



4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

WITH HEARTS PREPARED

Praying, Talking, and Living
God's Word during Advent

PRAYING WITH GOD'S

LOVE

Leader:

We begin our time together, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

Leader:

Lord Jesus, during this final week of Advent we find Christmas decorations, bright lights and the music of the season all around us. We enjoy parties and gift-giving, but remind us that what we celebrate above all is your birth into our world. As we approach the joy of Christmas, help us to think more of giving than receiving.

All: Amen.

1st Reader:

St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians speaks to the people of what love really means. As we reflect on the meaning of love, let us truly be attentive to these words:

2nd Reader:

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And

if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

1st Reader:

Love is an action that comes from the heart. We may do many great things in our life, but all of it must be from a heart of love.

2nd Reader:

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1st Reader:

This is what a heart of true love reflects. What have I done over the past week that does not reflect this image of love? (Pause for 1 minute) St. Paul continues by saying that Love never ends and the greatest

virtue is love. May we learn to truly reflect love more and be the example of that love for all.

2nd Reader:

Before we close our prayer, let us offer up our intentions within the silence of our heart to Mary who intercedes for us to her Son, Jesus, the model of love.

All: Hail Mary . . .

Leader:

Your love for us has no limits, O God. Help us to feel the power and warmth of your love for us. Show us your love in all your creation and in our care and concern for one another. Teach us to act with genuine love and compassion in our interactions with one another. May we learn to love by reflecting on the life and teachings of Jesus, your Son. And may we reach out, in particular, to those who seem most difficult to love. Christ our light of love guide our hearts as we near the celebration of your birth.

All: Amen

Leader:

In the name of
and Holy Spirit



TALKING ABOUT GOD'S WORD

Reader:

As the day of Christ's birth nears, we are reminded that we celebrate God entering our human condition. The Gospel reading during Christmas Day comes from St. John (John 1:1-14). It speaks of how God came among us. Let us now listen to this text:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

To help us enter fully into the Christmas season, we will reflect on this text. When we read this Gospel, we hear a lot about the "Word." Who is this "Word?" From this text we hear that John the Baptist testifies to him and that the "Word" came into our human condition.

What St. John is speaking about in this text is how Jesus entered our human condition. There is a lot of information that we are given in this text. It is an important teaching.

St. John is trying to communicate to us that Jesus is God. SAY WHAT?

If we are to look more carefully at the text, we hear "the Word was with God and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh and lived among us." (John 1:1;14)

Jesus is God who came into our human condition to unite us together. This is the great gift of Christmas that God gave us. God came to live among us and bring us salvation through the "Word" which is Jesus. During the Advent Season, we hear the word "Emmanuel" being used. "Emmanuel" means "God is with us."

Are you still scratching your head wondering how Jesus is God (divine) and human?

You are not the only ones to struggle with this concept. In the 4th century, the Church struggled to understand the humanity and divinity of Jesus. How can one individual be both human and divine?

Well, this is where faith calls us to re-examine the words of St. John and hear what the Church teaches us. The word the Church uses to describe how Jesus assumed human form but remained divine is **Incarnation**. To better remember this word, Jesus "became truly man while remaining truly God" (CCC # 464). This is what St. John was saying when stated that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The "Word" is God and God entered our human condition in Jesus who assumed human form.

To help in your understanding of Jesus as the Incarnation, listen to the words of St. Athanasius: "God assumed human form, so that we might become like God." St. Athanasius is saying that God wants to be a part of our lives, so that we can be with him. Without Jesus coming to the earth, our hope of salvation would not exist. It is out of great love that God came down to earth and this is the true gift of Christmas.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important that Jesus be both human and divine?
2. Explore how Jesus' life calls us to reflect God's love in our life.
3. From the material presented, what image of God do you now

LIVING GOD'S WORD

For this week's act of service, there are three options available:

1. As a family, go to a local food bank and volunteer an hour or two by helping them put together food packages for families in need.
2. As a family, prepare a care package for a family in your community that requires a little extra help at this time.
3. As a family, invite another family in the community to come over for a meal and learn something new about them.

