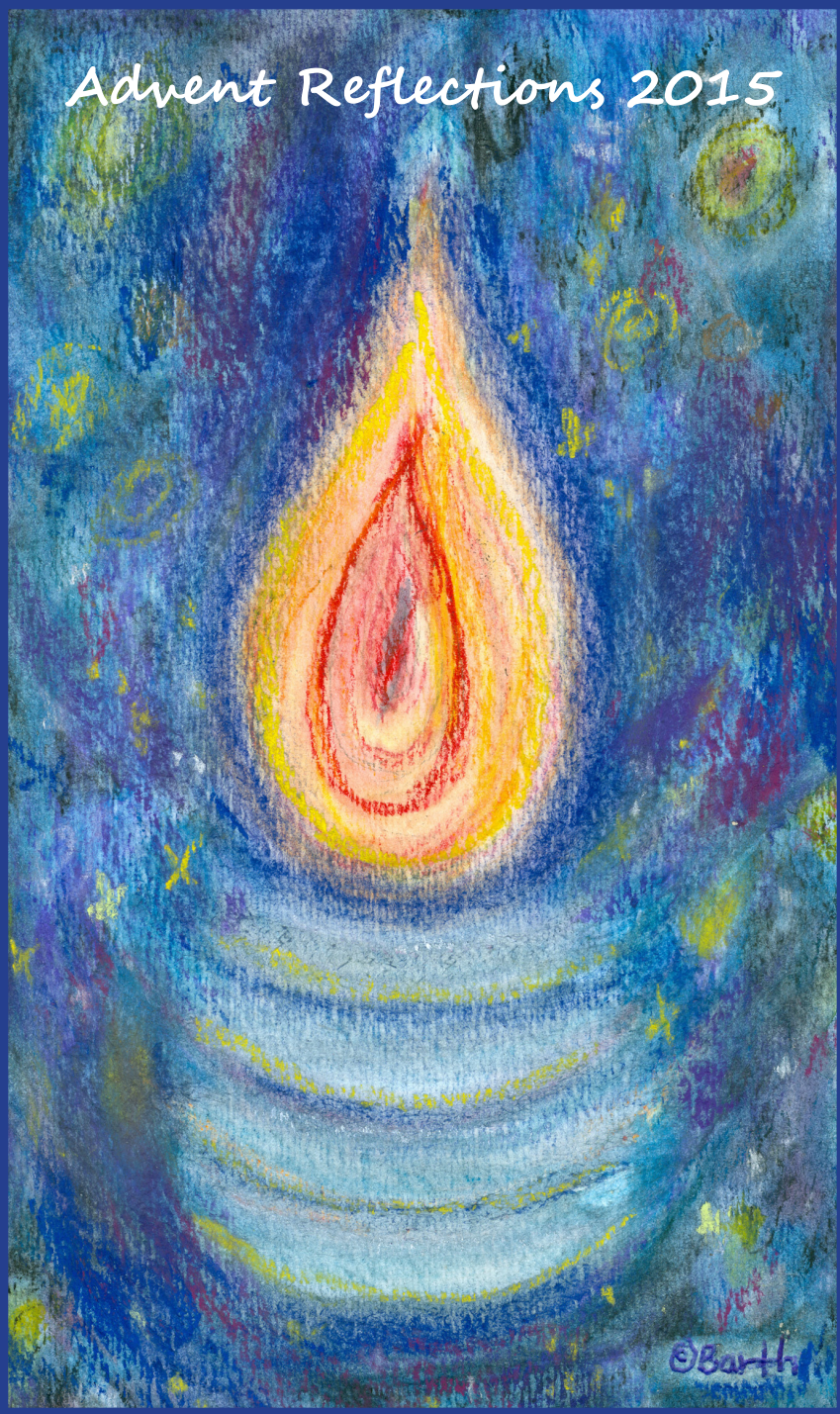


Advent Reflections 2015



“Cosmic Fire”

Marie Barth, PBVM

This Advent send the
energy of Nano's fire
to circles of
family,
community,
globe,
universe.

