

Symbolism of Cover Art

ADVENT - COMINGS

The Advent candles in this design, by their gradation in size, take us back in HISTORY to the birth of Jesus, to His coming in MYSTERY through Eucharist now, and to His imminent return in MAJESTY with our hope for a future united with Jesus.

*(Front Cover and Symbolism Statement
by Dolores Zieser PBVM)*

Waiting and Longing

The music of the universe sings quietly
in whispers of white, while we wait.

Waiting for the One promised by God
to provide people peace.

Realization strikes – that promise already has been fulfilled
Emmanuel “God with us.”

Recognition dawns – the longing is not waiting
for the One to come,
but to see that One face-to-face.

Diane McDermott, PBVM Associate

**First Sunday of Advent
November 30, 2014**

“Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come.” Mark 13:33

You are invited to focus on faith during this liturgical season of Advent. I've heard faith described as walking to the edge of all you have, and taking one more step. A special kind of courage, and a truly powerful faith is required to take that one more step.

You are invited to take some time to reflect on Peter walking across the water or Lazarus walking out of the tomb. Consider the woman who stepped forward to touch Jesus' cloak.

“Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come” – for YOU to take one more step!

Mary Dennis Lentsch, PBVM

Isaiah 63:16-17, 19; 64:2-7; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19;
1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37

Monday
December 1, 2014

“Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith.” Matthew 8:10

We welcome Advent as the season that calls us to watch for, and be alert to, the ways God comes to us with gifts of peace and fresh hope!

I remember the God I learned about as a child. This was a God who loved everyone and helped everyone, no matter what! As a child, I had the complete trust and faith of a child, knowing that God would never abandon me.

Life happens. Struggles, disappointments, and challenges are all a part of life. At times like this God can seem very far away, and one's faith can falter. But I have come to know that it is in the darkest times, the most difficult of circumstances, that God is right in my back pocket! All I have to do is have faith ... believe that God can turn the darkest night into the most joyful and bright tomorrow! Faith! What a rich gift!

When the centurion approached Jesus and begged him to cure his paralyzed servant, Jesus said, “I will come and cure him.” The centurion felt so unworthy, and yet, Jesus said “In no one in Israel have I found such faith.”

Today Jesus comes to each of us with gifts of peace and fresh hope. Believe, have faith and receive these gifts!

Becky Searcy, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122:1-9; Matthew 8:5-11

**Tuesday
December 2, 2014**

“Then turning to his disciples he spoke to them by themselves, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, and never saw it.’” Luke 10:23

Today’s Gospel reading reveals the depth of the Heart of Jesus, the reason for his joy. The disciples had returned from their missionary experience and shared that joy with Jesus. Jesus was joyful in the joy of his friends and the well-being of others. Jesus looks at them and says, “Blessed are you!” And why are the disciples happy? Because they now see things the prophets would have liked to have seen, but did not see. And what will they see? They will perceive the kin-dom in the common things of life: to cure the sick, feed the hungry, be with the dying and console the afflicted – to become disciples of the little ones.

Do I know Jesus, or do I simply know of him? Do I consider myself as being among the little ones? If so, blessed are the eyes that see what you see!

Sharon Kelchen, PBVM

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Luke 10:21-24

**Wednesday
December 3, 2014**

“His disciples said to him, ‘How could we ever get enough bread in this deserted spot to satisfy such a crowd?’ Jesus asked them, ‘How many loaves of bread do you have?’” Matthew 15:33-34

We are very familiar with this miracle of the loaves that Jesus performed feeding thousands with such an insignificant amount of bread.

How often I have wondered what "great" gifts I have to offer to God. My abilities just don't seem good enough. This passage makes me realize the power of our small gifts. Jesus could have just performed this miracle on his own, but instead, he chose to use what little someone else had to offer. What we have been given, we are to offer back to God, trusting that he will use our gifts to change the world.

Dear Jesus, I offer you all that I have and possess. Use it to perform miracles in our world.

