

## Title Page

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## Introduction

“Yes” is the word that dominates and defines Advent:

Mary’s yes to God through the angel Gabriel. Joseph’s yes. Elizabeth and Zechariah’s yes. The shepherds’ yes. The magi’s yes. *Our yes.*

The Christian life is all about a ‘yes’ to God. Yes to his life. Yes to his love and mercy. Yes to his truth, beauty, and goodness. Yes to his will for us. Yes, even, to the crosses we bear with Jesus.

But for many, the Christian life is not primarily a ‘yes’ to all of the good that God wants for us. Instead, it becomes primarily a string of nos to the bad things we’re supposed to avoid, and, often, a no to the crosses God would have us bear. Christian life is mainly gritted teeth, hunkering down, and withstanding temptations and crosses until they pass. There is not much joy in the “Gospel of No.”

When our spiritual life is primarily about saying no, it gets stripped of its richness, beauty, and power. The Christian life becomes rule-based. Prayer becomes just a series of desperate pleas: *Help me not to..., Keep me from..., May I avoid..., Prevent me from...* The Sacraments become a matter of obligation. Minimalism sets in when we measure our faith life only in terms of avoiding the bad rather than saying yes to the good God wants for us. And worse still, our focus gets shifted off of God himself. We spend more time looking at the dangers we are trying to avoid, or the crosses we wish were gone, than at the beauty of God himself. We take our eyes off the goal, like a runner who spends more time looking backward at his opponents than forward toward the finish line.

Thank goodness for Advent! Advent provides us with the grace to reset our focus where it should be: on saying yes to God. Advent is a blessed and powerful season of ‘Yes.’ At the center of these days is Mary and her incredibly generous yes to God. And around her ‘yes’ are the many others that helped welcome the way for the Lord: the yes of Joseph, Elizabeth, Zechariah, the shepherds, and the magi, not to mention the yeses of the great figures of old, like Abraham. All of these were focused on saying yes to God, yes to his life, and yes to his great plan of salvation.

“Yes” is the word that dominates and defines Advent. Join us this Advent season as we say yes to God.

# The Gospel of "No" or "Yes"?

## Two Examples

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The difference between living a "Gospel of no" versus a "Gospel of yes" is huge. Let's look at two examples to help us see just how big a difference these two approaches can make.

### Example 1: Bearing Our Crosses

No one likes going through difficulties and struggles in life when our crosses are heavy. When living in the "Gospel of No," our crosses often become the enemy, the things we most try to avoid or get rid of. As a result, our prayer can sound like this:

"Lord, get rid of these trials... Take this suffering away... It can't possibly be God's will that I should suffer like this... Why are you doing this to me?... This shouldn't be happening... Why has God forgotten me?"

The "Gospel of No" can lead us to the state described by Fr. Wilfrid Stinissen:

A problem that many people have today is that they no longer recognize God's will in everything that happens. They no longer believe in a providence that allows  
*all*

that takes place to work for the good of those who love God (Rom. 8:28). They say all too easily and superficially: "But it is not God's will that [there is suffering and struggles]..." Wilfrid Stinissen, *Into Your Hands, Father: Abandoning Ourselves to the God Who Loves Us* (Ignatius Press, 2011), 13.

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As a result, we resist all suffering, bitterly complain when it comes, and spend a lifetime wrestling against it, confident that God could not be present in it at all. It is exhausting and tiring to live life that way. When suffering seems to have no meaning, and every cross seems pointless, it is hard to keep going.

So what does it look like when we are radically living the "Gospel of Yes"? Fr. Stinissen's words may be hard to believe, but here is how we can understand our crosses and sufferings through the lens of our generous yes to God:

God makes use of evil in such a superb way and with such skill that the result is better than if there had never been evil... Nothing falls outside of God's plan. This is why the tragedy of the world, despite all its terror, has no definitive character. All the absurdity of which mankind's foolishness and blindness are capable is caught up in God's loving omnipotence. He is able to fit even the absurd into his plan of salvation and thereby give it meaning. Ibid., 15-16.

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When we believe that God is at work in our suffering, when we find meaning in it and offer the best yes we can, we suddenly find new strength and purpose. It is not nearly as exhausting as it once was. There is power and energy in the Gospel of Yes when applied to the crosses we bear.

How radically different these two approaches are to suffering! One is rooted in the "Gospel of No", the other in the "Gospel of Yes". This Advent, we will open up the Gospel of Yes and enter into it, learning to accept and say yes to all God is doing, even when it involves the cross.

### Example 2: Struggles with Sin

Imagine that your primary struggles are with pride and vanity. In daily life, you find that you are often concerned about what other people think of you. You strive for perfection around others, to always be right, because you are desperate to win the praise and approval of others. Fearing that any mistake could cause you to appear 'less than' in the eyes of others, you often work to get the last word, to justify yourself, and explain why you weren't wrong in a particular situation. You build a spiritual house of cards on *you*. Everything rests on you working hard to get the approval and love of others.

Becoming aware of this and wanting to be free of it, you could spend most of your time in the 'Gospel of No' trying to fix it. Your prayer life could be consumed with asking God to help you not be prideful and vain in all of the various situations of daily life:

Help me not to be so prideful with my family and co-workers  
Help me to not always get the last word.  
Help me not to always worry about winning the approval of others.  
Help me not fear my mistakes.  
Help me not fear appearing 'less than' to others.  
Help me not always justify myself and my actions.

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None of this, however, will bring the freedom and healing that is needed.

What does the 'Gospel of Yes' look like in this situation? It involves turning the gaze of my heart to the Lord. I spend my prayer time focusing my heart on him: his life, his love, his goodness. This 'yes' that initially involves just looking at the Lord and beholding him will gradually do something wonderful and amazing. Slowly but surely, as I gaze on the Lord, I will grow in my awareness of his love for me. I will become more aware that his goodness and beauty are turned toward me. I will become aware that I am the object of his great love and that God himself is interested in me.

This awareness will grow to the point that my heart finds its longing and hunger for love met more and more in him. I will discover my great dignity and worth as God's son or daughter when I turn to the Lord in prayer and find, amazingly, that he is turned toward me, that he finds me worthy of his loving attention.

As this grows within me, I find almost naturally that my need for the approval and praise of others begins to diminish. I find that I am relating to others more naturally, not driven by the need for their approval or praise. My heart has found its deep need for love and approval met in the Father and Son, whom I have been gazing upon in prayer. The love I have found in the Lord has brought healing to my heart, and it all flowed out of my 'yes' to God, not my own string of no's to sin.

Is this really possible? Can this happen? Yes. This is the power of the "Gospel of Yes". This Advent, we will enter into the "Gospel of Yes" with our Blessed Mother and learn from her how to give the most generous yes we can to the Lord.

## December 3, 2023

### Sunday of the First Week of Advent

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#### The Gospel of Yes

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

When the angel Gabriel is sent to Mary, she is already in a place of availability to God. Her heart has already been turned toward him. She is already disposed to hearing from him.

Our yes to God begins when we are turned toward him in this way, open and available. When we only focus on saying no to sin and temptation, we can miss what God is doing. When white-knuckling our way through struggles and temptations becomes "the Gospel," we usually miss the good things God wants to do.

The good news of the Gospel isn't just saying no to sin. It is a joyful yes to every good thing God has in mind for us:

Abandon yourself completely into the hands of God, and take directly from him every event of life, agreeable or disagreeable. Only then can God make you really holy. He loves your soul dearly, cling to him, and trust him, he so longs to be trusted. I would like you to know what I think Jesus wants from you. He would like you to place yourself in his hands entirely, giving him full permission to do what he likes with you. Thus you will accept lovingly crosses, trials, joys, and sickness, which you will try to take from his loving hands as a proof of love. Don't ask for suffering, but open your arms wide if it comes. William Doyle and Patrick Kenny, *To Raise the Fallen: A Selection of the War Letters, Prayers and Spiritual Writings of Fr Willie Doyle SJ* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2020), 125-126.

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To make this amazingly generous yes, we need to be turned towards the Lord. To be gazing at him. To see his beauty.

For some, this is a huge shift. Maybe you've only ever heard the "Gospel of No." So, to think of it in a new and proper way can be a radical and difficult change. No worries. God can make this change.

#### Today's Prayer:

In your prayer today, spend time with Our Lady praying through these verses from Psalm 27. Notice the verbs to *seek*, to *gaze*, to *hear*... They all imply an attentiveness to God. They teach us the beginning of the "Gospel of Yes," which starts with turning our hearts to the Lord.

**Psalm 27:4,7-9,13** There is one thing I ask of the Lord, only this do I seek: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord...

O Lord, hear my voice when I call; have mercy and answer me. Of you my heart has spoken, "Seek his face." It is your face, O Lord, that I seek; hide not your face from me. I believe I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living.

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#### For Your Reflection:



Domenico Beccafumi, *The Annunciation* (1545)(Note: In most e-book readers, you can tap or pinch/zoom on the image to see it in greater detail.)

The Annunciation is one of the most frequently painted scenes in sacred art. Despite the many artists who have set it to canvas over the centuries, there are two symbolic elements we find in many paintings of the Annunciation:

1. An open window.
2. An open book of the Scriptures.

Both elements symbolize our Lady's openness, availability, and attentiveness to God.

#### *The Open Window*

The open window signifies Mary's openness of heart and soul to the Lord. While she is often depicted in an enclosed room, garden, or courtyard in scenes of the Annunciation, there is always some architectural element that also implies her simultaneous openness to the Lord.

The enclosed garden or courtyard, in Latin *Hortus Conclusus*, is a reference to Mary's purity and virginity: "How can this be since I have no relations with a man?" (Luke 1:34) It is an image taken from the *Song of Songs* 4:12 which reads: "A garden enclosed, my sister, my bride, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed!" While Mary is preserved from knowing man, she remains open to the Lord. This is the symbol of the open window. Here, in Beccafumi's work, the window looms large and central in the canvas, with the bright light drawing our eyes to it. The sheer size of the open window seems to capture Mary's great openness to God, her total availability.

#### *The Open Book of the Scriptures*

Notice the open Scriptures in Mary's left hand, supported on her lap. Mary is often depicted with the Scriptures in paintings of the Annunciation. Like the open window, it is a symbol of her openness to the Lord, but it also implies a closeness and familiarity. In her heart, Mary is already pondering his Word, already prepared, it seems, for the unfolding of God's plan in which the Word will become flesh in her very womb.

#### *Reflect on This Image Today:*

- How open are you to the Lord? Is there a large and looming window opened to God in your life? There may be a window, but is it closed and locked? Advent is the time to open it! We will never be able to say yes to God without first creating greater openness in our hearts to him.
- What about the open Scriptures? How available are you to the Lord through his word in Scripture? Do you have any intimacy or closeness to the Lord through Scripture? Is there prayer time built into your day in which you turn your heart and soul to the Lord?

Later in the day, pray again through the verses from Psalm 27 above, in light of the painting of Mary and what you learned about our openness to God from it.

## December 4, 2023

### Monday of the First Week of Advent

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#### Why A “Yes”?

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: “May it be done unto me according to your word.”

#### Today’s Thought:

God’s plan doesn’t steamroll through human history. It waits for the door to be opened through the yes of the human heart. Why a yes? Because God made me free, this is my great dignity. And freedom is essential to the act of loving. We can’t do what we were made to do (to love) without being free.