You Are Invited

Come —
drop the wrap of expectations
at the door

Step over the threshold,
enter
the deepest cavern of self

Find the way by candlelight,
one and one more
until four

Luminescence of spirit
brightened in
contemplation,
living mercy,
compassion,
justice, peace

Celebrate then, again,
the advent of God!

Colleen Vlasisavljevich
PBVM Associate and Former Member

**First Sunday of Advent
November 29, 2015**

**“Make known to me your ways, Lord; teach me your paths.”
Psalm 25:4-5**

When I take today's readings and reflect on them all together I realize this is the real challenge of Advent. I LOVE Advent – the planning, the friends and family, the cooking, decorating and music. But I also love it when a big snow hits and forces me and everyone else to just stop! So much so that I try to make myself stop throughout Advent to ensure I am living in love and not in tasks, and following God's path for my life, not planning my own.

STOP! Before you even get started this first Sunday of Advent think not about what you are going to do for the holidays, but what you are NOT going to do!

Judi A. Moritz, PBVM Associate

Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14
1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2; Luke 21: 25-28, 34-36

**Monday
November 30, 2015**

**“Jesus stood there amazed! Turning to the crowd he said, ‘I haven’t seen faith like this in all the land of Israel!’”
Matthew 8:10-11**

I am preparing this reflection on September 24. Francis, Our Holy Father, spoke to Congress today. He emphasized compassion, taking care of the poor, the sick, all those on the margins. Jesus was amazed at the Centurion’s compassion and his humility to ask for healing for his servant. This was the first time Jesus had “seen such great faith.”

**When was the last time I had true compassion for the poor, the sick, the physically or mentally challenged?
When was the last time I dropped my pride for the sake of others? How great is my faith?**

Janice Hancock, PBVM

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

**Tuesday
December 1, 2015**

“For he will deliver the needy who cry out, the afflicted who have no one to help. He will take pity on the weak and the needy and save the needy from death.” Psalm 72:12-13

We can certainly apply those lines from Psalm 72 in light of the current world situation – especially for the Syrian refugees and our own Mexican immigrants. A daily reading once went: “God, how can you let so many bad things happen?” And God said, “You’re there, what have you done?”

It’s been said that we are to be God’s hands and feet here on earth so what can we do to help “the needy who cry out”?

Pray unceasingly!

Donate to an international relief organization.

Contact your congressman for political change.

Mary Lou Mauss, PBVM Associate

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

**Wednesday
December 2, 2015**

**“My heart is moved with pity for the crowd. By now they have been with me three days and have nothing to eat.”
Matthew 15:32**

The scripture quote I chose is from today's Gospel; there is a similar theme in our first reading. Isaiah tells us that “God will wipe away the tears from all faces. The reproach of his people he will remove from the whole earth.” Both selections speak of God's tender heart, his compassion and pity for his people, and his desire to help them. In the Gospel the people were experiencing a hunger for earthly food after listening to Jesus for three days and witnessing the miracles he performed. Isaiah tells of the feast of rich foods and choice wines the Lord will provide for all peoples. Both readings remind me of our need not only for food for our bodies, but food for our souls as well. Our God, with his Son whose birth we will celebrate soon, will provide us with both.

Has my heart ever been moved with pity for someone in need? What did I do about it? How many tears have I wiped away?

Perhaps after honestly answering these questions we might pray with today's Responsorial Psalm, “I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.”

Anne McCormick, PBVM

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

**Thursday
December 3, 2015**

“Anyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on rock. When the rainy season set in, the torrents came, the winds blew and buffeted his house. It did not collapse; it had been built solidly set on rock.” Matthew 7:24-25

Jesus tells us that our faith is not just a matter of words. We must build our life on the “rock” of God’s will. He gives us a foundation to follow of love, mercy, and kindness. I recently heard a story about St. Francis who asked a follower to accompany him on a mission to preach to the people. After walking through the town without saying any words, the follower asked, “When are we going to preach?” Francis replied, “My son, we just did!”

If others could watch my daily life, could they tell by my actions that I am a follower of Jesus? We must put our words into actions!