Yvonne Kisch, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 25:6-10; Psalm 23:1-6; Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday
December 4, 2014

“A strong city have we; he sets up walls and ramparts to protect us.” Isaiah 26:1

From extensive volunteering in the shadow of the US-Mexico border wall, I know that those walls and ramparts don't bring our nation true protection. Nor do they foster the “kinship” with our neighbors that our faith-tradition (“Kin-dom’ of God”) has taught us. Instead, they symbolize separation and take the lives of thousands.

Participating in our Spiraling Mission Circle on immigration, however, makes me feel connected and better equipped to move our nation toward needed change. Connected to the activity of our faith community, I can continue to hope and to work for justice. The community action of God’s people fortifies – better than a “fort” mentality can.

Following the path of the God of Justice builds true strength. Honoring hope and trust promotes peace and true security.

How can I promote the way of justice and strength today?

How might I strengthen our faith community by participation in Basecamp?

Billie Greenwood, PBVM Associate and Former Member

Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27;
Matthew 7:21, 24-27

**Friday
December 5, 2014**

**“As Jesus moved on from there, two blind men came after him crying out, ‘Son of David, have pity on us.’”
Matthew 9:27**

Like the blind men who called out to Jesus for healing, we, too, need light in our darkness. Let us pray with faith and confidence that, with the touch of Jesus, our blindness will be healed.

What blinds me from following Jesus on my Advent journey?

May the healing touch of Jesus open my eyes to the goodness of all I meet each day.

Renè Laubenthal, PBVM

Isaiah 29:17-24; Psalm 27:1-4, 13-14; Matthew 9:27-31

**Saturday
December 6, 2014**

“Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.” Matthew 10:8

The inclination to give is rooted in the depths of the human heart; every person is conscious of a desire to interact with others and every one finds fulfillment in a free gift of self to others.

The gospel reading leads us to ask some thought-provoking questions. The love of God poured into our hearts ought to inspire and transform who I am and what I do. Think of the gifts God has given us! Now it is our turn to help others without counting the cost ... without receiving satisfaction. Christ offers his own example and invites me to follow him. When I hear his voice do I give my life to him and for others?

How will I give today without counting the cost?

Dear Lord, I need your help as I go through this day.

Dolores Moes, PBVM

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Psalm 147:1-6;
Matthew 9:35-10:1, 6-8

**Second Sunday of Advent
December 7, 2014**

“Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end...” Isaiah 40:1-2

“Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care.” Isaiah 40:11

In today's first reading Isaiah offers a tender message of comfort and hope. God will lead the people out of their exile, back to Jerusalem. He will gather them to himself like a loving, gentle shepherd and lead them back to their true home.

Gentle Shepherd, may my observance of these Advent days lead me to recognize my exile – my alienation from you, others, creation, myself – and draw me ever closer to my true self, my true home in you.

Carol Witry, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalm 85:9-14;
2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception
Monday
December 8, 2014**

“Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” Luke 1:28

Today

Today, is Mary's day!

Today, expect God to be working among you.

Today, be humble enough to recognize that your limitations do not limit God.

Today, live sacrificially, giving yourself completely to God.

Today, give thanks for what it means for you to be a servant of God.

Pray a ‘Hail Mary’ asking God to develop more fully the spirit of Mary within you.

“I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word.”

Cheryl Demmer, PBVM

Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Psalm 98:1-4;
Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38

**Tuesday
December 9, 2014**

“Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice ... for he comes, for he comes to rule the earth.” Psalm 96:11-13

The psalm for today reminds us of the glories of the Lord, the king of the universe. The Advent or arrival season prepares us for this long-awaited king who is going to be everything we can imagine and then some things that we are unable to imagine, such as his great sacrifice on the cross. This long-awaited king comes as a baby so that he might relate more closely to us and our needs. How do we prepare ourselves for this great birth? What are our priorities? Are our Advent preparations out of balance? Are we on the fast track for GIFTmas Day or CHRISTmas day? Is it time for us to change, slow down, enjoy and be PRESENT to this time of preparation?

During this Advent season, pray for a healthy balance in our preparations for the birth of the Lord.

Jesus, teach us to reject the ever-present commercialism of YOUR season.

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON.

Marlene Von Fumetti, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 96:1-3, 10-13; Matthew 18:12-14

**Wednesday
December 10, 2014**

“Come to me all you who are weary and find life burdensome and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28

Are you feeling weary about the Christmas cards you have not written and the presents you have not purchased or wrapped?