Often, in our struggles with sin and various trials, we ask God to take away our freedom, to overrule us, and simply do what he needs to do. While it is a great thing to want God to do whatever he wants, he will never take away our freedom to accomplish it. But he will give us grace to make us capable of choosing him, saying yes to him, in our struggles and trials. That is what we are praying for this Advent.

Just as the Lord waited on Mary’s yes, so he waits on ours.

A beautiful homily from St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090 – 1153 AD) captures the moment as all creation waits upon Mary’s yes to the Lord:

You have heard, O Virgin, that you will conceive and bear a son; you have heard that it will not be by man but by the Holy Spirit. The angel awaits an answer; it is time for him to return to God who sent him. We too are waiting, O Lady, for your word of compassion; the sentence of condemnation weighs heavily upon us.

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The price of our salvation is offered to you. We shall be set free at once if you consent. In the eternal Word of God we all came to be, and behold, we die. In your brief response we are to be remade in order to be recalled to life.

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Tearful Adam with his sorrowing family begs this of you, O loving Virgin, in their exile from Paradise. Abraham begs it, David begs it. All the other holy patriarchs, your ancestors, ask it of you, as they dwell in the country of the shadow of death. This is what the whole earth waits for, prostrate at your feet. It is right in doing so, for on your word depends comfort for the wretched, ransom for the captive, freedom for the condemned, indeed, salvation for all the sons of Adam, the whole of your race.

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Answer quickly, O Virgin. Reply in haste to the angel, or rather through the angel to the Lord. Answer with a word, receive the Word of God. Speak your own word, conceive the divine Word. Breathe a passing word, embrace the eternal Word.

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Why do you delay, why are you afraid? Believe, give praise, and receive. Let humility be bold, let modesty be confident. This is no time for virginal simplicity to forget prudence. In this matter alone, O prudent Virgin, do not fear to be presumptuous. Though modest silence is pleasing, dutiful speech is now more necessary. Open your heart to faith, O blessed Virgin, your lips to praise, your womb to the Creator. See, the desired of all nations is at your door, knocking to enter. If he should pass by because of your delay, in sorrow you would begin to seek him afresh, the One whom your soul loves. Arise, hasten, open. Arise in faith, hasten in devotion, open in praise and thanksgiving. Behold the handmaid of the Lord, she says, be it done to me according to your word. St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Hom. 4, 8-9: Opera omnia, Edit. Cisterc. 4* [1966], 53-54.

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#### Today’s Prayer:

Spend time with Mary praying through the verses from Psalm 40 below. Notice the focus is first on the Lord and the wonders and designs he has worked for us. Remember, this is where our “yes” begins: when we focus on

him, when we direct the eyes of our hearts to him. With the focus on the Lord, David declares: “You do not delight in sacrifice and offerings, but in an open ear.” What pleases God most is when the ears of our hearts are open to him, ready to do his will. And then David offers his yes to the Lord: “See, I have come.”

**Psalm 40:6-9** How many, O Lord my God, are the wonders and designs that you have worked for us; you have no equal.

Should I wish to proclaim or speak of them, they would be more than I can tell! You delight not in sacrifice and offerings, but in an open ear.

You do not ask for holocaust and victim. Then I said, “See, I have come.” In the scroll of the book it stands written of me: “I delight to do your will, O my God.”

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### **For Your Reflection:**

Domenico Beccafumi, The Annunciation (1545)

Returning to [Beccafumi's painting](#), notice how the angel Gabriel approaches Mary with arms crossed. He does not come to force God's yes upon her. The crossed arms signify a certain humility, a gentleness, that will wait upon her answer. (The lily he carries is a symbol of Mary's purity and virginity.) Gabriel's eyes are cast down, another sign of his humility and gentleness as he comes to her. The Lord also approaches us in this way. He never forces himself on us but waits for us to use our freedom in the greatest way: to say yes to a relationship with him, to say yes to his plan, to say yes even to the crosses we bear with Jesus.

Return to Psalm 40 during the day. As we move through these days of Advent, pray for the grace to make David's words your own: “I delight to do your will, O my God.” Gradually, during this holy season, you will notice something stirring and growing in your heart as you look upon the Lord. Marveling at his wonders and designs, your heart will become more open to saying yes to him, to doing his will.



December 5, 2023

Tuesday of the First Week of Advent

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### A Yes to the Goodness of God

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

Our yes to the Lord, like Mary's, only makes sense when it is a yes to something greater and more beautiful than the world could ever offer. His beauty and love are the great motivation for our yes. I say yes to him as a response to the love, mercy, and life he first gave me. I say yes to him in order to receive more of him.

To fuel our yes to God, we must be convinced, like Mary, of his utter goodness. When our hearts believe that and have tasted of his goodness, our yes will follow.

St. Augustine wrote: "You, Lord, created heaven and earth. They are beautiful because You are beauty. They are good because You are goodness. They exist because You are existence." The Confessions of St. Augustine, Book 11, Chapter 4 Augustine spent years trying to find beauty and goodness in the world, apart from God, and it left him empty and restless. Only later did he discover that everything he was looking for was found in the One who made him:

"Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you... You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace." The Confessions of St. Augustine, Book 10, Chapter 27

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Once Augustine tasted the Lord's goodness, he went all in and gave his yes to the Lord.

This Advent, let's pray that with Mary and Augustine and so many others, we may taste the goodness of the Lord in such a deep and satisfying way that we will want to give the most generous yes to him that we can. May our turning to the Lord this Advent be with a purpose: "To gaze upon his beauty." (Cf. Psalm 27:4) Let our prayer be motivated by this purpose so that we set aside time to be with him not out of obligation but out of our heart's desire to encounter true beauty and goodness. And may that encounter lead us to offer the most generous yes to the Lord that we can offer.

#### Today's Prayer:

**Psalm 34:9-16** Taste and see that the LORD is good. Blessed the man who seeks refuge in him. Fear the LORD, you his holy ones. They lack nothing, those who fear him. The rich suffer want and go hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no blessing. Come, children, and hear me, that I may teach you the fear of the LORD. Who is it that desires life and longs to see prosperous days? Guard your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Turn aside from evil and do good. Seek after peace, and pursue it. The LORD turns his eyes to the just, and his ears are open to their cry.

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#### For Your Reflection:





Henry Ossawa Tanner, *The Annunciation*, 1898, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Henry Ossawa Tanner's *The Annunciation* is a relatively contemporary (1898) work of art. There is a simplicity to it: Tanner uses a column of light to depict Gabriel and paints Mary in peasant clothing with no halo or other traditional symbols depicting her holiness. What stands out is Mary's upward and open gaze toward the angel Gabriel. Mary's posture is one of humility and littleness: her hands joined together in her lap, her body slightly leaning forward. But her face conveys her openness to the Lord as her head and eyes are raised, coming outside of herself. This is the spiritual posture we aim for in our prayer: to be drawn outside of ourselves toward the beauty, goodness, and love of the Lord.



Tanner, *The Annunciation* (Detail)

When you pray, are your eyes more focused on yourself or the Lord? Sometimes, our prayer can become the proverbial "navel-gazing" that is more self-focused. Notice how, in Tanner's *Annunciation*, Mary is pulled outside herself into an experience of God's love. Through the Holy Spirit, the Lord wants to pull us outside ourselves into an experience of his love. It may take a number of baby steps, but trust that the Lord wants you to experience the depth of his love for you.

For your continued prayer today, go back to Psalm 34 above or offer one of the "Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment" [found here in the book](#) after Christmas Day.

December 6, 2023

Wednesday of the First Week of Advent

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### A Yes to the Love of God

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

Our yes is a yes to God's love for us. Our yes to the Lord actually begins with his initiative. He pours out his love, mercy, and goodness on us. Receiving those gifts and tasting the goodness of the Lord, we respond with a yes like Mary.

These days of Advent are special because they invite us to connect with the Lord in prayer and experience his goodness and love.

Today, we focus on God's love for us.

Scripture is filled with the truths about his love for us:- We don't earn it. It is his gift to us.- He poured out his love even when we were dead in sin.- His love is the source of our dignity and worth. His love for us declares we are his treasure, prized by him beyond all our imagining.

This is the one to whom we are saying yes: the one who loves us beyond our wildest dreams.

#### Today's Prayer:

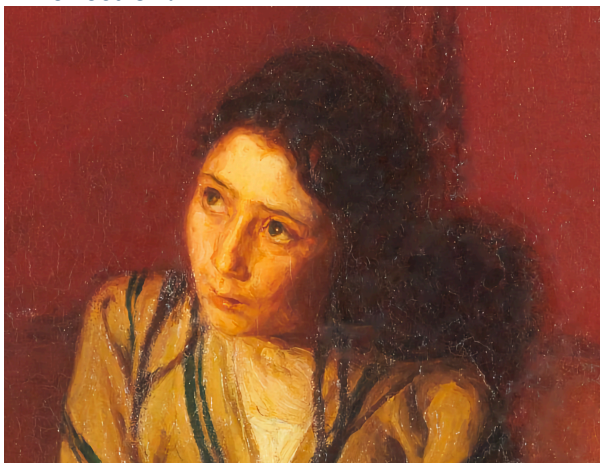
Reflect on these verses in your prayer time today. Allow the truth of God's love for you to penetrate into your heart. As you pray through them you may find yourself not convinced that it is true, or that it is true for everyone else but you. But these are obstacles and lies that need to be healed. Let the Lord heal them in you so that you might be completely convinced of God's love for you. And experiencing this love, may your heart be prepared to respond with a generous yes back to him who first loved you.

**Romans 5:5-8**"The love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us. For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us."

**Ephesians 2:8-9**"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from you; it is the gift of God; it is not from works, so no one may boast."

**Romans 8:35,37-38**"What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will anguish, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? No, in all these things we conquer overwhelmingly through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

#### For Your Reflection:



Tanner, The Annunciation (Detail)

Let's go back to Tanner's Annunciation today. Looking at Mary's face, notice her upturned cheeks and lips. Her face does not appear dour or overly troubled. Something greater seems to have caught her heart's attention.

Notice her eyes, turned up and away from herself. This is what we want to experience in our own prayer. We want to be pulled outside of ourselves as we deeply experience God's love for us. Only when that happens will we give ourselves to him with a generous yes, as Mary did.

Let your prayer this Advent season be slow and unhurried enough that you let the Lord steep your heart in his love. Taste and see the goodness of the Lord. Spend time with him in Eucharistic Adoration, gazing on his beauty in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood.

For your continued prayer today, return to the verses above. Allow the truths of God love to soak into your heart. And don't be afraid to respond to that love by praying through one of the ["Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment" at the end of our Advent book](#).

December 7, 2023

Thursday of the First Week of Advent

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### A Yes to the Mercy of God

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

We are continuing to fix our eyes on the Lord, to seek the face of the Lord. Today, it is the merciful face of the Lord that we look upon. Our yes to God is a yes to his merciful love.

Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, "rich in mercy" (

*Eph*

2:4), after having revealed his name to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (

*Ex*

34:6), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the "fullness of time" (

*Gal*

4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf.

*Jn*

14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.

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We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness." *Misericordiae Vultus*, #1-2, Pope Francis. Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, 2015.

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#### Today's Prayer:

It is mercy that we are saying yes to this Advent.