Yvonne Kisch, PBVM Associate

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

**Friday
December 4, 2015**

“See to it that no one knows of this.” Matthew 9:30

“See to it” is a phrase that often means “Do it.” Was Jesus telling those two newly sighted men to proclaim their miracle? Or was Jesus’ expression a tongue in cheek paraphrasing? Jesus’ request seems odd to me. Telling two formerly blind adults to NOT talk about their recent cure is like asking cataract patients to not chat about their successful surgery nor who performed the surgery. Upon further reflection, was Jesus telling the two to not use words telling their good news but rather share it by their deeds? Do modern miracles cause you to intensify living out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy? In other words, see to it. Please.

Lord, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy increase my awareness of and involvement in deeds (See to it ...) that address the spiritual and corporal needs in my neighborhood, parish, and community. As I decrease in physical energy/deeds, may I increase in my prayers (words) for those who need and those who give a hand up. Amen.

Marilou Irons, PBVM

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

**Saturday
December 5, 2015**

“At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest.’”

Matthew 9:36-38

My favorite image of Jesus is the shepherd because many times I feel lost and need his loving care. But no matter how far I stray, I know Jesus will find me and bring me back to the fold. The second part of this passage reminds me to pray for vocations as well as for the courage and guidance needed as religious life changes in today's world. May there always be daughters and sons of Nano to care for those in need.

Holy Spirit, send to our world laborers to care for the lost and troubled; and may I be a tiny part in this mission. Let me bring someone a bit of comfort today. Amen.

Janet Leonard, PBVM Associate and Former Member

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Psalm 147:1-6
Matthew 9:25-10:1, 6-8

**Second Sunday of Advent
December 6, 2015**

“Those that sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.” Psalm 126:5

My year has been filled with many expected and unexpected deaths, resulting in many tears. While reading *Sacred Spaces* by Margaret Silf, she writes that God was not punishing humankind when God created death, but was giving humankind a gift, so that we would not forever be separated from God.

It struck me that this was true. As much as I miss all those who have died, I would not for a moment wish any of them back from the loving arms of God. Each had fulfilled his or her purpose for living and are now “rejoicing” with their creator.

Spend some time today praying for and thinking of loved ones who have died. Rejoice with them as you think of the happiness they are experiencing.

Dianne McDermott, PBVM Associate

Baruch 5:1-9; Psalm 126:1-6
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6

**Monday
December 7, 2015**

“Some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set [him] in his presence. But, not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, ‘As for you, your sins are forgiven.’” Luke 5:18-20

A paralyzed man is brought by four men to Jesus. He is for them their only hope. Seeing their faith, he tells the paralytic: Your sins are forgiven you! At that time people believed that physical defects were a punishment from God because of some sin committed. For this reason, the paralytics and many other disabled persons felt that they were rejected and excluded by God! Jesus teaches the contrary. Such a great faith of the paralytic was an evident sign of the fact that those who helped them were accepted by God in his love.

Placing myself in the position of those who helped the paralytic: Would I be able to help a sick person, take him up to the top of the house and do what the four men did? How great is my faith?

Cheryl Demmer, PBVM

Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 85:9-14; Luke 5:17-26

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception
Tuesday, December 8, 2015**

“She was deeply troubled by his words and wondered what his greeting meant.” Luke 1:29

Mary was greeted by the angel Gabriel and addressed as “highly favored daughter,” then informed that “The Lord is with you,” and “Blessed are you among women.” Luke tells us that she was deeply troubled by these words. Another translation uses the word, “perplexed” in place of “troubled.” Mary probably was perplexed, bewildered or puzzled about where this greeting was leading her. She obviously was troubled and concerned when the angel then announced that she would bear a son. She was a virgin and, as yet, unmarried; how could this be? After being assured that this was all part of God’s plan, she gave her assent to the will of God.

How do I respond when I am asked to be involved in a new responsibility that seems to be difficult, beyond my ability to accomplish or is very time consuming?

Mary, I pray that I will have the faith, trust and courage to answer the call as humbly and courageously as you did.