This may be the day to count your blessings and hold in your heart those who are weary of war, weary of hunger, weary of dead-end jobs, weary of domestic violence, weary of the lack of adequate healthcare, or other heavy burdens.

On this day reach out to someone in your family, neighborhood, workplace, or some other group, and lighten his or her heavy load.

Corine Murray, PBVM

Isaiah 40:25-31; Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10; Matthew 11:28-30

**Thursday
December 11, 2014**

**“For I am the Lord, your God, who grasp your right hand. It is I who say to you, ‘Fear not, I will help you.’”
Isaiah 41:13**

Think of Isaiah as a close, caring friend who reaches for your hand. He uses the language of a father. “I am holding your hand. Don’t be afraid.” “I will help you.” Isaiah is the holy one keeping before our eyes the kindness God desires for us.

Rivers well up! The wilderness turns into a lake and the dry ground has a fountain of water! All around are beautiful trees – cedar, juniper and cypress! Listen to, see, and know that God is all around, loving us. God is bringing us out of chaos! Whoever has ears, let them listen and hear!

**God’s praise be ever in our mouths!
And let every creature bless God’s holy name!
Forever and ever!**

Virgie Luchsinger, SFCC, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 41:13-20; Psalm 145:1, 9-13; Matthew 11:11-15

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Friday
December 12, 2014

“... for nothing will be impossible for God.” Luke 1:37

It was only a couple days before I got the opportunity to reflect on today's scriptures that my husband and I had made a stop at the shrine of our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Cardinal Burke had the idea to build a place to honor our mother and in 1995 the idea was started. There are so many different places there – the votive chapel, a rosary walk, the church, the stations and other shrines – to spend time praying and meditating. One could spend a whole day or more there. Many people helped and are still helping to make this retreat place available.

Juan Diego, in his trials upon experiencing the appearance of the Blessed Mother near Mexico City, shows great perseverance. And then turning to today's Gospel, Mary shows her great love for God with “yes.”

God shows through Mary at the Annunciation and through a poor boy in Mexico, all the saints and the wonders of the world that, as the angel Gabriel said to Mary, “... nothing will be impossible for God.”

It is a special day to honor our Blessed Mother; A time to turn to her with our thoughts, needs and desires. Her motherly ways can console and encourage us.

Mary Irene Stanton, PBVM Associate

Zechariah 2:14-17; Judith 13:18-19; Luke 1:26-38

**Saturday
December 13, 2014**

“Turn again, Lord of hosts; look down from heaven and see; Attend to this vine, the shoot your right hand has planted.” Psalm 80:15-16

In defeat of battle, the Israelites call upon the Lord to help them. Still today, as we fight the battles of everyday life, we call upon the Lord to “tend to this vine;” to tend to us, the people of God. We cannot battle evil alone, but rather, need to ask God every day for his hand to “prune” the vine that is each of us, together as his Church.

Dear Lord, your Church today is the shoot you have planted. Tend to us always, that we may become stronger vines in your vineyard, bearing the fruit of good works and your Good News.

Michelle Covey, PBVM Associate

Sirach 48:1-4,9-11; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19;
Matthew 17:10-13

**Third Sunday of Advent
December 14, 2014**

“I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul.” Isaiah 6:10

Today we celebrate Gaudete (rejoice) Sunday. The lectionary for today repeats the focus of the day in several ways. Isaiah proclaims “I rejoice heartily in the Lord ... the Lord makes justice and praise spring up before all nations,” and the letter to the Thessalonians reminds us to “Rejoice always.”

The word *rejoice* is defined as feeling joyful or elated or as giving joy to others. Paul gives us some insight into what it might look like to be a person of joy. Rejoice ... give thanks ... refrain from evil ... listen to the Spirit ... be faithful.

How can I be joy or give joy today testifying to the light as John the Baptist proclaims?

Spirit of God, light my day with gratitude and joy that I may be light for all that I meet, especially those who find this season challenging.