After the sin of Adam and Eve, God did not wish to leave humanity alone in the throes of evil. And so he turned his gaze to Mary, holy and immaculate in love (cf.

*Eph*

1:4), choosing her to be the Mother of man's Redeemer. When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive. Ibid., #3.

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God turns his merciful gaze to Mary, who responds with a complete and total yes to his plan for salvation. Looking on the merciful face of the Father, Mary joins her heart to God's great plan and so becomes the Mother of Mercy. Pray through these verses from Psalm 103, which tell of the Lord's great mercy. With Our Lady, gaze on the face of the Father, responding with your own yes to his plan of mercy.

**Psalm 103:1-12** Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all within me, his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all his benefits.



It is the Lord who forgives all your sins, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with mercy and compassion, who fills your life with good things, renewing your youth like an eagle's.

The Lord does just deeds, gives full justice to all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, and his deeds to the children of Israel.

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and rich in mercy. He will not always find fault; nor persist in his anger forever. He does not treat us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our faults.

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so strong his mercy for those who fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far from us does he remove our transgressions.

*Hail Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, Our life, our sweetness, and our hope ...*

### **For Your Reflection:**



Mikhail Nesterov, Annunciation. 19th century.

The animated and brightly colorful Annunciation by the Russian painter Mikhail Nesterov (1862-1942) seems to anticipate Our Lady's Magnificat spoken in reply to Elizabeth immediately after the Annunciation:

"The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. (Luke 1:49-50)

Mary's arms are raised not only in openness to God but even in praise of his great mercy, "for he looked with favor on his lowly servant." In the painting, Mary seems to be responding in joyful love to the mercy of God, who has come to save his people.

This "looking with favor" by God that Mary speaks of in her *Magnificat* is always a look of merciful love. It looks upon the lowly and does great things, not because it has been earned, but solely because of God's great favor. How can one not say yes to such great and merciful love?

The more we spend time gazing on the merciful face of God, revealed in Jesus, the more we naturally want to give our own yes back to him.

For your continued prayer today, return to Psalm 103 above, and then use one of the [Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment](#) as your response to his mercy.

December 8, 2023

Friday of the First Week of Advent, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

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### **A Yes to Something Sweeter Than Sin**

#### **Opening Prayer:**

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### **Today's Thought:**

We cannot spend our spiritual life simply saying no to sin. There must be something sweeter, more beautiful, and more attractive that captivates our hearts than the sins and temptations we battle.

This Advent, we are looking to Mary to teach us how to offer a generous yes to the Lord. That yes will only happen when our hearts have been captivated by him, and he becomes more attractive than the sins that often tempt us.

A spiritual life spent only saying no to sin diverts our attention from Jesus, our Savior. We aren't fully living the Christian life if the gaze of our heart and the focus of our attention is not on the One with whom we have fallen in love. Advent teaches us not only to say yes to God but to discover Him as the greater, more beautiful, sweeter thing to which we are saying yes.

One of the great dangers of focusing only on our temptations is that they can become even more tempting.

In the Garden of Eden, Eve was lured into focusing on the forbidden fruit by the serpent:

"The snake said to the woman: 'You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil.'" The woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it." (Genesis 3:4-6)

Eve took her eyes off God the Father and dwelt too long on the tree. She saw it was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable for gaining wisdom. In fixing her gaze on the temptation and not on the goodness of God, she was more susceptible to the serpent's lies.

#### **Today's Prayer:**

How do we withstand the lies of the enemy? Only by remaining in the truth:

"Jesus then said to those who believed in him, 'If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" (John 8:32)

The enemy, Satan, only speaks lies: "[The devil] was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he speaks in character, because he is a liar and the father of lies." John 8:44

**Psalms 119:97-104** O LORD, how I love your law: my meditation all the day! Your command makes me wiser than my foes, for it is with me always.

I have more insight than all who teach me, for I ponder your decrees. I have gained more understanding than my elders, for I keep your precepts.

I keep my feet from every evil path, to obey your word. I have not turned away from your decrees, which you yourself have taught me.

How sweet is your promise to my tongue, more than honey in the mouth. I gain understanding from your precepts, and so I hate all false ways.

#### **For Your Reflection:**



John Roddam Spencer Stanhope. The Temptation of Eve. 1877.

Notice how the enemy whispers into Eve's ear in this painting by Stanhope. It captures in art what Jesus declares: he is the "Father of Lies." While Jesus is the true Word of God, the enemy only speaks lies; his words do not come forth from the mouth of God. In order to speak a generous yes to God this Advent, we must first hear the truth of God spoken to us. Contrast this image with what we've seen in the images of the Annunciation in which Mary is depicted with the Scriptures open before her, attentive to God's word.

Notice also how Eve is ensnared in the lies of the enemy. The branches of the tree twist about her, as does the enemy. Eve seems to be a prisoner here, not truly free at all. This is what happens when we listen to and welcome the lies of the enemy. It is the opposite of what Jesus tells us in the Gospel of John: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32)

Pray for the gift of true freedom today, a freedom rooted in the truths God speaks to us, especially in Scripture. Pray that you will find God's Word and law sweeter even than honey so that the lies and temptations of the Evil



One may not lure you away from the Lord himself. Offer one of the [prayers of surrender](#), or use your own words to give your yes to the Lord today.

December 9, 2023

Saturday of the First Week of Advent

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### A Yes to God in My Daily Life (I)

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

What is the yes we are offering to God this Advent? Looking at Mary's yes at the Annunciation, it seems like it must be a *huge* yes, way outside the scope of everyday life. It seems like the yes God wants is too big and too important to be found in ordinary, daily life.

But is that case? When Mary offered her yes, it was a yes that included all of the same things that every mom says yes to: to sleepless nights with a newborn baby, to changing diapers, to singing lullabies to her son, to cleaning up after him, to waiting for his first word and his first step.

We see the same thing with St. Joseph. His yes to the Lord was a yes to providing for his family as every father does: yes to working dutifully, to early mornings or late nights in the workshop, to caring for the needs of Mary and Joseph, to his own turns getting up in the middle of the night, to teaching Jesus the skills of his trade.

This teaches us that our yes to God includes all of the small, daily yes's that come with our vocation and state in life. This is good news, because it means that we don't say yes to God somewhere outside of our daily life. We don't have to leave daily life, in all of its ordinariness, to offer a superhuman yes.

"You must understand now, more clearly, that God is calling you to serve Him in and from the ordinary, material and secular activities of human life. He waits for us every day, in the laboratory, in the operating theatre, in the army barracks, in the university chair, in the factory, in the workshop, in the fields, in the home and in all the immense panorama of work. Understand this well: there is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it... There is no other way. Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him." St. Josemaria Escriva, "Conversations · 114 · Escriva.Org," Conversations – Passionately Loving the World – Point 114, 2023, <https://escriva.org/en/conversaciones/114/>.

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#### Today's Prayer:

The life-transforming yes we make to God this Advent is made right in our daily life. It is a yes that includes so much of what is already asked of us as moms, dads, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, students, employees, friends, and neighbors. In saying yes to loving well in these small, daily moments, we are saying yes to God himself.

As you begin your prayer, turn the gaze of your heart to the Lord, pause a moment, and make yourself present and available to him, like Mary in the scene of the Annunciation...

**Deuteronomy 30:11-14** "For this command which I am giving you today is not too wondrous or remote for you. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, "Who will go up to the heavens to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?" Nor is it across the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross the sea to get it for us and tell us of it, that we may do it?" No, it is something very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to do it."

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#### For Your Reflection:



Annunciation Triptych (Merode Altarpiece) Workshop of Robert Campin, Netherlandish, ca. 1427–32

The Annunciation Triptych (known better as the Merode Altarpiece) is displayed at The Met Cloisters. It is described as:

“One of the most celebrated early Netherlandish paintings—particularly for its detailed observation, rich imagery, and superb condition—this triptych belongs to a group of paintings associated with the workshop of Robert Campin (ca. 1375–1444), sometimes called the Master of Flémalle.”

“Having just entered the room [in the central panel], the angel Gabriel is about to tell the Virgin Mary that she will be the mother of Jesus. The golden rays pouring in through the left oculus carry a miniature figure with a cross. On the right wing, Joseph, who is betrothed to the Virgin, works in his carpenter’s shop, drilling holes in a board. The mousetraps on the bench and in the shop window opening onto the street are thought to allude to references in the writings of Saint Augustine identifying the cross as the devil’s mousetrap. On the left wing, the kneeling donor appears to witness the central scene through the open door. His wife kneels behind him, and a town messenger stands at the garden gate. The owners would have purchased the triptych to use in private prayer. An image of Christ’s conception in an interior not unlike the one in which they lived also may have reinforced their hope for their own children.”The Metropolitan Museum of Art. “Workshop of Robert Campin | Annunciation Triptych (Merode Altarpiece) | South Netherlandish | The Metropolitan Museum of Art,” n.d. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/470304>.



#### Annunciation Triptych (Detail)

Notice the familiar elements around Mary that we have already reflected on in our prayer: the enclosed room, the open window, the open Scriptures (both on the table and in Mary’s hands.) She is open and available to God. We cannot say yes to the Lord unless we have first made ourselves available to him and turned our hearts to him.

But notice also that the scene happens right in the home, in the living room. It does not happen in some remote place, like a mountaintop or far-off monastery. It is in the home. As the description from the Metropolitan Museum reminds us, this scene, painted in a home “not unlike the one in which [the donors] lived also may have reinforced their hope for their own children.” It is a beautiful and hopeful thing that God comes to us in the ordinary!

Do you value the yes you make to God in your daily life? Does your yes to the ordinary things of life seem too mundane to matter to God? Do you appreciate the power of the small times you say yes to God in your daily life? Ask Our Lady to pray that you might come to value the power of your everyday small yeses to the Lord. For your continued prayer, return to the passage from Deuteronomy above and then offer one of the ["Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment" found in the Advent book.](#)

December 10, 2023

Sunday of the Second Week of Advent

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### A Yes to God in My Daily Life (II)

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

Joseph, too, is available to God right in the midst of his ordinary workday. Laboring in his workshop, his toil is available to be used by God. The mousetraps that he is crafting are a reference to the writings of St. Augustine, who described the Cross of Christ as a baited trap that ensnared the devil:

"The Devil exulted when Christ died, and by that very death of Christ the Devil was overcome: he took food, as it were, from a trap. He gloated over the death as if he were appointed a deputy of death; that in which he rejoiced became a prison for him. The cross of the Lord became a trap for the Devil; the death of the Lord was the food by which he was ensnared. And behold, our Lord Jesus Christ rose again." Augustine of Hippo, *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons*, ed. Hermigild Dressler, trans. Mary Sarah Muldowney, vol. 38, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1959), 392–393.

Jesus' death on the Cross was the bait that ensnared the Devil. Jesus could die only because he took on our human flesh and entered fully into our human condition. Our seemingly "ordinary" human condition became the very way that Jesus overcame sin and death and the Devil. Joseph's role in that seemingly "ordinary human life" of Jesus was huge: entrusted as foster father, Joseph formed Jesus and taught him his trade. All of the ordinary, daily things that Joseph taught Jesus would end up serving our salvation.

Luke tells us: "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him" (Luke 2:40). The "ordinary" work of Mary and Joseph contributed invaluablely to the growth and strengthening of Jesus as well as to his developing wisdom.