Dolores Zieser, PBVM

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

**Wednesday
December 9, 2015**

**“Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.”
Matthew 11:28-30**

We tried so hard to follow the kosher (dietary) laws, the Ten Commandments, the detailed instructions of the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, as well as paying oppressive taxes but were unable to distinguish the essential from the trivial. It frankly became overwhelming and impossible.

Then one day we heard this guy – humble, gentle, loving, and poor like us. What was this “freedom from religion,” this alternative to the stress of being law-bound? How freeing to hear this Jesus of Nazareth invite us to cast off the burdens weighing us down and simply be in love, to live it, this new way. What a day it was!!

Today, simply be in love.

*Colleen Vlasisavljevich, PBVM Associate
and Former Member*

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

**Thursday
December 10, 2015**

“I am the Lord your God; ... ‘Do not be afraid; I will help you.’... I, the God of Israel, will never abandon [my people].” Isaiah 41:13, 17

How often in Advent are we called to trust our God: to trust the Mystery, the Word, God’s care for each of us, the Divine Presence living within and without our days?

Abraham Lincoln once said: “Without the assistance of the Divine Being, I cannot succeed. With that assistance, I cannot fail ...”

As we imitate God’s concern for all of creation, let us pray this day trusting that God will “never abandon” but rather, bring about peace and salvation through the gift of Jesus and the Spirit alive in our hearts. “Be not afraid.”

I might imitate God’s concern for me by showing similar concern for others this day.

Jeanine Kuhn, PBVM

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

**Friday
December 11, 2015**

“But wisdom is vindicated by her works.” Matthew 11:19

When one of our daughters was a teenager she informed me there was nothing to eat in the house. Well, I didn't think it was really that drastic, but it was the end of the week and I went for groceries and got many good foods. And then she said to me: “What are you doing? Are you trying to make me fat?”

Sometimes I too am like those children in the gospel who were never satisfied. If someone has said a cruel word to me, it is hard to love them and pray for them. If someone has an entirely different set of beliefs, I am sometimes uncomfortable around them. But as it says in Isaiah 48:17: “I, the Lord your God, teach you what is for your good.” I too need to study God's law more closely and become wiser and do more works that are for good. As long as God isn't through with me yet, I need to keep trying to be vindicated.

Today take time to reflect on God's laws and your life and see if there is anywhere for more wisdom.

Mary Irene Stanton, PBVM Associate

Isaiah 48:17-19; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Matthew 11:16-19

**Saturday
December 12, 2015**

“Thereupon Mary set out, proceeding in haste into the hill country to a town of Judah, where she entered Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth.” Luke 1:39

As we reflect on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe and on Luke’s Gospel, we are reminded of our call to respond to others. On hearing that her cousin Elizabeth was soon to give birth and in need of support, Mary hastened to be with her. Mary, not thinking of herself, traveled through the hills to Judah. Juan Diego also reached out, when he was asked to visit the bishop and request that a church be built. His journey, like Mary’s, was not easy, as he was young and probably afraid. Mary and Juan Diego put aside their fears and took time to reach out to others. May this prayer help us slow down and reach out to others, too.

Slow Down

O Lord, give us each a tender heart. Let us do loving things that surprise even ourselves. Let us stop daily to talk to people who need a good word, to mend hearts that are broken and to assure others that they are loved. Make us more aware of the tiny surprises that are scattered like secrets all around us. Let us notice such things, as we have forgotten and those persons of whom we have grown weary. May we see others in a loving way and be a sign of hope for them. As we busily set ourselves to do the large tasks, may we find more time for small celebrations. O Christ, give us the grace to live out each day, as though it were a gift. O Spirit, who guides us all, show us the way to Christ. Amen

Margaret Anne Kramer, PBVM

Zechariah 2:14-17; Judith 13:18; Luke 1:39-47

**Third Sunday of Advent
December 13, 2015**

“Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged!” Zephaniah 3:16b

The immigration crisis ... global warming ... shootings in schools and churches ... and Zephaniah says “Shout for joy!” Racial hatred ... abject poverty ... ugly politics ... and Paul says “rejoice!” What to do? How can I make sense of these opposing messages? Luke tells us how: share what we have, practice honesty, be grateful. Then can Christ be found. Then can God’s peace surpass all troubles. Gaudete Sunday reminds us to be lantern light in a world full of darkness.

