragement and / or active engagement. Let us remind ourselves that it is our privilege to contribute to the spirit of Advent all year round, helping those in our spheres of influence to "see the salvation of our God".

**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.

# Turning Our Hearts to the Lord

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Advent Scripture Sharing Resource 2018

## WEEK 3

### **Reader 1: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (3:10-18)**

*'Someone is coming who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire'*

When all the people asked John, 'What must we do?' he answered, 'If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same.' There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, 'Master, what must we do?' He said to them, 'Exact no more than your rate.' Some soldiers asked him in their turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!'

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.' As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

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**

One of our teachers regularly reminded us that Christianity was both a revealed religion and a practical religion. At the time we admired his conviction but it ended there. Study for the Leaving Cert, boy-girl relationships, sport and fashion, friendship and other leisure pursuits were central to our lives.

Recently we gathered for a class reunion and during the course of the evening it became clear that his words had found a home in many of our hearts. Deceased friends and friends absent owing to ill health were remembered in prayer and God was also honoured and thanked for the good and formative years we had had together.

As the night progressed women and men who had known troubles of their own sought to encourage and support past friends for whom life was now a struggle. In and through their experience of being cared for and helped by God they had become truly compassionate and caring. This Advent and Christmas let us not forget to honour Christ in our neighbour ... not only the one who is good to us and who reciprocates our kindness ... but equally the one who needs a true friend at this time. Let us be good news to their existence. Through our love may their hearts be open to the love of the Christ-child this Christmas day.

**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.

# Turning Our Hearts to the Lord

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Advent Scripture Sharing Resource 2018

## WEEK 4

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (Lk 1:39-44)

*Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?*

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

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

Our shared Advent journey draws to a close and once again the Church invites us to fix our gaze on Our Lady. Here we see the young Mary setting out and going as quickly as she can to the elderly couple Zechariah and Elizabeth. Her arrival reveals the presence of three other persons, her spouse, the Holy Spirit, the Word of God incarnate residing in her womb and the future John the Baptist, residing in Elizabeth's womb. Through Elizabeth the Holy Spirit reveals Mary secret identity, the one who is most blessed. And why is she the most blessed? .... Because she has "believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled".

As this Advent concludes let us not be shy about asking the Lord for a belief akin to Our Lady's. May this gift in turn help us receive and share the Christ-child as she did.... as one who carries Him internally in our hearts as well as presenting Him to the world through our words and actions. Let us pray too for the grace to be present to others in their time of need, as Mary was to Elizabeth, and in such a manner as to radiate God's love in the normal ups and downs of everyday life.

**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 Advent booklet*