Your yes to God in the ordinary things of life can also be used in amazing ways!

#### Today's Prayer:

God loves the ordinary and chooses to work in ways that surprise us because they are so ordinary. Pray through these words of St. Paul to the Corinthians, in which Paul reminds us that no one is too ordinary for him. Let these words bring you confidence in offering your yes to the Lord today in the midst of your daily duties and responsibilities:

**1 Corinthians 1:26-31** Consider your own calling, brothers. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. Rather, God chose the foolish of the world to shame the wise, and God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong, and God chose the lowly and despised of the world, those who count for nothing, to reduce to nothing those who are something, so that no human being might boast before God. It is due to him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Whoever boasts, should boast in the Lord."

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#### For Your Reflection:





Moving to the panel on the right of the altarpiece, we have Joseph working in his shop. This portrayal of Joseph shows him as the provider. In many other works of art, Joseph is often presented as feeble, sleeping, or insignificant. But Campin has given Joseph dignity. He has painted him as the provider of the holy family, a hard worker who participates in the salvation narrative.

### Board of Spikes

Joseph is drilling holes into a small, square board. Northern European artists of this time sometimes portrayed Christ as carrying the cross with a rope tied around his waist. Attached to these ropes were boards that looked just like the board that Joseph is making. In the holes of the board, spikes were inserted so that, as Christ walked, they would bang against his legs, adding another layer to his suffering. We can see the boards like this in the painting by Hieronymus Bosch below. Christ is stepping on one, and the other is hitting his ankle:



Those boards are just one reference to the future work that Christ will take on behalf of humanity. The saw in the bottom left of the Altarpiece panel is believed to reference the sword that the Apostle Peter will use to slice the ear off of a Roman Soldier on the night Jesus is arrested. And the other tools spread throughout the work-space are references to other moments of the Passion narrative.

### The Mousetrap

The most remarked upon detail of this panel in Campin's altarpiece, however, is the mousetrap. There is one on the workbench and another sitting on the window sill as if advertising Joseph's work to passersby. The mousetrap is a symbol for Christ dying on the cross and trapping Satan.

St. Augustine, several times, made the analogy between a mousetrap and Christ. "What is this trap, made by a Carpenter who works in wood? God's trap for the devil is the cross. And who is the bait, placed on the trap? It is Jesus. He himself becomes the bait."

When Christ came Satan saw his opportunity to do damage, perhaps even kill Jesus. But it was a trap, it is in Christ's death on the cross that Satan loses all.

For your continued prayer today, [offer one of the "Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment" found in the Advent book.](#)

December 11, 2023

Monday of the Second Week of Advent

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### A Yes With Jesus to the Father

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

Our yes is a yes with Jesus to the Father. We are united with Jesus in his total offering to the Father. Everything can be united with him – our life, our praise, our sufferings, our prayer, and our work – and so acquire a completely new value:

"The Church which is the Body of Christ participates in the offering of her Head. With him, she herself is offered whole and entire. She unites herself to his intercession with the Father for all men. In the Eucharist the sacrifice of Christ becomes also the sacrifice of the members of his Body. The lives of the faithful, their praise, sufferings, prayer, and work, are united with those of Christ and with his total offering, **and so acquire a new value**. Christ's sacrifice present on the altar makes it possible for all generations of Christians to be united with his offering." Catholic Church, [Catechism of the Catholic Church](#), 2nd Ed. (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), #1368.

Mary did this. She offered her life with Jesus to the Father. Her yes was a sharing in the great yes that Jesus offered the Father.

When we do this, all that we offer acquires a new value. Daily work takes on new meaning when it becomes part of our yes to the Father. Suffering and hardships have new meaning and purpose when we offer them as part of our yes. Tedious and monotonous things aren't simply empty and useless when they are part of our yes. There is such great hope in this truth! Be encouraged this Advent as we continue to pray for the grace to offer a generous yes to the Lord.

#### Today's Prayer:

St. Paul knew that in our union with Jesus, everything could be offered to the Father through him:

**Romans 12:1-2** I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. Remember that everything we offer – our praise, sufferings, prayer, and work – acquires new value when it is part of our yes to God. What areas of your life need that new value and meaning? What areas of your life haven't been offered over to the Lord yet? Bring those areas to him today that they may take on an entirely new value and meaning as part of your yes to God.

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#### For Your Reflection:





Georges de la Tour, *Joseph the Carpenter*, 1642.

This painting by Georges de la Tour depicts Jesus assisting Joseph in the workshop. It's a simple thing: Jesus holding a candle as Joseph drills into a wooden beam with an auger, whose shape reflects the Cross that is to come. The spiritual message of today's theme reverses this: we share in the great work of Jesus – his offering to the Father - by giving even the simplest or most menial of daily tasks over to our yes. Nothing is off limits, nothing is too simple. All can be offered with Jesus to the Father.

"Painted by Georges de la Tour in 1642, *Joseph the Carpenter* depicts a sweet moment between Foster-father and Christ.

This artwork now hangs in Louvre, and it is easy to see why. Their bond is immediately evident, with the young Christ assisting Joseph by holding the candle to light his workspace. No different than today, when you assign your child the important task of holding the flashlight, it is not just a bonding moment, but a chance to teach valuable life skills.

It is important to remember that God chose to place His son in a working-class household. Christ would learn firsthand, like any child, about the value of hard work, helping others and taking responsibility.

The artist has made this moment even more unique by using one lone candle. While any other scene cast in darkness might imply sadness or drama, the candle held by Christ reveals instead the warmth and love between Christ and Joseph. The style of painting the sharp differences between light and shadow is known as tenebrism, and the artist Georges de la Tour is celebrated for his mastery of this technique. Most of the artworks created throughout his career feature dramatic scenes lit by a lone candle, and just as many of them are scenes from the gospel. It is a small but important detail that the artist uses to connect the audience with Christ. After all, working by candlelight was a common pastime up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The candle reveals only what is necessary for the scene, and that is an eager, young Christ observing Joseph hard at work. The artist prefers to keep the setting in the natural world, as the only hint at Christ's divinity is the candle shining brightest on His face. The wood Joseph is carving resembles the arm of a cross, and the hole he bores is not unlike where a nail would go. Even in the precious moment between the child and foster-father, the fate of Christ on the Cross is ever present.

While Christ's true Father is God, this work of art by Georges de la Tour makes it clear that Joseph still played an important role in Christ's life. While sacred art tends to center on Mary and her life with Christ, Joseph should not be forgotten, for he too helped raise the Son of God."Caleigh McCutcheon, "Exploring Sacred Art: Celebrating Fatherhood with St. Joseph," *Celebrating Catholic Moms & Families*, accessed November 29, 2023, <https://www.catholicmom.com/articles/exploring-sacred-art-celebrating-fatherhood-with-st.-joseph>.

For your continued prayer, return to the passage above from Romans. Our yes to the Lord is not just words, but the very offering of our life in the flesh. Then use one of the [Prayers of Surrender](#) to make your yes to God.



December 12, 2023

Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent

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### Yes to a Greater Good

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

"We should abandon ourselves entirely into the hands of God, and believe that His providence disposes everything that He wishes or permits to happen to us for our greater good." (St. Vincent de Paul). God loves us so much that in his providence, he makes all things work for our good: "We know that all things work for good for those who love God." (Romans 8:28) This may sound too good to be true, but it isn't! So we don't need to desperately control our lives to make things work for our good. God's got this! Believing this leaves us free to abandon ourselves entirely into God's hands. There is so much more freedom and peace when we aren't desperately trying to control every aspect of our life. So our yes to God is always a yes to some greater good that God has in mind. I may not know what it is, but God has something in mind for me in every situation, even in every cross.

Listen to these words of St. John Henry Newman as he reflects on the strange ways that God's providence often leads us:

"God has created all things for good; all things for their greatest good; everything for its own good. What is the good of one is not the good of another; what makes one man happy would make another unhappy. God has determined, unless I interfere with His plan, that I should reach what is my greatest happiness. He looks on me individually, He calls me by my name, He knows what I can do, what I can best be, what is my greatest happiness, and He means to give it me."

God knows what is my greatest happiness, but I do not. There is no rule about what is happy and good. What suits one would not suit another, and the ways by which perfection is reached vary very much; the medicines necessary for our souls are very different from each other.

Truly, God leads us by strange ways! We know He wills our happiness, but we neither know what our happiness is, nor the way. We are blind, and left to ourselves we should take the wrong way; we must leave it to Him.

Let us put ourselves into His hands, and not be startled though He leads us by a strange way, a *mirabilis via* (marvelous way), as the Church speaks. Let us be sure He will lead us right, that He will bring us to that which is, not indeed what we think best, nor what is best for another, but what is best for us.

O, my God, I will put myself without reserve into Your hands. Wealth or woe, joy or sorrow, friends or bereavement, honor or humiliation, good report or ill report, comfort or discomfort, Your presence or the hiding of Your countenance, all is good if it comes from You. You are wisdom and You are love—what can I desire more? You have led me in Your counsel, and with glory You received me. What have I in heaven, and apart from You what want I upon earth? My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the God of my heart, and my portion forever."

#### Today's Prayer:

Slowly and repeatedly pray over these words of St. Paul:

"We know that all things work for good for those who love God." (Romans 8:28)

Keep repeating them, allowing them to sink into your heart. Let the Lord stir up greater faith in the truth of these words.

Then, offer the prayer of St. John Henry Newman: O, my God, I will put myself without reserve into Your hands. Wealth or woe, joy or sorrow, friends or bereavement, honor or humiliation, good report or ill report, comfort or discomfort, Your presence or the hiding of Your countenance, all is good if it comes from You. You are wisdom and You are love—what can I desire more? You have led me in Your counsel, and with glory You received me. What have I in heaven, and apart from You what want I upon earth? My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the God of my heart, and my portion forever.

### **For Your Reflection:**



Philippe de la Champaigne, The Annunciation. Circa 1644.

This is one of several paintings of the Annunciation by Philippe de la Champaigne, each depicting the scene differently. Here, we see Mary kneeling prayer. The open prayer book or Scriptures is before her, with the cabinet door opened below, revealing additional books. A warm heavenly light is seen throughout the upper right corner of the painting as the Holy Spirit comes upon Mary.

While Mary's face seems peaceful, her right-hand gestures to herself, capturing the moment Mary says, "How can this be?" As St. John Newman said: "Truly, God leads us by strange ways!" God's ways are strange, so much higher than our way of thinking. How can it be that Mary, who does not know man, will conceive and bear a child? Mary's reaction is to give herself over to God's plan, believing as St. Vincent de Paul said: "We should abandon ourselves entirely into the hands of God, and believe that His providence disposes everything that He wishes or permits to happen to us for our greater good."

Sometimes, our reaction to God's strange ways is to withhold our yes, demanding to know *how* God will make all things work for our good before we say yes. For your continued prayer, return to the verse above from Romans and then pray again through the prayer of surrender from St. John Newman.

December 13, 2023

Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent

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### An Imperfect Yes

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

Mary's yes to the Lord is perfect. Conceived without sin, Mary is able to give a perfectly free and total yes to God.

What about us? Will our yes be perfect like Mary's? Will we be able to give a perfectly free and total yes as she does? If we can't, then what? Do we only offer a yes if it's perfect?

