

# TAKE TIME OUT

## *Pastoral Retreat*

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## ADVENT REFLECTIONS



November/December 2020

### **ADVENT Week 4: TRUST & OBEDIENCE = Mary the mother of Jesus**

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2020:** The fourth Candle is lit for the Virgin Mary:

**Candle 4:** The Virgin Mary was the mother of God's Son, Jesus Christ! Because Mary was a good and faithful person, who trusted God completely and obeyed His commands, she was especially chosen by God. Mary was visited by the angel Gabriel, who told her that she had been impregnated by the Holy Spirit and would bear God's baby Son, Jesus Christ.

**Opening Prayer:** Father God, there are many things in Your Word that we do not understand. However, we must resist the temptation to limit You to our understanding. Almighty God, You are Omnipotent and Omnipresent; You are in all things at all times, this is a mystery most wonderful. Yet Father, You are a God of Truth and so we ask You to help us accept the things of You that we cannot understand; help us to live by faith in accord with Your Word until we, at last, find rest with You. **Amen!**

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**Poem: This Helpless Babe** ©Janice Morgan 2013-November *Based on: Isaiah 9:2-7*

Those who have walked into darkness  
Are saved by a Child born for us  
Whose great light will shine over all  
To save tempted souls from the fall

This helpless Babe who is divine  
Has turned our water into wine  
Upon this earth He lived and grew  
God's breath of love on us He blew

Jesus lightens all our darkness  
Shining His bright light within us  
Counsellor God, Prince of all peace  
His death brings our healing justice

So each Christmas tide let us praise  
Our voices and arms let us raise  
To this helpless babe poorly born  
Who suffered His flesh to be torn

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**CD: The Colours of Christmas: Track 2:** The Colours of Christmas *by* John Rutter

*2:51 minutes; Can be found on YouTube*

Green for the ivy that grows by the wall  
White for the mistletoe that hangs in the hall  
Red for the berries that shine in the snow

Orange and yellow for mornings first glow

*Chorus:*

*These are the colours of Christmas  
Let them shine all over the earth  
These are the colours of happiness  
The joy of a new baby's birth*

Blue for the robe of his mother so mild  
Gold for the precious gift they brought to the child  
Silver the starlight to shine through your sleep  
And a rainbow for all the sweet dreams you will keep

*Chorus:*

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### **Scriptures:**

#### **Isaiah 60:1-3**

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness has covered the earth and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and His glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of Your dawn.

#### **Zechariah 6:12**

Thus says the Lord of hosts: here is a man whose name is branch; for he shall branch out in this place and he shall build the temple of the Lord.

#### **Luke 1:26-38** *Advent Angels and joyous news*

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The Angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. <sup>31</sup>And now you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name Him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of His ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His Kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the Angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The Angel said to her, "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 holy; He will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to Your Word." Then the angel departed from her."

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**CD: The Colours of Christmas: Track 13:** Gabriel's Message by John Rutter – 2:26minutes

*Can be found on YouTube*

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,  
His wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;  
'All hail', said he, "thou lowly maiden Mary,  
Most highly favoured lady,  
Gloria!

'For known a blessed Mother thou shalt be,

All generations laud and honour thee,  
Thy son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,  
Most highly favoured lady,  
Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head  
To me be as it pleaseth God she said  
My soul shall laud and magnify His holy name  
Most highly favoured lady,  
Gloria!

Of her Immanuel the Christ was born  
In Bethlehem all on a Christmas morn  
And Christian folk throughout the land  
Did ever say  
Most highly favoured lady,  
Gloria!

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### **Reflection:**

What can I say, how can I tell anyone what has just happened to me? When the angel appeared it took me by surprise and I was scared. Why was I greeted as 'favoured one'? What does it mean and what did the angel intend to do to me? But the angel soon put me at ease and told me not to be afraid because God was pleased with me. Whew! That was a relief, I can tell you! I thought God only sent angels with messages when He was angry! But then things got really weird. The angel said I would become pregnant and have a baby. Well, how could I believe that! I mean, I'm not married and no man has even been near me, not even my fiancé Joseph, I'm not that kind of girl! What's more the angel even told me it would be a boy and what name I was to call him. As if that wasn't weird enough, the angel then goes on to tell me that this boy child Jesus, would be the Son of God and take up King David's throne. I was having trouble taking all this in but he didn't even stop at that. There was more to come for this little baby that I am going to grow; I was told that His reign over the kingdom and the house of Jacob will never end. I questioned the angel ... hey I questioned myself! Was I dreaming, had I eaten something that disagreed with me, what? I told the angel I was a virgin, I was brought up right, and besides I value my own body. But, get this, the angel just carried on as if it didn't matter at all, I was chosen because I was a virgin and pure of heart. The Holy Spirit would be the One to come within me and the power of God Himself will overwhelm me. All this would make the child holy, which is lovely, but to be honest it scared the living daylights out of me! What is the Holy Spirit, and how would I experience such a close encounter with God and survive? Oh dear, my head is reeling and I don't know how to make sense of any of this. Apparently, I'm not the only one that the angel has visited with news of a seemingly impossible pregnancy. The angel said that my cousin Elizabeth is already six months pregnant! But how can that be? She and Zechariah have been trying for a baby for years but nothing has ever happened so they kind of gave up ages ago. If what the angel said is true it would be so wonderful, I would be so happy for Elizabeth. But then that's what made me believe! The angel said that nothing is impossible for God, that's awesome! God *is* God after all, He *is* the One who created all things, if He wants to open a barren womb and have a Son with a human woman, then who am I to disbelieve. Oh, but wait! How on earth am I supposed to explain this to Joseph! Will he believe me, will he be able to understand what I have accepted to do for God, after all I've just agreed to carry and give birth to God's Son. Would any man be able to believe it, let alone come to terms with it! Dear God, I think I will need a little help from You on this one. I

had better go and tell Joseph the news right away, Truth is always best. I do hope he doesn't decide to leave me, I don't know how I would see this through on my own, and besides the council would put me to death if they knew! I need Joseph at my side through all this. Well then, there's nothing else for it, deep breath, here I go.

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**CD: The Gift: Track 4:** Let it be to Me *by* Graham Kendrick – 1.22minutes

*Can be found on YouTube*

Let it be to me according to Your Word  
Let it be to me according to Your word  
I am Your servant, no rights shall I demand  
Let it be to me  
Let it be to me  
Let it be to me according to Your word

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**Closing Prayer:** Heavenly Father, some things are easier than others to obey; some things we understand but in others understanding is denied. Yet in all things You have our best interests at heart and only give good things to Your children. Help us to be like Mary and delight in trusting Your Word and obeying Your commands, whether we understand or not. **Amen!**

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