Marilyn Breen, PBVM

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11; Luke 1:46-50, 53-54;
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

**Monday
December 15, 2014**

“What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?” Matthew 21:23

Answering a question with a question – clever – leaves the original question unanswered and the askers silent. Is it a matter of “authority problems” for the temple elders and priests? It seems more a matter of “heart conditions” – Jesus teaching a superior law of love, forgiveness and compassion that goes beyond the many laws enforced and guarded by temple authorities. Sound familiar?

How many face fears daily and stand trust-rooted in the authority of the Law of Love in living out justice? The *fire* of such moments and actions plunges one deeply into God – so apparent that someone may ask, “Who gave you this authority?” Thank you, God of all, for blessing the temple of our world with these people!

Today, take a step beyond timidity, anxiety, or fear in one instance and respond with the authority of love within you. In gratitude, give thanks to the Author of your courage.

*Colleen Vlasisavljevich, PBVM Associate
and Former Member*

Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17; Psalm 25:4-9; Matthew 21:23-27

**Tuesday
December 16, 2014**

**"Which of the two did the will of his father?"
Matthew 21:31**

In telling the story, Jesus wants us to realize that what we do is more important than what we say we will do. Jesus wants us to answer "yes" when he tells us to "love one another," but sometimes we do not show love to our family members. Jesus wants us to answer "yes" when he says "follow me," but sometimes we do not choose what Jesus would do but rather what we want to do!

**When I am asked to do something, will I do it willingly?
Or will I say "yes" and do it without conviction? Today
let us say "yes" with a happy heart.**

**O Lord, sometimes we say "yes" but our actions say
"no." Help us to be faithful to do what you have called
us to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

Barb Klein, PBVM Associate

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Psalm 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-19, 23;
Matthew 21:28-32

**Wednesday
December 17, 2014**

**“... Sarah ... Rebecca ... Leah ... Tamar ... Rahab ...
Ruth ... Bathsheba ... Mary ... ” Matthew 1:1-17**

Matthew's family record of Jesus is inclusive of women. Some bible versions use the woman's name and the word, "mother" while other versions use only the woman's name. What is important is that these women provide great examples of discipleship. Each is open to Divine Energy already present. Each collaborates with this Divine Energy to incarnate.

How like Mary these women seem to be!

How consistently aware am I of the Divine Energy that exists?

What is being incarnated at this moment in time?

Joetta Venneman, PBVM

Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Psalm 72:3-4, 7-8, 17; Matthew 1:1-17

**Thursday
December 18, 2014**

**“Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who alone works wonders; blessed forever his glorious name. May the whole world be filled with his glory! Amen! Amen!”
Psalm 72: 18-19**

I've been working with the Ecumenical Emmaus for years now. It always strikes me that the other religions tend to exuberantly praise God in prayer and song so much more than we Catholics do – at least more than I have. Each year I'm learning to say a little louder, with my prayers and my life, that not only is he my God but also to proclaim his wonder and his glory!

Could you be spending more time joyfully, and loudly, praising God just because he is our wondrous God?

**May the whole world be filled with his glory!
Amen! Amen!**

Mary Lou Mauss, PBVM Associate

Jeremiah 23:5-8; Psalm 72:1, 12-13, 18-19;
Matthew 1:18-24

**Friday
December 19, 2014**

“God, you have taught me from my youth, to this day I proclaim your wondrous deeds.” Psalm 71:17

Today’s readings reveal the birth of Samson and the birth of John the Baptist. Both of their mothers gave birth at elderly ages which surprised everyone. In one more week we celebrate the birth of Jesus to a virgin mother. All of these appear to be God’s way of telling us of the wondrous births and their importance in history.

O God, you have taught us the importance of the miracle of births in our Christian history. May we continue to respect and value life from conception to death. May the gift of life be cherished throughout the world, especially in this Advent season. Help us to reach out to others in prayer and service.

Harry Stanton, PBVM Associate

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25; Psalm 71:3-6, 16-17; Luke 1:5-25

**Saturday
December 20, 2014**

**“Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” Luke 1:28
“... for nothing will be impossible for God” Luke 1:37
“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.” Luke 1:38**

Amazing Grace! The Lord is with Mary! The Lord is with us!
The promised “Emmanuel,” “God is with us.” Matthew 1:23

Mary is graced, blessed, gifted – and so are we! Mary
responds with her “yes” as God’s servant – and so are we
God’s servants, too!