Ponder your first two weeks of Advent. How have you reflected joy and peace and light? There’s still time to shine!

Bernie Graves, PBVM Associate

Zephaniah 3:14-18; Isaiah 12:2-6
Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18

**Monday
December 14, 2015**

**“Jesus answered them, ‘I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?’ And they discussed it among themselves, saying, ‘If we say, ‘from heaven’ he will say to us, why then did you not believe him? But if we say, ‘From man,’ we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet.’ So they answered Jesus, ‘We do not know.’ And he said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.’”
Matthew 21:24-27**

Pope Francis reminds us that our daily work is the pursuit of the common good. We cannot say that we do not know if our actions are from human or divine origin. Our daily prayer is precisely about discerning that.

At the end of the day, I might well ask, “How have I contributed to the common good today?”

Maura McCarthy, PBVM

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

**Tuesday
December 15, 2015**

“But I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly, who shall take refuge in the name of the Lord: the remnant of Israel.” Zephaniah 3:12

What does it mean to be the remnant that God leaves behind? It involves both God’s choice of the remnant, those chosen to be kept, and our agreement to be the remnant, the humble and lowly. As I listen to the political powers, both in our country and other nations, I see the opposite of humble and lowly. As I look at the people who live in the affordable housing where I work I frequently see the humble and lowly. I’m continually amazed at their faithfulness and gratitude. As I reflect on the stewardship decisions facing the congregation I feel that the faithful remnant is a fitting description. Being that remnant is an active call – to look at our resources and how they will really benefit our local reality and beyond.

Do we recognize that God chose us as the remnant of Israel? How can we actively participate in being part of the remnant? What big and small decisions will continue to enhance that covenant? May God grant us the faith and wisdom to make those decisions every day.

Brendalee Connors, PBVM Associate and Former Member

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Psalm 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19, 23
Matthew 21:28-32

**Wednesday
December 16, 2015**

“Are you ‘He who is to come’ or do we look for someone else?” Luke 7:19

In today's reading Luke uses this important question as a pointer to help John's disciples realize that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah. Eventually John's disciples left him to follow Jesus. The answer to that question challenged them and changed their lives in ways they could never imagine.

How do I live with questions that seem to have no answers?

What are the questions that I am living with at this time in my life? “How do I prepare for the feast of Christmas?” takes on a greater importance than “Do I have my Christmas cards written?” and, “Do I have my Christmas shopping finished?”

Can I recall and perhaps share with another person the question and answer that set my feet on the road to discipleship?

Corine Murray, PBVM

Isaiah 45:6-8, 21-25; Psalm 85: 9-14; Luke 7:18-23

Thursday
December 17, 2015

**“May his name be forever; as long as the sun, may his name endure. May the tribes of the earth give blessings with his name; may all the nations regard him as favored.”
Psalm 72:17**

Who is this? Do you know who this passage is speaking about? Is this Christ? Is this Nano Nagle? Is this you?

“You make him the pattern of blessings forever, you gladden him with the joy of your face.” Psalm 21:7

Again, who is this? Do you know people who are strong, confident leaders? Are your words and actions ones of kindness and love? Let us continue to be positive role models to the young and the elderly.

Let us pray for each other today. Give praise to those who have worked hard on a job well done. Encourage someone who may be struggling with a challenge or problem. May our actions and words be filled with wisdom and knowledge as we work with those around us. You have been blessed. You are a blessing to so many!

Darla Budden, PBVM Associate

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

**Friday
December 18, 2015**

**“This is the name they give him: ‘The Lord our justice.’”
Jeremiah 23:6**

**“And blessed forever be (God’s) glorious name ...”
Psalm 72:19**

“... you are to name him Jesus.” Matthew 1:21

“... they shall call him ‘Emmanuel’ ...” Matthew 1:23

What is in a name?

For the ancients a name was an expression of one’s place in the universe. A name often reflected one’s birth or a glimpse into one’s future. For the Israelites, the name of God was enough to designate God. Jesus is named as one who “saves,” and as “God is with us.”

