

# Adult Faith Formation - Advent Series

## Week 2: Faith



### Opening Prayer

Father, in the wilderness of the Jordan you sent a messenger to prepare people's hearts for the coming of your Son. Help me to hear his words and repent of my sins, so that I may clearly see the way to walk, the truth to speak, and the life to live for Him, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Guiding Scripture:

Hebrews 11:1-12

### Guiding Question:

Name one way that faith has affected your life.

## Reflection on Faith: Preparation and Journeying

The theme of the second week of Advent is faith. As our guiding Scripture made known to us, "faith is the assurance of the things we hope for, and the certainty of the things that we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1). In this definition, we see how the theme for the second week of Advent builds upon the theme of hope found in the first week. Our hope is not a hope as it is commonly understood in the world. It is not a hope of a favorite athletics team winning the championship, or a hope that the lottery ticket we purchased will be the lucky winner. There is no assurance in these hopes, no guarantee that these hopes will come about. Faith, however, is the assurance of that for which we hope. Our hope in God and His promises is an expression of our faith, a guarantee that these promises will be fulfilled. When we speak of the hope of Christmas, the hope of Christ's coming, it is a hope of which we are certain. We do not hope in Jesus as we hope in a lotto ticket. We hope in Jesus with an assurance of faith. Under the theme of faith, we can find two subthemes: preparation and journeying. Both of these themes, these aspects of faith, result from the faith to which we are called.

Faith demands preparation. If you think about any important goal that you have ever set out to achieve, these goals required some level of preparation. A child goes to school to be prepared with the knowledge they need to live out in the world. A person prepares for an interview so that they can appear equipped and competent for the job. An athlete prepares for competition through long hours of training and practice. Our faith is no different. Faith requires us to be in a constant state of preparation as we seek to ready ourselves for eternal life with God. The Gospel from this Sunday spoke of John the Baptist and how he came to prepare the way of the Lord. John the Baptist was the fulfillment of the prophesy of Isaiah, who prophesied:

*"A voice cries out in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low, winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth. And all mankind shall see the salvation of God."*

*Isaiah 40:3-5*

In the Old Testament Temple period, priests would prepare themselves before entering into the Holy of Holies to offer sacrifices. It was only after they had prepared themselves that they would dare to enter into the presence of God. Priests today prepare themselves before offering the Sacrifice of the Mass. As they put on each part of their priestly vestments, they pray a particular prayer that goes with each part of their vestment in order to prepare themselves for the sacrifice to which God has called them. We prepare ourselves for Mass by refraining from eating or drinking an hour before Mass, as well as arriving a few minutes early in order to quiet our hearts to receive the graces the Lord wishes to pour out upon us in the Mass. Our entire Christian life should be a state of preparation for the coming of Christ. It is because of our faith in God and His promises that we understand the need to prepare ourselves to be received into everlasting life. In Advent, we pay special attention to this need for preparation as we await the coming of the Christ Child on Christmas.

Our faith also entails committing ourselves to a lifelong journey. We are reminded in Advent of the journey that Mary and Joseph took to Bethlehem. It was their faithfulness to God and His will that set them on this journey. When Mary said yes to being the Mother of God and Joseph said yes to taking Mary as his wife, they had complete trust in all that had been promised



them by God. They were guaranteed of that for which they hoped. With that guarantee, they embarked on a lifelong journey, not knowing what every step would hold but having faith that every step was willed by God. The journey to Bethlehem ended with birth of the Messiah. They then journeyed to Egypt to escape the threat from King Herod. From there, they returned to Nazareth where Jesus was raised. For Mary, her journey took her all the way to the foot of the cross where she stood by her Son as He bore the sins of the world upon the cross. Mary's journey ended with her being assumed into heaven and entering into the glorious eternity of heaven where she intercedes for us as our Queen and Mother. The journey of the Holy Family was filled with twists and turns, immense sorrow and grief, and overwhelming joy. But at the heart of the journey was the unwavering faith which set them on the journey in the first place.

Each of us is on a journey of faith. From the time of our conception, we are on a journey towards our eternal destiny of heaven. That journey requires continual preparation so that we are ready to receive Christ and be received by Him. We hope for that day, and through faith, our hope is assured. We hold in faith all that the Lord has promised. This second week of Advent, we focus our attention on this great gift of faith, the journey this faith sends us on, and the need to prepare for that journey.



Artwork 1 Francis Ashton Jackson's Nativity

### *Discussion Questions:*

- 1) Looking back on our guiding Scripture, the author gives the example of Noah building the arc. Has following God's call in your life ever exposed you to ridicule from the others in your life. How did you respond to that ridicule?
- 2) The Bible gives us countless examples of holy men and women who courageously acted in their faith. Which people or stories serve as the greatest inspiration to your faith today?
- 3) What nourishes your faith in times of uncertainty?
- 4) As we journey through Advent, how can we allow our faith and hope in Christ to spill over into all areas of our lives?

### *Weekly Challenge*

Spend time praying with the Scripture passage which inspires your faith. Pray the prayer of the apostles in Luke 17:5 - "Lord, increase our faith."

### *From the Catechism*

Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself. By faith "man freely commits his entire self to God." For this reason the believer seeks to know and do God's will. "The righteous shall live by faith." Living faith "work(s) through charity."

**Closing Prayer** - Reread the guiding Scripture (Hebrews 11:1-10) and pray together.