**How aware of God’s presence in me am I today?
For what gift/grace/blessing of God am I grateful
in my life?**

**For what gifts/graces/blessings am I grateful in those
around me?**

**How will I be “handmaid” / “servant” with my
God-given gifts?**

**Emmanuel, open our eyes and hearts to your presence.
May we serve, trusting that with you all things are
possible.**

Diana Blong, PBVM

Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 24:1-6; Luke 1:26-38

**Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2014**

“The angel said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you.’” Luke 1:30

How stressful to be caught unaware, when life seemed “on track.” As John Lennon said, “Life is what happens while you are busy making other plans!” This announcement to Mary is so real in our own lives as we go along toward our personal plans – when suddenly, an unavoidable challenge sort of derails us, and requires of us courage and abilities we never believed we had. Out of these events often comes new life and direction – the mystery of our humanness, and a confidence that God is somehow interjecting graces and miracles throughout the entire time.

When my own life agenda gets derailed by other needs, do I tend to take reflection times throughout the process to note the graces/miracles that are present within the journey? A thankful journal is most helpful at these times.

Pause here to remember your own journeys.

Carol Kane, PBVM Associate and Former Member

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11, 16; Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29;
Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

**Monday
December 22, 2014**

“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant.” Luke 1:46-48

Today our readings speak of two women who experience miraculous conceptions and births. Hannah is barren and pours out her heart to God to conceive a child. Mary, a poor, young woman, finds herself pregnant by God’s design. Hannah gives birth to Samuel and Mary to Jesus.

Both Hannah and Mary respond to their circumstances with trust and gratitude for God’s activity in their lives. Both humble women have hymns of praise to God attributed to them.

Today take time to reflect on God’s activity in your life this week, and sing a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to God.

Annette Kestel, PBVM

1 Samuel 1:24-28; 1 Samuel 2:1, 4-8; Luke 1:46-56

Tuesday
December 23, 2014

“They pointed out to her, ‘None of your relatives has this name.’” Luke 1:61

My name is Rita. No one else in my family that I know of has that name. It was heard at the hospital where I was born on the speaker system. It is a nice name. It's short, easy to spell and works well in several cultures. It means “a pearl.” I do not know if my parents thought at the time about a pearl being formed around the sand grain irritating the oyster. My mother often said I threw every organ in her slender body out of whack during the pregnancy. I wonder if the irritation I was, and sometimes can be, formed into a pearl? The people in the gospel reading were “astonished” at the name without precedence in the family. As people, we struggle with the new, the different, the irritations and changes in general, but God seems to like to shake us up that way ... and to astonish us.

**Is God using something different to shake me up?
What irritation in my life would God like to see me make
into a pearl?**

Rita Menart, PBVM

Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Psalm 25:4-5, 8-10, 14;
Luke 1:57-66

**Wednesday
December 24, 2014**

“Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!” 2 Samuel 7:2

No doubt during this season you’ve heard Bing Crosby croon, “I’ll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams.” King David dreamed of building a grand home for God to dwell among the chosen people. But God had a larger plan in mind – to become one of us through the lineage of David and by womb of a virgin; to save us from our sins and abide in the hearts of all people. Tonight we celebrate God’s vision of the Word made Flesh.

How have you experienced the Incarnate God in your life?

Bernie Graves, PBVM Associate

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11,16; Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29; Luke 1:67-79

**Solemnity of Christmas
Thursday
December 25, 2014**

“And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.” Luke 2:20

The scripture readings for Christmas Day are a summary of hope. “The Lord reigns,” “light dawns for the righteous and joy for the upright,” “shepherds sharing what they saw” – all are words of hope for you and me.

As Christians it is important that we don't just survive the Christmas season but recognize it as a season of hope. What hope have you witnessed during Advent? How does the celebration of Christmas bring hope? Who will you bring hope to this day? How will you bring hope to our world?