What names of God speak to me this Advent? What names of God speak to our world?

What names of Jesus speak to me this Advent? What names of Jesus speak to our world?

How does my name/my life reflect my place in the universe?

**Emmanuel, God with us, may we glorify you in our lives,
as we reverence the names of those we meet today, as we
reverence our own names as your gifts to us.**

Diana Blong, PBVM

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

**Saturday
December 19, 2015**

“The Spirit of the Lord stirred him.” Judges 13:25

Samson: This is Your Life
Childless couple.
Proclaiming angel.
Consecrated boy-child.
Stirring Spirit.

**On this Advent day, celebrate your consecration...
as baptized person, as married couple, as single servant,
as vowed religious, as ordained minister, as ...**

**On this Advent day, let the Spirit of the Lord stir you to
fruitful prayer, heartfelt compassion and generous service.
This is your life.**

Jennifer Rausch, PBVM

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

**Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 20, 2015**

“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.” Luke 1:45

The familiar story of “The Visitation” as depicted in Luke’s gospel involves journey, kinship, surprise, and love. In response to the angel’s message, Mary sojourned to Judah to visit and “be with” her cousin Elizabeth, incarnating the words of our foundress, Nano Nagle’s family motto “Not words but deeds.” This tender visit served to confirm Mary’s understanding of her own future. Surprise! The angel’s pronouncement to her was really real. Her kinship with Elizabeth of blood was also a kinship in motherhood! She set out in love to visit Elizabeth, encountered love in Elizabeth’s greeting and would birth Love.

What possibility is God speaking to you/through you?

Barbara Ressler, PBVM Associate

Micah 5:1-4; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

**Monday
December 21, 2015**

“Blessed the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he has chosen for his own inheritance. Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield, for in him our hearts rejoice; in his holy name we trust.” Psalm 33:12, 20-21

All we think and do, God knows better than we do! Our heart and spirit he formed. He has chosen us as his own and we can rejoice in his love for us. If we choose God, then we need not fear anything or anyone against us, for he is with us to help and shield us. We can trust that he will be near us always!

Lord, direct my thoughts and actions today in ways that are pleasing to you. Help my heart to sing of your unconditional love for me.

Jean Lange, PBVM Associate

Song of Solomon 2:8-14; Zephaniah 3:14-18
Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Luke 1:39-45

**Tuesday
December 22, 2015**

“Mary said, ‘My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Savior, for he has remembered me, his lowly servant!’” Luke 1:46-48

Mary’s Song is all about relationship – about what God has done for Mary and how Mary responded. With risk and boldness, Mary cooperated with grace. She accepted the seed of the Word within and brought it to life. In the first part of her song, she rejoices at being chosen by God. The second part shows how God turns everything upside down; the faithful, poor, hungry and humble are exalted.

Sing of what God has done for you. Remember Mary’s Song and live it out loud in your life.

Joan Brincks, PBVM

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

**Wednesday
December 23, 2015**

“Make known to me your ways, Lord; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.” Psalm 25:4-5

In today's busy society, how often do we stop and ask for guidance? How often do we ask God to teach us his paths? Usually we are so caught up in running in every direction, trying to “get everything done” (especially in this Christmas season) that we forget to just sit back and be still and ask God to guide us. This psalm begs for us to stop, and reflect and learn.

Dear Lord, as we anxiously await the celebration of your birth, please let me take time to ponder your ways and learn from you the paths you wish me to take. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.

Michelle Covey, PBVM Associate

Malachi 3:1-4, 23, 24; Psalm 25: 4-5, 8-9, 10, 14
Luke 1:57-66

**Thursday
December 24, 2015**

“The favors of the Lord I will sing forever; through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your faithfulness. For you have said, ‘My kindness is established forever;’ in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness: ‘I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: Forever will I confirm your posterity and establish your throne for all generations.’” Psalm 89: 2-5

“Your love, God, is my song, and I’ll sing it! I’m forever telling everyone how faithful you are, I’ll never quit telling the story of your love – how you built the cosmos and guaranteed everything in it. Everyone descending from you is guaranteed life; I’ll make your rule as solid and lasting as a rock.”
The Message (The Bible in Contemporary Language)

**What stories of God’s faithfulness can we tell?
To whom do we tell these stories?**

We thank you God for our stories and the honor to be part of the Greater Story. We are grateful for your faithfulness and love. May we seek to radiate your life and love to all we meet. Amen.

