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ADVENT *and*
CHRISTMAS
WISDOM
— *from* —
POPE JOHN PAUL II

Daily Scripture and Prayers
Together With
Pope John Paul II's Own Words

Compiled by John V. Kruse, PhD



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Entering the Season, Contemplating the Mystery

Dearest Brothers and Sisters[:] With today's first Sunday of Advent, a new liturgical year begins. The Church takes up her journey again, and invites us to reflect more intensely on the mystery of Christ, a mystery that is always new and that time cannot exhaust. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Thanks to him, the history of humanity proceeds as a pilgrimage toward the fulfillment of the Kingdom which he inaugurated with his Incarnation and victory over sin and death.

JOHN PAUL II, ANGELUS, DECEMBER 2, 2001

THE DEPTH OF GOD'S LOVE REVEALED

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

EPHESIANS 1:3–10

PRAYER

Loving God, source of my ultimate longing, you have reached out to your people through the gift of your incarnate Son. Today in a special way I start anew my spiritual journey toward the stable where I seek to encounter the babe of Bethlehem. Be with me, guide me, teach me, strengthen me, and inspire me during this journey. Draw me into closer union with you as I put forth my best effort to prepare for the coming of Christ so that I may truly present him with a gift worth giving on Christmas day.

ADVENT ACTION

What is it specifically that you hope to achieve this Advent season? Take the time to give this question serious thought. Write down a few thoughts on a piece of paper. Keep this paper in this book and refer to it regularly as you engage in your daily meditations.





DAY 2

Prepare the Way of the Lord

In...[the Gospel of Luke] the figure of John the Baptist appears, the prophet sent to prepare the way for the Messiah. His voice cries out “in the wilderness” where he had withdrawn and where, as the Evangelist Luke says, “the word of God came to [him]” (Luke 3:2).

John the Baptist’s cry reechoes from generation to generation: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth” (Luke 3:4–5). How urgent and timely is this call at both the personal and social level! God wants to come and dwell with the people of every time and place, and he calls them to cooperate with him in the work of salvation.

But how?...[Luke’s Gospel] gives us the answer: we must “straighten” injustices, “fill” the void with goodness, mercy, respect and understanding, “bring low” pride, barriers and violence, and “make smooth” all that prevents people from living a free and dig-

nified life. Only in this way can we prepare to celebrate Christmas in an authentic way.

JOHN PAUL II, ANGELUS, DECEMBER 7, 1997

CALL FOR JUSTICE

*Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
learn to do good;
seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.*

ISAIAH 1:16–17

PRAYER

Lord, help me to prepare for your coming. You call me to right injustices...in my own life, in my local community, in my nation, and in the world. Help me to be prepared for your coming by giving me the strength and courage to fight injustice wherever I encounter it.

ADVENT ACTION

What injustices do you see around you in the world? Obviously, you cannot correct every injustice, but what steps (even small ones) can you take today to “make the crooked straight”? Make a commitment today to join and/or financially support an organization that promotes greater justice.



Waiting With Patience

*A*dvent invites us to rejoice, and at the same time, it exhorts us to wait with patience for the coming of the Lord now approaching. It exhorts us not to be discouraged, to resist every kind of adversity, with the certainty that the Lord will not delay his coming.

This vigilant patience...favors the strengthening of human ties in the Christian community. The faithful realize that they are little ones who are poor and in great need of God's help, and they come together to receive the Messiah who is about to come. He will come in the silence, the humility, the poverty of the crib, and will bring his joy to all who welcome him with open hearts.

JOHN PAUL II, HOMILY, PASTORAL VISIT TO THE ROMAN PARISH OF
ST. MARÍA JOSEFA OF THE HEART OF JESUS, DECEMBER 16, 2001

TRUSTING THAT HE IS NEAR

Be patient, therefore, beloved, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

JAMES 5:7–8

[THIS PASSAGE SERVES AS THE THEME OF JOHN PAUL II'S HOMILY.]

PRAYER

Jesus, Lord of our longings, it seems that patience is a lost virtue in the modern world. We expect instant results and gratification. Often, when we wait, we feel as if we are wasting time. In reality, waiting often deepens our sense of appreciation for that which we await. Teach me the virtue of patience. Help me to see that waiting only makes me appreciate even more the gift of your coming. Truly, good things do come to those who wait.

ADVENT ACTION

When circumstances cause you to wait today (for example, traffic delays, in line at a store, or while waiting to pick up a child at sports practice), try to do so with patience. Turn your waiting into an opportunity. Use the time for prayer and to reach a deeper recognition of your own longing for the coming of the Lord into your life.



DAY 4

The Incarnation: Source of Answers to Life's Ultimate Questions

Ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: *Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?...* These are questions which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives.

The Church is no stranger to this journey of discovery, nor could she ever be. From the moment when, through the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about human life, the Church has made her pilgrim way along the paths of the

world to proclaim that Jesus Christ is “the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

JOHN PAUL II, *FIDES ET RATIO*
(FAITH AND REASON), 1–2, SEPTEMBER 14, 1998

LOOKING TO CHRIST FOR ANSWERS

So Jesus asked the twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

JOHN 6:67–69

PRAYER

Lord, there are many things in life that I don’t understand. There are many questions that I have. Yet I know that you have taken on human flesh in order to show me the way to find meaning in life and to lead me to the answers that I seek. May the questions that I have lead me to a deeper union with you, the source of all truth.

ADVENT ACTION

What questions do you have for God? Have you been waiting on God for answers? Are you open to hearing God’s answers? Reflect on how the fact that God became human for your salvation might provide answers to your questions. Remember that we can begin to find the answers to the tough questions of life in the word of God. Spend a few extra minutes reading one of your favorite Scripture passages or perhaps the *Lectionary* readings for the day, which should be indicated in your church bulletin.



DAY 5

God Seeks Us

*I*n Jesus Christ God not only speaks to man but also *seeks him out*. The Incarnation of the Son of God attests that God goes in search of man. Jesus speaks of this search as the finding of a lost sheep (see Luke 15:1–7). It is a search which *begins in the heart of God* and culminates in the Incarnation of the Word. If God goes in search of man, created in his own image and likeness, he does so because he loves him eternally in the Word, and wishes to raise him in Christ to the dignity of an adoptive son. God therefore goes in search of man who *is his special possession* in a way unlike any other creature. Man is God's possession by virtue of a choice made in love: God seeks man out, moved by his fatherly heart.

JOHN PAUL II, *TERTIO MILLENNIO ADVENIENTE*
(AS THE THIRD MILLENNIUM DRAWS NEAR), 7, NOVEMBER 10, 1994

GOD'S LONGING TO FIND US

“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

LUKE 15:8–10

PRAYER

God, I often feel lost in this world. There are many messages bombarding me, telling me which way to go. In my restlessness, I know that I long for something more than what this world has to offer. Thankfully, I do not have to find my way through all these conflicting messages on my own. Out of your great love for me, you have sent your Son to find me amid the confusion of this world. I pray in a special way today that Jesus will take me by the hand and lead me to a life beyond anything what the world has to offer: life in you.

ADVENT ACTION

What barriers in your life are you erecting to prevent God from finding you this Advent season? Are you keeping too busy? Are you caught up in the materialism of the season? Are you burdened by worry and anxiety? Is there some activity in which you are involved that is keeping a distance between you and God? Tear down at least one barrier that you have put up between yourself and God.