

During this Advent season, we remember that our God is the God who comes and intervenes in the lives of his people. He came and touched Mary, a poor and humble peasant girl; and as a result of his touch, her life and status were for ever changed. She became the bearer of God.

Our God also continues to intervene in the lives of other ordinary people, people like *you and me*. He has sent his Son into the world; and as a result of this, our lives and status can be for ever changed as well. Our Lord has come to give us hope, and to **be** our hope; he has come to give us a new perspective on our present; and he has come to give us a radically different outlook on our future.

Questions to ponder

1. Do I believe that God is at work in my life?
2. Has he given me any signs recently to demonstrate this?
3. If I believe that God is at work in my life, how might this concretely affect the way I consider my future?

A prayer

Lord, as I prepare for your birth as Mary's Son, help me to remember that I am never too old, never too filled with the effects of sin, never too far away to receive you with openness and trust. Amen.

Suggested Advent actions

This week:

- I will make a point of thanking God for the ways in which he has intervened in my life in the past; I will thank him for the blessings he has bestowed upon me.
- I will resolve to be hopeful about the new and creative ways in which God will continue to work in my life and in the lives of others. 'For he **is** my hope; and my hope is **in him**.'

Fr. John Moore 2015



The Fourth Week of Advent

A devotional guide

Week 4: 20th - 24th December 2015

'Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and shield. Our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.'

Psalm 33. 20-22

As we enter this **Fourth Week of Advent**, we realise that this season has not only been a time of waiting for the celebration of the birth of the Christ-child; it has also (hopefully at least) been a time of personal growth.

As we look back over Advent 2015, and indeed as we look back over our lifetime journey with God, can we recognise moments during which we have made spiritual progress and our relationship with him has deepened?

Generally, spiritual growth is not something that God gives us without any participation on our part; it does not fall upon us unexpectedly like a lightning bolt! It is something that our Father hopes that we will aspire to; it is a blessing that we are called to sincerely desire in our hearts.

Advent provides us with the opportunity to prepare for two gifts: the gift of the Son of God to the world; and the gift of new maturity in Christ, which we receive as we wait to receive him

afresh in our hearts.

As we move towards Christian maturity, all the members of the Trinity have their particular role to play: the Father reveals to us something of his glory, as he demonstrates his love and mercy in sending his Son to us; the Son comes to indwell our hearts; and the Holy Spirit strengthens us in our inner being.

Suggested Scripture readings

During the week, you may decide to set a bit of time each day and read short passages of Scripture that are given to prompt our reflection, response and prayer.

Monday	Luke 1. 46-55
Tuesday	Psalms 25. 3-9
Wednesday	Psalms 89. 2, 19-27
Thursday	Luke 1. 67-75, 78-79

We focus here on [Luke 1. 46-55](#):

- ⁴⁶ And Mary said,
'My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,

⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

Commentary

This song of praise comes from deep inside Mary. The lyrics of the song, as they emanate from the larynx of this young girl, reveal that she has new knowledge and wisdom about what God is up to, and about how he operates in the world.

Mary's praise begins with her grateful response to the mercy and grace that God has shown her, a humble servant of the Lord. She rejoices in God who is her Saviour, and she thanks him for the saving work that Jesus Christ will come to accomplish.

In this song, Mary gives a prophecy about the impact that her Son will have on the world. She announces two distinct revolutions that our Lord will instigate and activate; and she speaks of these revolutions in the past tense, as if they have already happened. These deliverances have already been accomplished to some degree; but they will be finally and fully realised as a result of Christ's coming. The first revolution is spiritual; and the second is social and economic in nature.

Mary's song of praise ends as it was introduced, once again affirming faith in God's promises and mercies. Belief in God's might and miracles is the final chord struck in Mary's hymn.

Mary looks at the long range and not the short term. On one hand, she views the coming of our Lord in terms of the past; that is to say, in light of the historical covenantal promises of God. But she also views this event in terms of the future. She knows that Christ's first coming will announce the arrival of the kingdom of God; and that his second coming will set things eternally straight. Mary could see this as clear as day. And the bracing Advent question for all of us is, 'Do we see this, too?'