Rita Cameron, PBVM

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-11, 16; Psalm 89: 2-5, 27, 29
Luke 1:67-69

**Solemnity of Christmas
Friday, December 25, 2015**

“When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, God saved us ... because of God’s mercy.” Titus 3:4-5

Christmas Day!

Christmas is about an amazing and gratuitous gift – Jesus, gift of God’s loving kindness and mercy – lavished upon each one of us and upon all people!

In response to such a wondrous gift, how can I – and how will I – extend “free” mercy to some person and/or group of persons in this Year of Mercy?

Celebrate God’s Love and Mercy!

Julia Wingert, PBVM

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

**Saturday
December 26, 2015**

“Jesus said to his disciples: ‘Beware of men for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake.’” Matthew 10:17-18

During difficult times, I hear God say: “I care about you. Let my strength support you and my love carry you. I’ll help you through any pain or misfortune. You are my child and I will never forsake you.”

Today let your prayer be: Dear Lord, whenever I am feeling sad or mistreated, please restore my hope and energy. My faith is in you my God. In your loving presence, God, I can let go of worries that keep me from experiencing your love. Thank you for the comfort of your tender touch.

Sandy Kahle, PBVM Associate

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

**Feast of the Holy Family
Sunday, December 27, 2015**

“... [Joseph and Mary] journeyed for a day and looked for [Jesus] among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him ...” Luke 2:44-45

Every parent's nightmare: a lost child while traveling. In a time when communication was only by word-of-mouth, Joseph and Mary's anxiety was likely near panic. No Amber Alerts. No cell phones. No Highway Patrol. Nowhere to turn for help.

In our time, family separation during migration is very common. Last year, actually 64.6% of migrants who traveled with family members told workers at the Kino Border Initiative Center in Nogales, Mexico that circumstances separated them from those family members.

Sad to say, U.S. agents sometimes do that separating. Families are deported at different border ports of entry – perhaps willfully, sometimes negligently. It can be hard to reconnect those separated family members.

Migrants feel vulnerable, as Mary and Joseph felt when they lost Jesus.

May your presence be with all who migrate, Holy Family. You are concerned about their welfare. So we commit them to your care. Protect them from every evil, harm and danger. And please strengthen us to do what we can to ease their lives. Help us work for justice and peace—so people won't need to migrate. Amen.

Billie Greenwood, PBVM Associate and Former Member

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Psalm 28:1-5; Colossians 3:12-21; Luke 2:41-5

Monday
December 28, 2015

“After the wise men were gone, God’s angel showed up again in Joseph’s dream and commanded, ‘Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child, and wants to kill him.’” Matthew 2:13

The gospel narrative for today, Holy Innocents Day, recalls the story of the journey to Egypt. This day has traditionally been a day when children are remembered in a special way. Children are loving and trusting, pure and innocent and unencumbered by concerns of status or etiquette. The child also represents all that is weak, vulnerable, and powerless. Jesus asks us to become as children; to let go of all that gets in the way of wonder and simplicity.

This Christmas season is a time to wonder at all the beauty around us. You might take a long walk, enjoy the lights and decorations, or recall the gatherings of family and friends which brought you joy in this Christmas season.

Today many children are abused, abandoned, and live with violence daily. We weep for these children. May our eyes be opened to see Christ today in beauty and in suffering.

Marilyn Breen, PBVM

1 John 1:5-2:2; Psalm 124:2-5, 7-8; Matthew 2:13-18

Tuesday
December 29, 2015

“Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother remains in the light, and there is nothing in him to cause a fall.”