Charlotte McCoy, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 62:11-12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12;
Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20

Friday
December 26, 2014

“Stephen, filled with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people.” Acts 6:8

Stephen was among the first deacons chosen. His name in Greek means “crown” or “king.” Besides likeness in name, his life was comparable to Jesus in several other ways. Stephen “was filled with grace and power, working great wonders and signs among the people.” Earlier in Acts, Luke commented, “Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst.” Both were brought before the Sanhedrin, elders, and scribes. False witnesses were presented. Jesus said they would see “the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Stephen witnessed he could “see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” Last words spoken were similar. “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” “Lord, do not hold this sin against them. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

Can it be said I “filled with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people?” Is my life of service a witness to my faith? When falsely accused, how do I react?

Ellen Mary Garrett, PBVM

Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Psalm 31:3-4, 6-8, 17, 21;
Matthew 10:17-22

**Saturday
December 27, 2014**

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the word of life – for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us – what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete.” 1 John 1:1-4

Each day I have the privilege of seeing Jesus in so many people. From the cleaning staff to the volunteers to the nurses and doctors; I see Christ ministering to people to help them get well again. When we bring Jesus to others we are hearing, seeing, and touching him.

What will you do to bring Jesus to others today?

Jane Conrad, PBVM

1 John 1:1-4; Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; John 20:2-8

Feast of the Holy Family
Sunday
December 28, 2014

“Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, according to your word, for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel.” Luke 2:29-32

There is so much in today’s readings about the wisdom of age: truly *seeing* through eyes of faith. Sirach, Colossians, the Psalm and Luke are all written by someone, or about someone, who’s been “around the block” and realizes that true understanding of life requires bumps, bruises, aha moments, mountaintop experiences and walking through the dark valleys. There are no greater “prophets” about real life than those who have lived it, and lived through it, soaking in from it the unimaginable lessons that are taught (and learned) from all perspectives: the past, by allowing us to prepare ourselves; the experience itself and how our faith helped us get through it; and the aftermath, by looking back to what we learned and what we can share with others when their lives have similar situations.

Brother Jesus, Mother Mary, Step-Father Joseph, thank you for being the example of a truly Holy Family so that we can look to you as a model for our own lives. Help us to use our past, present and future experiences to gather wisdom for our own life’s journey “around the block!”

Karen Bonfig, PBVM Associate

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Psalm 128:1-5;
Colossians 3:12-21; Luke 2:22-40

Monday
December 29, 2014

“... and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be contradicted (and you yourself a sword will pierce) so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.’”

Luke 2:34-35

The footnotes for this reading say “Mary herself will not be untouched by the various reactions to the role of Jesus ... Her blessedness as mother of the Lord will be challenged by her son who describes true blessedness as ‘hearing the word of God and observing it.’” (Luke 11:27-28 and 8:20-21)

I like to read the footnotes in the Bible – they give me more insight into the scripture passage. This footnote is quite profound. Mary’s blessedness will be challenged by her Son, Jesus. I’m sure she wondered what that meant. And as Jesus grew up they faced the joys and challenges of life. I’m sure Mary was very proud of her Son’s greatness, but I can’t begin to imagine the horrible heartache she endured upon seeing his trial and crucifixion. Her extraordinary example of true blessedness, as Jesus describes, was “hearing the word of God and observing it”. She did so, that many hearts may be revealed. Her trials and tribulations were lived for all of us, not just for her. Now that is truly amazing grace!

How often do we say the Hail Mary? Do we really listen to the words we pray? Let us take extra time to reflect upon these words.

Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with thee ...

Darla Budden, PBVM Associate

**Tuesday
December 30, 2014**

“And there was a prophetess, Anna, who did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day.” Luke 2:36-37

Hope grows with prayer and age. Anna waited patiently and hoped for the coming of Jesus as she prayed. What was it that kept Anna praying day and night in the temple?

Lord, increase my love for prayer. May I never cease to hope in you and to trust in your promises. Anna, may your example of patient waiting grace me with hope and patience as I await the Lord’s coming.

What do I hope for? How do I grow in hope?

Janice Hancock, PBVM

1 John 2:12-17; Psalm 96:7-10; Luke 2:36-40

**Wednesday
December 31, 2014**

“You have the anointing that comes from the Holy One so that all knowledge is yours.” 1 John 2:20

The phrase, “all knowledge is yours” implies that having been anointed I have all the gifts needed to attain eternal life.