The truth is that we will never be able to give as perfect and complete a yes as Mary did. Free from the effects of original sin, Mary is uniquely able to make a complete gift of herself to God. For us, in whom some wounds of original sin remain (see [Catechism #1264](#)), our yes will always require more effort.

The good news in all of this is that the Lord still wants us to offer our yes to him, even if it is imperfect. His grace will help us, even pulling and dragging us at times when our yes struggles.

Qualified Christian holiness begins with man's free "Yes" to his election and his faithfulness in carrying out his commission. It would be quite wrong to say that this "Yes" is equally weak and feeble in all who are thus called; on the contrary: some give a full "Yes", others a clear "No"; others say, "Perhaps"; one says, undefined

"Not now, but later", or, "Yes in part". Those who utter a wholehearted "Yes" will sometimes stumble or hesitate or fail to live up to their first ideal, but grace will help them up again. undefined

They will stick to their path, and very often it is the case that God's task takes over and relentlessly drags their poor, protesting person ever onward. Thus God has gained the upper hand in them over themselves. It is not they who possess a mission, but their mission possesses them. This mission can be anything: a mission of prayer, of suffering, of active involvement for the poor and oppressed, a mission to a small circle of people who need support and the comfort of a light, a public mission or a hidden mission, a successful mission or one doomed to failure: the only important thing is that man stays faithful to it. undefined

Now we are at the center of the mystery of Christian holiness, and also at the center of the mystery of today's feast. The man in whom the mission has won precedence over his private personality has become dispossessed, expropriated in favor of it, for the sake of God and his fellowmen. He is a ploughed field in which God's word can and will bear fruit. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *You Crown the Year with Your Goodness* : *Radio Sermons*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press. 2006.

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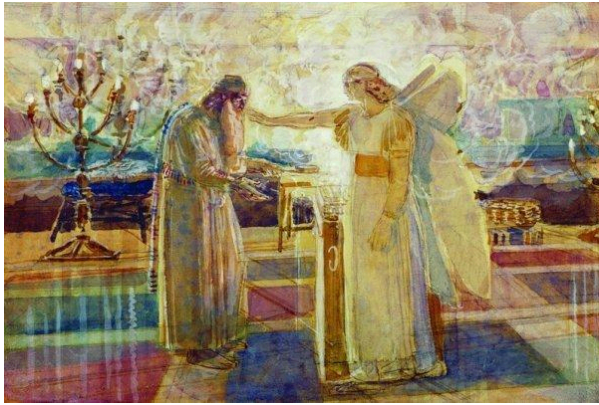
#### Today's Prayer:

St. Paul knew what it was like to struggle in the life of faith and how God's strength could still prevail. Pray through the verses below and take encouragement in Paul's words. Paul shares that he has not reached perfection yet, but just keeps striving toward the goal. These are good words for us to hear during these days of Advent as we offer our own imperfect yes to the Lord but keep pressing on without giving up.

**Philippians 3:8-9,12-14** I count everything as loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all other things, and I regard them as so much rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him.

It is not that I have already attained this or have yet reached perfection. But I press on to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me. Brethren, I do not claim to have taken hold of it as yet. Only this one thing: forgetting what is behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the finishing line to win the heavenly prize to which God has called me in Christ Jesus.

## For Your Reflection:



Alexander Ivanov, Archangel Gabriel Struck Zechariah Mute. 1824.

Alexander Ivanov was a Russian painter best known for his great work, *The Appearance of Christ Before the People*. Much of Ivanov's other works are sketches and incomplete canvases that could be considered masterpieces in their own right.

The work depicted here – the appearance of the Archangel Gabriel to Zechariah – is rather uncommon in the history of art. Maybe that shouldn't surprise us since Zechariah's response to Gabriel is a struggling yes that results in his being struck mute. That's not nearly as inspiring as Mary's *fiat*. So artists have used far more paint and canvas depicting the annunciation to Mary. But Zechariah captures all of us and our own struggling and weak yesses to the Lord. And in the end, God still wins, and Zechariah's tongue is loosed after the birth of John. So it's hardly all bad news!

The brightly colored work here, with the jeweled stone floor of the Temple glowing, captures the moment when Gabriel stretches out his hand and arm to strike Zechariah mute for his unbelief.

The good news here is that Zechariah's imperfect yes to the Lord did not completely interrupt God's plan. And in this we can find hope for ourselves as we offer our own yes to the Lord this season of Advent:

Sometimes for me, and I think for many of us, one of the greatest sources of despondency is that perfection in the spiritual life, understanding of the faith, even friendship with God, does not come all at once. The gradual process of growing in these things can sometimes strike me as especially frustrating. Why can't all of these things just come at once? Advent does something to pull us out of this feeling, for it's a season which expresses desire and longing most perfectly as the words of the expectant prophets become, quite literally in the Divine Office, our song. Brother Albert Elias Robertson, O.P. (2019, December 10). *Advent Art: The Angel Gabriel Appearing to Zechariah*, by Alexander Ivanov. The Dominican Friars in Britain. <https://www.english.op.org/godzdogz/advent-art-the-angel-gabriel-appearing-to-zechariah-by-alexander-ivanov/>

For your continued prayer, return to the verses from Philippians and take courage from Paul, who tells us he hasn't reached perfection yet but keeps striving. Then choose one of the [Prayers of Surrender](#) to make your offering to the Lord again. It may be imperfect but the Lord will use it to help you keep growing in your generosity toward him.

December 14, 2023

Thursday of the Second Week of Advent

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### A Yes to a Plan That May Not Look Planned

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

God's plan is perfect. But it may not always look that way to us. He sees the big picture, while we only see a sliver or a small slice. As a result, it sometimes seems to us that God's plan isn't very planned. In these moments, our yes become more difficult. It's hard enough when the plan seems solid and trustworthy, but what about those moments when the plan doesn't seem as certain?

Abraham is a good example of what it looks like to keep trusting the Lord, to keep saying yes, even when the plan may not look that planned. Abraham was 75 years old when the Lord promised a great land to his descendants, but at the time, Abraham had no children. Years passed without Abraham and Sarah having a child. Abraham questioned the Lord, who repeated his promise and asked Abraham to keep believing. Finally, when he was 100, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. God saw the whole picture all along, but he asked Abraham to trust and keep saying yes even though he didn't see the big picture himself.

Our yes to the Lord is often similar. We are asked to trust a plan that doesn't always seem like a plan.

St. Joseph profoundly experienced this himself, with the Lord often speaking to him in dreams with commands and instructions that veered from what he first expected. Joseph often expected one thing, only to find out that God's plan was different. Think about the very first dream of Joseph, which took place after he decided to quietly break off his betrothal to Mary when he received news that she was with child. Joseph is described in Scripture as a just and upright man, so we know that he didn't make this decision lightly. He was a man of prayer and virtue, so he spent time wrestling with this. It was only after he prayerfully made the decision that the Lord sent the angel to him with the message: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home." (Matthew 1:20)

Other dreams in which Joseph experienced this unexpected change of plans include:

- **Second dream:** In Matthew 2:13, Joseph is warned to leave Bethlehem and flee to Egypt.
- **Third dream:** In Matthew 2:19–20, while in Egypt, Joseph is told that it is safe to go back to Israel.
- **Fourth dream:** In Matthew 2:22, because he had been warned in a dream, Joseph awakens to depart for the region of Galilee instead of going to Judea.

#### Today's Prayer:

It's important to remember that what may not appear to be planned to us is always planned and foreseen by the Lord. Whether he is actively directing situations or simply permitting us to experience certain things, nothing happens without the Lord knowing exactly what is happening. To reassure you and help you say yes to the Lord, pray over these verses from the prophet Isaiah:

**Isaiah 55:8-9** For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

#### For Your Reflection:





Daniele Crespi, Saint Joseph's Dream. Circa 1620 and 1630.

The painter Daniele Crespi depicts St. Joseph's second dream when the angel says to Joseph: "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt." (Matthew 2:13) Crespi depicts an angel robed in bright white and red, touching Joseph with his left hand while pointing to Mary and the Child with his right hand. Joseph, exhausted, sleeps at his workbench, apparently continuing his trade even while in Bethlehem for the census in order to support his family.

For Joseph, this represents another moment when he probably expected one thing, only to discover that God's plan was different. What is wonderful about Joseph is his quiet obedience to the Lord in each of these moments. We might think that the Lord needs to speak to Joseph in his dreams because awake he is not very docile to the Lord. But this would be a mistake. Joseph's quiet obedience each and every time the Lord gives him direction is something marvelous to behold. Joseph kept offering a yes to a plan that may not have looked very planned. Notice the angel's peaceful, almost smiling face. The angel carries the Lord's peace into this situation. When we fear that God's plan isn't so planned, and so hold back on our yes, it's good to be attentive to the ways God is communicating his peace to us. For Joseph, it was through the angel. For you it may be through a family member, a close friend, or a message you hear in Scripture or in a homily. Be open to however it may be that the Lord reassures you: "Do not be afraid!"

For your continued prayer, return to the verses from Isaiah above and then offer one of the [Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment](#) this day.

December 15, 2023

Friday of the Second Week of Advent

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### A Yes to the Impossible

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

"How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" (Luke 1:34) This is Mary's reaction to Gabriel's announcement of the impossible. Mary's response isn't one of doubt, but of surprise. At the human level, it would be utterly impossible for Mary to be with child since she did not know man. Hence Mary's surprise. But Gabriel reassures Mary: "The holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God." (Luke 1:35)

Mary is asked to give a yes to the impossible. And we are asked to give a yes to the impossible as well. This obviously requires faith, a belief that God can do all things. Because Mary's life has already been turned to God, and the gaze of her heart has already been focused on his goodness and love, she is prepared to give a yes to the impossible. Nevertheless, Gabriel gives Mary reassurance: "And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." (Luke 1:36-37)

"Don't be afraid. Nothing is impossible for God." Our yes to God is built on this truth. Because nothing is impossible for God, we are not afraid to give our yes.

Scripture is filled with great examples of this kind of faith. Abraham was asked to believe that God could do the impossible, especially with his beloved son Isaac, for whom he waited so many years in faith:

"By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son, of whom it was said, 'Through Isaac descendants shall bear your name.' He reasoned that God was able to raise even from the dead, and he received Isaac back as a symbol." (Hebrews

Abraham reasoned that God was able to do the impossible. So he wasn't afraid to say yes to what the Lord was asking.

Our yes is to the God of the impossible. We don't have to know *how* he will do it, but to simply believe that he can.

#### Today's Prayer:

Pray through these verses from the Gospel of Luke, asking for the gift of faith in what is declared here: *Nothing will be impossible for God.*

**Luke 1:36-37** "And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Luke 1:36-37

#### For Your Reflection:



Holly Schapker, The Annunciation to Mary, 2017.

When God asks us to say yes to the impossible, our reaction is one of surprise. In this image of the Annunciation, we see that surprise in Mary. Sitting upright, with her right hand raised, Mary says yes but also asks, "How can this be?" It's ok for our yes to also be joined to surprise. God's ways are not our ways, so we will often be surprised. As long as our surprise is joined to faith and not to doubt, we will be fine.



As you make your "yes" to the Lord today, remember that it is a yes to the One who can do the impossible. So have faith in him. Don't be afraid to give your yes to the Lord even if you don't know how he will work things out. It's ok to be surprised, but let it be with faith in him!  
For your continued prayer, offer one of the Prayers of Surrender trusting in the Lord's power to do all things!