This powerful, humbling and yet energizing verse from 1 John speaks of personal knowledge and experiences that reveal God’s love through his forgiveness and mercy. Haven’t we all been blessed frequently with these God gifts? As I begin a new year, I challenge myself to emulate those gospel values in the workplace and at home. I thank God for having blessed me with co-workers, family and friends whose lives consistently demonstrate the Lord’s compassion to me and challenge me to gently say “I am sorry” or “Forgive me.”

I ought to have a great 2015 year as I have the “know how” to live as a child of God. Putting that “know how” into daily practice is another matter.

Lord, God, give me your grace to forgive often and always forget what was forgiven. Amen.

Marilou Irons, PBVM

I John 2:18-21; Psalm 96:1-2, 11-12, 13; John 1:1-18

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
Thursday
January 1, 2015

“The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” Luke 2:16-19

This gospel tableau reveals Mary's contemplative response to the shepherds' message. How *all-struck* she must have felt to hear *all* the shepherds shared. It connects to the song, “Mary Did You Know?” Mary had begun her faith journey placing her trust and life in God's hands and with each unfolding event she incarnates another “Yes.”

What wonders call for our heartfelt reflection?

Barbara Ressler, PBVM Associate

Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8;
Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

**Friday
January 2, 2015**

“As for you, let what you heard from the beginning remain in your hearts. If what you heard from the beginning does remain in your hearts, then you in turn will remain in the Son and in the Father. He himself made us a promise and the promise is no less than this: eternal life.” 1 John 2:24-25

What we have heard from the beginning remains in our hearts – and that includes the promise of eternal life! That promise alone can bring a lifetime of peace to us. Believe that God made this promise to us; then worry need never be a part of our lives. We can trust that no matter what, eternal life awaits us.

Being human though, we do worry. What do we worry about? We might wonder if that “eternal life” means a life of peace with God, free of pain and hardship. Or perhaps we’re not sure. Is worry over daily happenings a sign of our lack of trust in God’s promise?

How can we deepen our trust in God even with the human tendency to worry? Through prayer. Let’s ask God to end our worries and deepen our faith and trust in him.

Anne McCormick, PBVM

1 John 2:22-28; Psalm 98:1-4; John 1:19-28

**Saturday
January 3, 2015**

“Sing a new song to the Lord, who has done marvelous deeds; Whose right hand and holy arm have won the victory. He has remembered faithful love toward the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth; break into song; sing praise.” Psalm 98:1, 3-4

We celebrate the coming of the Lord with a new song when we celebrate the birth of our Savior with our family and friends, with those we love. Whether we have large or small families, lots of friends, or only a few, it matters not. Our most meaningful celebration is the one we share with Jesus, whose birthday it is. When we praise God and give thanks for the gift of the Incarnation, we quietly in prayer shout with joy to the Lord.

Jesus, I love you and thank you for loving me enough to become human and show me how to love more deeply. Help me to sing to the rooftops that God is good and wants us to be happy and love others as we journey back to you.

*Janet Leonard, PBVM Associate
and Former Member*

1 John 2:29-3:6; Psalm 98:1, 3-4, 5-6; John 1:29-34

**Feast of the Epiphany
Sunday
January 4, 2015**

“Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you. You shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow.” Isaiah 60:1, 4a, 5

Another translation, The Message, says it this way: “Get out of bed, Jerusalem! Wake up. Put your face in the sunlight. God's bright glory has risen for you. Look up! Look around! When you see them coming you'll smile – big smiles! Your heart will swell and, yes, burst!”

This is the beginning of a poem about the restoration and glory of Jerusalem and of God's people. An appeal is made to fallen Zion to arise, to shine, to reflect the glory of God which will attract all nations.

This new year is a great opportunity for personal restoration, for choosing anew to live more fully and more deeply in God's glorious light and love.

In what area of my life am I being called to rise up, to wake up, to allow God's light to shine so brightly in and through me that others will see and give glory to God?

Julia Wingert, PBVM

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13;
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12



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