## December 16, 2023

### Saturday of the Second Week of Advent

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#### A Yes "Not by Obligation But by Delight"

##### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

##### Today's Thought:

Today, we revisit the theme with which we started these reflections: Our yes to the Lord is a joyful yes to the goodness, love, and mercy of God. It is not just a dry act of the will, nor is it just a yes of duty and obligation. The reason that we have spent these days of Advent taking time to pray and gazing on the beauty of the Lord is so that we can be drawn to him, attracted to him, that it would be our delight to say yes to him.

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draw him." (John 6:44)

Commenting on this verse from John's Gospel, St. Augustine speaks about the power of attraction, drawing us to God:

"What splendid praise of grace! Nobody comes unless drawn. Are you not yet being drawn? Pray to be drawn.  
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Do not imagine that you are being drawn against your will; the soul is also drawn by love. Nor should we fear [those] saying to us, "How can I believe by choice if I am being drawn?" I, in turn, say, "Your will is less important than you think; you are also drawn by pleasure."  
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What does it mean to be drawn by pleasure?  
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*Delight in the Lord, and he will give you the appeals of your heart*  
(Ps 36:4). There is a pleasure of the heart for the one for whom that heavenly bread is sweet. If the poet could once say, "Each one is by his pleasure drawn," not by necessity but by pleasure, not by obligation but by delight, how much more strongly should we say that those whose delight is in the truth, whose delight is in happiness, whose delight is in justice, whose delight is in eternal life, are drawn to Christ, because each of those is Christ.  
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You show a bunch of green leaves to a sheep, and you draw her. Nuts are shown to a small boy, and he is drawn; and he runs where he is drawn to, he is drawn by love, drawn without any harm to his body, drawn by a cord of the heart. So, if these things, which are revealed to their lovers among earthly delights and pleasures, draw, how true it is that "each one is by his pleasure drawn." Will not Christ draw us, when revealed by the Father? After all, what can the soul desire more eagerly than Truth? What ought to make its mouth water more, what better reason could it have for wanting a healthy inner palate, sensitive enough to judge the truth of things, than the prospect of eating and drinking Wisdom, Justice, Truth, Eternity."Saint Augustine, [Homilies on the Gospel of John 1-40](#), ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald and Boniface Ramsey, trans. Edmund Hill, vol. 12, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2009), 452-454.

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Augustine's words are amazing as he teaches us: "Your will is less important than you think; you are also drawn by pleasure." This is what we have been praying for this Advent: to be drawn to the Lord, attracted to him, by his beauty, truth, and goodness. Our will is crucial, obviously. But our yes to the Lord is also aided by the grace of attraction. How are you letting the Lord attract you to himself?

During these remaining days of Advent, as things become even busier in our daily lives, keep meeting the Lord in prayer, Adoration, silence, and the Sacraments. Only when we spend time with him can he attract us to himself, not by obligation but by delight.

### For Your Reflection:



Today, let's return to the Merode Altarpiece and the image of Mary. Here, as in so many paintings of the Annunciation, Our Lady is shown praying with the Scriptures. This is one of the principal ways God attracts and draws us to himself.

The beauty of God's Word can grab our heart's attention, captivate us, and draw us to the One who speaks those words.

For your continued prayer today, spend time with the verses from Psalm 19 below.

**Psalm 19:8-11** The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The decree of the Lord is trustworthy, giving wisdom to the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The statutes of the Lord are true, all of them just; More desirable than gold, than a hoard of purest gold, Sweeter also than honey or drippings from the comb.

## December 17, 2023

### Sunday of the Third Week of Advent

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**A Yes to the Cross. A Yes to the Resurrection.**

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

When Mary gave her yes to the Lord, did she realize all of the suffering that would come as a result of that 'yes'? Was she aware of how deeply she would share in her son's sufferings? The old man Simeon prophesied in the Temple, declaring to Mary: "You yourself a sword will pierce." (Luke 2:35) God gave him some spiritual insight into what would take place. But we don't know how much Mary may have sensed that same thing. Did Simeon's words confirm something Mary already knew? Or were those words a gift from God to prepare her for it? What we do know for certain is that Mary's yes was a complete and total yes. Mary would not withdraw her yes or ever take it back. So when suffering came, her yes remained. It was a yes that contained so much faith and trust in God that she believed God would somehow work even in the sufferings, even in the Cross. She trusted that God was working, even on Good Friday.

Because of her great trust, her yes to the Cross became a yes to the Resurrection. Mary believed and experienced firsthand what Fr. Stinissen spoke of:

God makes use of evil in such a superb way and with such skill that the result is better than if there had never been evil... Nothing falls outside of God's plan. This is why the tragedy of the world, despite all its terror, has no definitive character. All the absurdity of which mankind's foolishness and blindness are capable is caught up in God's loving omnipotence. He is able to fit even the absurd into his plan of salvation and thereby give it meaning. Wilfrid Stinissen, *Into Your Hands, Father: Abandoning Ourselves to the God Who Loves Us* (Ignatius Press, 2011), 15-16.

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My yes to the Lord is a yes to the Cross. Offering this yes requires me to believe that God's providence can really make all things work for the good of those who love him. It requires me to believe that God can even use the crosses I bear and the sufferings I endure to bring about some wonderful good. Believing this, and so offering my yes to the Lord, also becomes a yes to the Resurrection. My yes now to the Cross will become a yes to the marvelous way in which all the absurdity of mankind's foolishness and blindness are caught up in God's loving omnipotence and thereby receive new meaning.

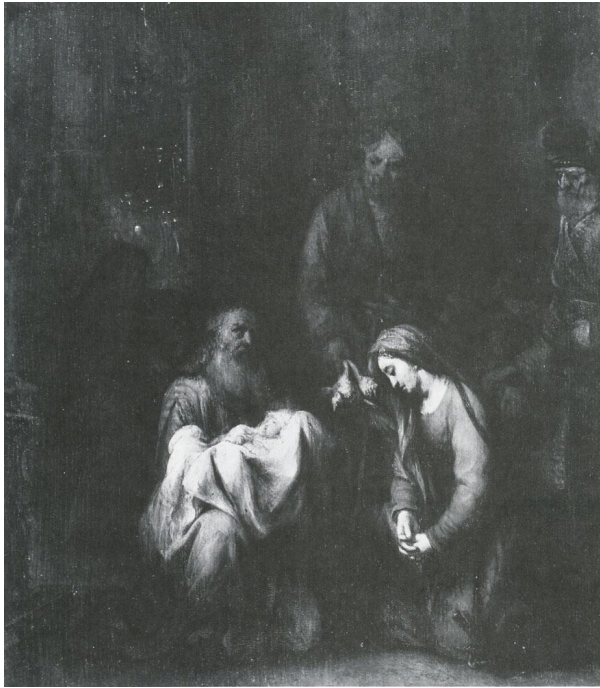
Today, make an act of faith in that truth. Believe with Mary that no evil or tragedy can disrupt God's providence from achieving what it sets out to do.

#### Today's Prayer:

Pray through these verses from Isaiah 53, the Song of the Suffering Servant. In this remarkable Old Testament prophecy, Isaiah foretells the suffering of the Lord. Perhaps the most remarkable thing here is that it is not useless or pointless suffering. This would have shocked the Old Testament mind in its way of thinking. Suffering had always been viewed as pointless since it was simply seen as paying the price for one's sins. But here, the suffering of God's servant is seen as salvation for his people. As you pray through this, ask the Lord for the grace to believe that God can make use of evil in such a superb way and with such skill that the result is better than if there had never been evil.

**Isaiah 53:** He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, knowing pain, Like one from whom you turn your face, spurned, and we held him in no esteem. Yet it was our pain that he bore, our sufferings he endured. We thought of him as stricken, struck down by God and afflicted, But he was pierced for our sins, crushed for our iniquity. He bore the punishment that makes us whole, by his wounds we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, all following our own way; But the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all. By making his life as a reparation offering, he shall see his offspring, shall lengthen his days, and the Lord's will shall be accomplished through him. Because of his anguish he shall see the light; because of his knowledge he shall be content; My servant, the just one, shall justify the many, their iniquity he shall bear.

#### For Your Reflection:



Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, The Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

Gerbrand van den Eeckhout was a Dutch painter and pupil of Rembrandt during the Dutch Golden Age of the 1600s. In this etching of the Presentation, we see three central figures that form a triangle for the eye: 1) Simeon in the center-left, holding the child Jesus, 2) Joseph standing above him in the background, and 3) Mary in the center-right kneeling opposite of Simeon.

Simeon is holding the baby Jesus whose swaddling clothes reflect a heavenly light, reminiscent of Simeon's words about Jesus: He is "a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel." (Luke 2:32) Notice how Simeon, in shadow compared to the child Jesus, looks up to heaven. His face seems stern and foreboding, aware of what the child and his mother will suffer.

Kneeling down across from Simeon is Mary, with her head cast down and hands joined together. It is the posture of one who slumps over under some great weight. We know what that weight is: she has heard the words of Simeon's prophecy. Mary looks like she could be kneeling at the foot of the cross rather than in the Temple. In between Simeon and Mary, almost joining them, are the two turtledoves held by Joseph. They are to be sacrificed as an offering. They are the sign of the sacrifice of Jesus.

In this scene we see clearly that Mary has already begun to share in the Cross of Christ her son. Her sorrow has already begun. The sword has already begun to pierce her heart. But all of that sadness will give way to the bright joy of Easter Sunday. Mary's yes to the Cross is also a yes to the Resurrection.

For your continued prayer today, offer one of the Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment, praying especially for the grace to believe that God can make use of evil in such a superb way and with such skill that the result is better than if there had never been evil.

December 18, 2023

Monday of the Third Week of Advent

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### A Yes to My Weaknesses

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

Our yes to the Lord is also a yes to our own weakness, our dependence on the Lord. Perhaps you may have thought that saying yes to the Lord would mean you must do everything on your own to live out that yes. Maybe you thought saying yes to God also meant saying "I got this!" to the Lord.

Thankfully, this is not the case. Our yes to the Lord is also a yes to our own weakness. It is a yes that also says, "I can't do this on my own."

In sacred art Joseph is often depicted asleep. This is not just because the Lord often spoke to Joseph in dreams. It is also a sign of our basic human weakness and frailty. Joseph represents each of us in that way. But the good news is that the Lord still works through our weakness. Our tiredness, our exhaustion, and our struggles do not prevent the Lord from working. There is such good news here!

Making a yes to God that includes a yes to our weakness is one of the great secrets of the spiritual life. In fact, St. Therese of Lisieux was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church exactly because of this secret of "the little way" which marked her relationship with God. "It is so good to feel that one is weak and little!" Therese declared. St. Therese of Lisieux, *Her Last Conversations*, tr. J. Clarke, OCD (Washington, D.C.: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1977), p. 74.

Her "Little Way" was this:

"To recognize our nothingness, to expect everything from God as a little child expects everything from its father ... to be disquieted about nothing, and not to be set on gaining our living," that is, "the eternal life of heaven." *Conversations*, p. 139.

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Pope Pius XII declared of St. Therese's Little Way: "It is the Gospel itself, it is the heart of the Gospel that she rediscovered; but with what grace and freshness: 'If you do not become like children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.' (Mt 18:3)" Radio Message of Pope Pius XII for the Consecration of the Basilica of Saint Therese of Lisieux:

[http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/fr/speeches/1954/documents/hf\\_p-xii\\_spe\\_19540711\\_lisieux.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/fr/speeches/1954/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19540711_lisieux.html)

There is such good news in all of this! We can make a bold yes to the Lord not because we are super strong and independent, able to do all things, but precisely because we are not. Our weaknesses are meant to become a cause of rejoicing as we turn to the Lord with the confidence of children, saying yes to the Lord and saying yes to our own weaknesses.

#### Today's Prayer:

The message of St. Therese was already found in the Gospel and in the words of St. Paul. Pray through these verses below with Paul and Therese, asking for help today to welcome the truth of your weakness as you offer your yes to the Lord:

**2 Corinthians 11:30, 12:9-10** If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness... The Lord said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

#### For Your Reflection:





Stefano Maria Legnani (1660–1715), *The Dream of St. Joseph*

Many of the paintings of Joseph show him sound asleep. While this captures the way the Lord often spoke to Joseph in his dreams, it also captures the human reality of his exhaustion and weakness. These were not obstacles for the Lord, but something that actually gave God more room to be at work. When we sleep, we are more docile to God. We tend to wrestle with him less when sleeping (except for Jacob!) What is true of our sleep is true of our weaknesses in general: God's power is made perfect in our weakness.

Notice how deeply Joseph is sleeping in this painting by Legnani. His right hand has relaxed and fallen open on his lap as his head remains propped up by his left hand. In the back, to the left, Mary is feeding the baby Jesus in the light of a brightly burning candle.

Even while Joseph is asleep, God is at work. This is such a reassuring truth! In our own weakness and frailty, God is always at work. And as St. Paul learned, it is in our weakness that God's strength and power is made perfect. So don't be afraid of saying yes to the Lord and then falling asleep.

For your continued prayer today, offer one of the [Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment](#), aware of your weakness but trusting in God's strength and power.

December 19, 2023

Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent

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### A Yes After I First Said No

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

What happens if I don't say yes at first? What happens if, for some reason, I say no and then later change my mind? Is it too late? Have I completely messed things up forever?

We've spent some time this Advent looking at St. Joseph alongside Mary. While Mary gave a generous and complete yes to the Lord right at the beginning, Joseph needed a little extra help from the Lord:

"When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home..." (Matthew 1:18-20)

Joseph was a good and upright man, so his initial "no" wasn't due to any sin on his part. He just made a decision that was different than what the Lord had planned. Thankfully, the Lord came to him in the dream and helped set things right.

The Lord will also help us when our first choice is not a wholehearted and generous yes. But what about when it's due to our own sin that we say no? Then what happens?

Jesus teaches about this exact situation, telling us that his great mercy allows us to say yes after we first said no:

"Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.' He said in reply, 'I will not,' but afterwards he changed his mind and went. The man came to the other son and gave the same order. He said in reply, 'Yes, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did his father's will?' They answered, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him.'" (Matthew 21:28-32)

This is such great news, and so encouraging for us! Even when we first say no, God's grace and mercy allow us to change our minds and say yes. Today, let's take the Lord up on this offer.

#### Today's Prayer:

When our no to the Lord is a result of our sin, it is good to know that God's mercy allows us to change our minds and say yes. Pray through these verses from Isaiah that capture the Lord's invitation to come back to him:

"Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their way, and sinners their thoughts; Let them turn to the Lord to find mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving."

What areas of your life need this mercy and a new "yes" to the Lord?

#### For Your Reflection:



Apparition of the angel to Saint Joseph. Engraving. Holy Bible, 19th century.

In this engraving from a 19th-century Bible, we see the apparition of the angel to St. Joseph, asleep in the workshop, surrounded by wood. The Greek New Testament word for Joseph's trade was *tekton* (see Matthew 13:55), which we have traditionally translated as *carpenter*, but really meant a craftsman of either wood or stone. Wood is certainly a more forgiving medium for a craftsman than stone. It easier to cut and shape, easier to

work with. In light of today's reflection ("A Yes After I First Said No"), the wood that surrounds Joseph in this engraving becomes a powerful image of how pliable Joseph is in the hands of the Lord. Joseph allowed the Lord to change him, to move his no to a yes.

As we continue these days of Advent, pray and ask the Lord to be pliable and docile to him. Is there any area of your life where you offered a "no" to him? If so, allow him to bend your "no" back, to offer a yes where you first said no.

Woodworkers know that bending and shaping wood is a two-step process: first, it must be softened, then it is formed and bent into the desired shape. Craftsmen use steam or boiling water to soften the wood, or they create multiple cuts on the back of the wood using a saw. Once the wood is made pliable, it can then be shaped.

Spiritually, we too must be softened to the Lord, in order to offer a yes where there had first been a no. In what way might the Lord need to soften you this Advent to bend your will more to his own?

For your continued prayer today, reflect on how the Lord might be working to soften your heart. While it may not feel good in the moment, don't resist the work of the Lord to help you offer an even more generous yes to him.



December 20, 2023

Wednesday of the Third Week of Advent

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### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

### Today's Thought:

It is very important to remember that our yes to the Lord is a yes offered in this present moment to whatever the Lord may be asking of me at this time. I don't know what tomorrow will bring, so there is no point in worrying and fretting about it and whether I will be able to say yes to it. I just need to offer my yes to the Lord today, in this present moment. The Lord will provide for me tomorrow.

All of the great spiritual writers are very clear on this point. We cannot let our yes to the Lord today, in this moment, become paralyzed by the unknowns of tomorrow. We cannot hold back our yes now out of fear of what may come tomorrow. The Lord will give us everything we need tomorrow when we get there.

Another important aspect of the spirituality of the little way is to live in the present moment. Not to go endlessly over the past, but leave it entirely to God and his mercy. Not to torment ourselves about tomorrow, but entrust it to his Providence. The Gospel is very clear on this point. "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on ... Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? ... Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all." (Matthew 6:25-33) Worrying has never solved any problem. What solves problems are trust and faith. Living in the present moment means accepting the poverty in us: not insisting on going over and over the past or taking control of the future, but contenting ourselves with today. But this is very liberating. God does not dole out grace by a sort of profit-and-loss accounting of my past based on my good and bad actions. He gives me grace according to my faith today: "Be it done for you as you have believed!" The past doesn't matter. If today I make the decision to believe, to hope, and to love, I can be certain of having all God's love to rely on. That is what happened to the good thief: "Today you will be with me in Paradise!" Fr. Jacques Philippe. *The Way of Trust and Love: A Retreat Guided by St. Therese of Lisieux*. Scepter Publishers. Kindle Edition.

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And again:

"The present moment is the soul's meeting place with God . . . the point of contact with the divine will. Regardless of its form and content, it is, by its very nature, the expression of God's will for us. In this precise minute, God wants us to accomplish an action that very often will be neither extraordinary nor grandiose, but mundane and tiny. Its only value will be that it is God's will. But, to be precise, is not this will sufficient enough? The present moment conveys not only the divine will, but also God's presence. If, at this moment, the Lord asks us to be in such-and-such a place or accomplish such-and-such an action, it is because He waits for us there. At this precise moment, we meet Him and, if we look for Him elsewhere, we will miss Him." Father Victor Sion, *Pour un réalisme spirituel, L'instant présent* (The present moment for a spiritual realism) (Éditions des Béatitudes, 1989), 15–16.

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### Today's Prayer:

Ask your heavenly Father to give you grace today, in this moment, to say yes to what he is asking of you now, in this moment. Our spiritual life is meant to be one of "daily bread", not looking too far beyond the present moment, asking our Father to provide for us now. Tomorrow will take care of itself.

Our Father...

And then offer this prayer from Fr. Andre, making his words your own:

"Lord, day after day, moment after moment, action after action, I write the novel of my life, and I write it for eternity. Help me to live out each moment as fully as possible. This moment that You give me will never be given again. I do not want to be anguished or tense because of it but wish to waste nothing in life. Each moment

is a drop of union with You. I do not live yesterday or today. I live in this moment. And I am united to You. I have everything.”Father André Sève, excerpt from *The Sun of Prayers*, quoted in Fr. Joel Guiber, *Abandonment to God: The Way of Peace of St. Therese of Lisieux* (p. 33). Sophia Institute Press. Kindle Edition.

### **For Your Reflection:**



John William Waterhouse, *The Annunciation*. (1914)

John William Waterhouse was a British Italian artist who painted in the Romanticist style. Many of his paintings depicted mythological themes, which were favorites of the Romanticist artists, but here he has captured the Annunciation in vibrant deep blues and purple. A halo crowns Mary's head, but so does her right hand, raised in surprise, while her left hand rests on her chest. Mary has been in prayer, seen in the open scroll of the Scriptures which rests on the pedestal to the right, but she is nevertheless caught off guard by the angel's sudden appearance. Gabriel's hair is swept back, giving a sense of motion even though he stands still.

When God comes to us and asks for a yes in the present moment of our daily life, it can often catch us by surprise. We often think of our yes to God as coming mainly in the big and dramatic moments of life. But it is in the small, daily, and often mundane moments that the Lord most desires our yes. These seem too small to us to matter to God, so we are often surprised.

Notice the colorful flowers growing out of the cracks in the stone to Mary's right. Like these flowers, God often appears in places and times we don't expect. Stone blocks don't seem hospitable to flowers springing up, but there they are. The "present moments" of our days may not seem hospitable to God, but it is right there that he shows up.

Pray today for the grace to say yes to the Lord in the present moment, even when it may catch you by surprise or seem too ordinary a place or time for God to be at work. Make use of one of the [Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment](#) to help you say yes today.

December 21, 2023

Thursday of the Third Week of Advent

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### A Yes of Obedience

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

It is wonderful when our yes to the Lord is one of attraction and sweetness, when it seems we hardly even have to say yes. But there are times when our yes is much more one of obedience. "To say 'yes, Father' here means putting one's hand to the plow, being God's obedient servant." Stinissen, 45.

This divine obedience becomes visible in Jesus. "My food is to do the will of him who sent me," he says, "and to accomplish his work" (Jn 4:34). "I can do nothing on my own authority ... because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (Jn 5:30). "I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me" (Jn 6:38). "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever he does, that the Son does likewise" (Jn 5:19). In his farewell discourse at the end of his life, Jesus can testify: "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work which you gave me to do" (Jn 17:4). Even after his death Jesus is obedient. The Father raises him to life, and he lets himself be raised. His Ascension into heaven is a final act of obedience. In no way does he turn off his course. He goes the shortest and quickest way to the Father, and he takes up with him all whom the Father has given him. That includes us! "[He] raised us up with [Christ], and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph 2:6).

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Jesus invites us to follow this path of obedience with him and in the same way he did. If we ask a mature Christian to speak about his journey to God, it will always be a story of obedience, though the word itself may not be mentioned. He has said Yes to God, and at certain times a more conscious, decisive, and perhaps dramatic Yes, which has borne fruit and led him to say Yes again and again. Without a Yes to God, nothing can mature in a person's life. If one's life is barren, the reason behind it is always the frequent repetition of the word No. Stinissen, 46-47.

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#### Today's Prayer:

Our Lady shares in the obedience of her Son, which Jesus praises in his mother:

"While Jesus was speaking, a woman from the crowd called out and said to him, 'Blessed is the womb that carried you and the breasts at which you nursed.' He replied, 'Rather, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.'" (Luke 11:27-28)

Mary's trusting obedience leads her to tell others to do the same, like the wedding at Cana: "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:5)

Offer the *Angelus* for your prayer today, asking Our Lady to intercede and pray for you for the grace to offer an obedient yes to the Lord as she did:

**The Angelus** √. The Angel of the LORD declared unto Mary, √. And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Hail Mary, full of grace; the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. \* Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

√. Behold the handmaid of the LORD. √. Be it done unto me according to thy word.

Hail Mary, full of grace; the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. \* Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

√. And the Word was made flesh. √. And dwelt among us. (Bowing slightly.)

Hail Mary, full of grace; the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb, Jesus. \* Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

√. Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God. √. That we might be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O LORD, Thy grace into our hearts; that, we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. √. Amen.

### For Your Reflection:



Juan de Flandes, The Marriage Feast at Cana. ca. 1497

Mary's yes at the Annunciation continued to echo at the marriage feast at Cana when she told the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." In this painting by Juan de Flandes, we see the hand of Jesus raised in blessing as the server fills the jars with water that will become wine. Notice Mary's attention and gaze are completely fixed on Jesus.



Mary's face, with eyes raised in love and trust, makes visible her yes to the Lord. Her loving obedience to the Father spills over into the first miracle her son performs. Obedience to the Lord is not a fruitless, dry act, but a life-giving yes that gives room for the Lord to work miracles.

Pray today for the grace to look upon the Lord Jesus as Mary does here with trust and love, doing whatever He tells you. Offer your yes using one of the [Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment](#).



December 22, 2023

Friday of the Third Week of Advent

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### A Yes With the Great Yes of Jesus

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:

Our yes draws its power from the great yes of Jesus. His yes is the archetype, the pattern, and the source of power, for all of our yesses. Mary's yes itself, while totally free and uncoerced, drew its power from the great yes of Jesus. The yes of the Son makes all of our yesses possible. This is such good news for us!

Image: Mary at the foot of the cross, sharing in her Son's yes



## December 23, 2023

### Saturday of the Third Week of Advent

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#### A Yes of Faith, Not of Feelings

#### Opening Prayer:

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

#### Today's Thought:



Simon de Vos, Mary and Joseph seeking refuge in Bethlehem.

December 24, 2023

Sunday of the Fourth Week of Advent

**A Yes to the Providence of God**

**Opening Prayer:**

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: "May it be done unto me according to your word."

**Today's Thought:**

Here we go back to Romans: God makes all things work for the good of those who love him...

The great story of salvation – think about all that got us to this point, with the birth of our Savior: how many incredible ways God's providence has been at work, working through things that we thought would totally interrupt God's plan but didn't...

Isaiah 1:3-4 The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand." Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who deal corruptly! They have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.



Vladimir Fokanov, "La Navidad es el Cristo, nuestro Salvador"

December 25, 2023

Christmas Day

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**A Yes That Ends in Joy**

**Opening Prayer:**

Come, Holy Spirit. I welcome you into my heart as Mary did. Come with power. Help me to offer my own yes to God the Father, saying with trust: “May it be done unto me according to your word.”

**Today’s Thought:**

Mary gazing on the baby Jesus in Gherardo della Notta's painting – the look of joy on her face.



# Prayers of Surrender and Abandonment to God

## **I. Prayer of Abandonment from the [Fathers of Mercy](#)**

Jesus, I Love you.... Jesus, I trust in you....

Lord, teach me not only to accept but to truly love my littleness and my inner poverty and to place blind trust in your infinite goodness and mercy that I may be entirely dependent upon your protective, fatherly care and experience the transforming power of your grace in my life...

My Lord and Savior, I know that you love me more than I can *ever* imagine and that you have a plan for my life that will end in eternal glory if I but surrender my heart and soul to you, entrust myself completely to you, and allow you to lead me always, especially through the darkest hours of my life....

My loving Jesus, let the fire of your Holy Spirit purify my soul, my senses, and my entire being to remove from my life anything that might stand as an obstacle to my ability to enkindle that flame of pure love – the love that you desire to receive from me....

Lord, teach me to be not only resigned to your holy will but to always seek your will, embrace your will, and truly, lovingly abandon myself to it, with joyful confidence that you desire my happiness far more than I do my own. Let my faith response be to give thanks *and* praise to you always, even when you will that I bear the cross of suffering. With the holy and immaculate Virgin Mary, let me say “yes” to your divine plan for my life, knowing that great things happen when we say “yes” to you....

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, let me love you with all my soul and all my strength. Grant me the grace to adore you with every beat of my heart and with every fiber of my being, that I may love you with the same passionate intensity with which you have loved me. Amen.

## **II. [Suscipe of St. Ignatius](#)**

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own.

You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

Give me only your love and your grace, that is enough for me. Amen.

## **III. [Healing Prayer of Surrender](#)**

Dear Lord Jesus, it is my will to surrender to you everything that I am and everything that I’m striving to be. I open the deepest recesses of my heart and invite your Holy Spirit to dwell inside of me.

I offer you my life, heart, mind, body, soul, spirit, all my hopes, plans, and dreams. I surrender to you my past, present, and future problems, habits, character defects, attitudes, livelihood, resources, finances, medical coverage, occupation, and all my relationships.

I give you my health, physical appearance, disabilities, family, marriage, children, and friendships. I ask you to take Lordship over every aspect of my life. I surrender to you all my hurt, pain, worry, doubt, fear, and anxiety, and I ask you to wash me clean.

I release everything into your compassionate care. Please speak to me clearly, Lord. Open my ears to hear your voice. Open my heart to commune with you more deeply. I want to feel your loving embrace. Open the doors that need to be opened and close the doors that need to be closed. Please set my feet upon the straight and narrow road that leads to everlasting life. Amen.

## **IV. [Prayer of Fr. Thomas Merton, OCSO](#)**

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you and I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.

And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road although I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

## **V. [The Surrender Novena Prayer - Father Don Dolindo Ruotolo](#)**

*The central prayer of the Surrender Novena:* O Jesus, I surrender myself to you, take care of everything! (10 times)

*To Our Lady:* Mother, I am yours now and forever. Through you and with you I always want to belong completely to Jesus.

*For the full novena, please click the link above the prayer in the title.*

## **VI. [Brother Charles de Foucauld – Prayer of Abandonment](#)**



Father,I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will.Whatever you may do, I thank you:I am ready for all, I accept all.Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures.I wish no more than this, O Lord.

Into your hands I commend my soul;I offer it to youwith all the love of my heart,for I love you, Lord,and so need to give myself,to surrender myself into your hands,without reserve,and with boundless confidence,for you are my Father.Amen.

### **VII. Offertory Prayer of Archbishop Fulton Sheen**

I give myself to God. Here is my body. Take it. Here is my blood. Take it. Here is my soul, my will, my energy, my strength, my property, my wealth – all that I have. It is Yours. Take it! Offer it! Offer it with Thyself to the Heavenly Father in order that He, looking down on this Great Sacrifice, may see only Thee, His Beloved Son, in Whom He is well pleased.

Transmute the poor bread of my life into Thy Divine Life; thrill the wine of my wasted life into Thy Divine Spirit; unite my broken heart with Thy Heart; change my cross into a Crucifix.

Let not my abandonment, and my sorrow, and my bereavement go to waste. Gather up the fragments, and as the drop of water is absorbed by the wine at the Offertory of the Mass, let my life be absorbed in Thee; let my little cross be entwined with Thy great Cross, so that I may purchase the joys of everlasting happiness in union with Thee.

Consecrate these trials of my life which would go unrewarded, unless united with Thee; transubstantiate me so that like bread which is now Thy Body, and wine which is now Thy Blood, I too may be wholly Thee. I care not if the Species remain, or that, like the Bread and the Wine, I seem to all earthly eyes the same as before. My station in life, my routine duties, my work, my family -all these are but the species of my life which may remain unchanged; but the substance of my life, my soul, my mind, my will, my heart – transubstantiate them, transform them wholly into Thy service, so that through me all may know how sweet is the love of Christ.

Amen.

### **VIII. Prayer of Surrender**

Loving Father,I surrender to you today with all my heart and soul. Please come into my heart in a deeper way. I say, “Yes” to you today. I open all the secret places of my heart to you and say, “Come on in.” Jesus, you are the Lord of my whole life. I believe in you and receive you as my Lord and Savior. I hold nothing back.Holy Spirit, bring me to a deeper conversion to the person of Jesus Christ. I surrender all to you: my time, my treasures, my talents, my health, my family, my resources, my work, relationships, time management, successes and failures. I release it and let it go.I surrender my understanding of how things ‘ought’ to be, my choices and my will. I surrender to you the promises I have kept and the promises I have failed to keep. I surrender my weaknesses and strengths to you. I surrender my emotions, my fears, my insecurities, my sexuality. I especially surrender \_\_\_\_\_ (*Here, mention other areas of surrender as the Holy Spirit reveals them to you.*)Lord, I surrender my whole life to you, the past, the present, and the future. In sickness and in health, in life and in death, I belong to you.

### **IX. Serenity Prayer**

God, give me grace to accept with serenitythe things that cannot be changed,Courage to change the things which should be changed,and the Wisdom to distinguish the one from the other.

Living one day at a time,Enjoying one moment at a time,Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,Taking, as He did,This sinful world as it is,Not as I would have it,Trusting that He will make all things right,If I surrender to His will,That I may be reasonably happy in this life,And supremely happy with Him forever in the next.Amen.

### **X. Prayer of Surrender from St. John Henry Newman**

O, my God, I will put myself without reserve into Your hands. Wealth or woe, joy or sorrow, friends or bereavement, honor or humiliation, good report or ill report, comfort or discomfort, Your presence or the hiding of Your countenance, all is good if it comes from You. You are wisdom and You are love—what can I desire more? You have led me in Your counsel, and with glory You received me. What have I in heaven, and apart from You what want I upon earth? My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the God of my heart, and my portion forever.

## Domenico Beccafumi - The Annunciation

## Henry Ossawa Tanner, The Annunciation

## Mikhail Nesterov, Annunciation

John Roddam Spencer Stanhope, *The Temptation of Eve*.



## Annunciation Triptych (Merode Altarpiece)

Georges de la Tour, Joseph the Carpenter

Philippe de Champaigne

Alexander Ivanov, Archangel Gabriel Struck Zechariah Mute

Daniele Crespi, The Dream of St. Josphe



Holly Schapker, The Annunciation to Mary, 2017.

William Adolphe Bouguereau, Pieta (1876).

Gerbrand van den Eeckhout, The Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

Stefano Maria Legnani (1660–1715), *The Dream of St. Joseph*

Apparition of the angel to Saint Joseph. Engraving. Holy Bible, 19th century.

John William Waterhouse, The Annunciation. 1914



Juan de Flandes, The Marriage Feast at Cana. ca. 1497

Gheritt van Hontorst, Adorazione del Bambino c.1620

Rogier van der Weyden, The Crucifixion. 1443.

Vladimir Fokanov, "La Navidad es el Cristo, nuestro Salvador"

Simon de Vos, Mary and Joseph seeking refuge in Bethlehem.