1 John 2:9-10

All I could think of when I read this passage were the four brothers I grew up with and how often I screamed “I hate you” at them during those childhood years. (And, of course, my two sisters as well.) Thankfully, that was never really the case but that didn’t stop me from saying it. Now I know that isn’t exactly what these verses are referring to but for me it is an in-my-face reminder of how hard it is to love all my brothers and sisters (and not just my siblings) all the time. But I want to be “in the light,” not “in the darkness.” And I certainly don’t want to “fall.” But the reality is talking the talk is easier than walking the walk. I struggle with loving all my brothers and sisters. I struggle to see the face of Jesus in everyone I meet. But I’m working on it.

Advent is a wonderful time to reflect on light and darkness. During this season, we are, in a way, in the darkness, waiting for the light to enter the world. What a gift that light, Jesus, is to all of us! That “Light” calls us to love!

So during this season of waiting, let’s spend some time appreciating that light of love, and what it means to be “in the light.”

How do you remain in the light? Do you ever find yourself in the darkness?

Maureen Utter, PBVM Associate

1 John 2:3-11; Psalm 96:1-3, 5-6; Luke 2:22-35

**Wednesday
December 30, 2015**

**“There was a certain prophetess, Anna by name ... a widow until she was eighty-four. She was constantly in the temple, worshiping day and night in fasting and prayer.”
Luke 2:36-38**

Anna spent much of her time in the temple at prayer, pouring out her heart to God. Little did she realize how her prayers would be answered. When Joseph and Mary brought Jesus into the temple, they did not seek out the religious leaders of the time but rather ordinary people like Simeon and Anna. Their faith-filled, prayer-filled lives were rewarded.

When we enter our houses of prayer, it is often people like Anna and Simeon – family, friends and yes, even strangers – who influence us and bring us closer to God. Thank God for the people in our lives who inspire us to be more prayer-filled people.

God our Redeemer, we see how your prophetess, Anna trusted faithfully in your Word, and how you blessed her with encountering your Incarnate Word in her advanced age. Grant us the steady and trusting faith that kept her loyal to your Word through constant worship and ceaseless prayer. Amen. *Daily Prayer, 2013*

Sheila Kane, PBVM

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

**Thursday
December 31, 2015**

“Sing to the Lord, a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name, announce his salvation day after day.” Psalm: 96:1-2

Today – New Year’s Eve – we look back to the past year and perhaps try to sort out the good events and the not so good ones and come up with many positive happenings in the past year. We thank God for all the many blessings we have received. As Charles Dickens once said: “Reflect upon your present blessings of which everyone has plenty, not on your past misfortunes, of which all have some.”

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL!!

O Lord, we sing to you and bless your name. Help us to do more for others in need in your name. We have so much for which to be thankful.

Harry Stanton, PBVM Associate

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

**Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God
Friday, January 1, 2016**

“And Mary treasured all these things, and pondered them in her heart.” Luke 2:19

Today the Gospel reading speaks of the heart of Mary. A contemplative reflection on the child's birth and all the events surrounding it, including the visit of the shepherds, serves to expand Mary's understanding. She does not have all the answers. In order to comprehend the extraordinary workings of God in her life, in her relationship with Joseph, and in the life of her son, Mary needs to ponder and to keep pondering.

What was it that Mary treasured and pondered in her heart?

Our new consciousness of our interconnectedness with the whole Earth Community calls us to new reflections and ever new actions in our times. How do the gospel references to Mary's heart speak to us today?

Carla Popes, PBVM

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

**Saturday
January 2, 2016**

“And now, children, remain in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not be put to shame by him at his coming.” 1 John 2:28

It is during this time of the year that family is even more special to us than usual. The Christmas and New Year's gatherings have reminded us of the kinship we have; of bonds that have been strengthened by love and thoughts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph as they shared a family's joys, struggles and everyday life; – all making heart strings stretch and beg for the simplicity of “normal” days. I love the fact that in 1 John, we are called “children.” That means in our spiritual lives, too, we have family. We ARE family! We have a loving Creator who invites us to stay with him. A long relationship with someone warrants a sense of security. We are like family members gathering for the holidays, feeling the warmth of tradition, of being together, of knowing that we are loved. That is the way we are meant to feel each time we gather for Eucharist. God is calling us, his children to remain with him, and even though some days in our New Year may stretch us, God will be there to keep us in his loving and safe arms.

I am God's beloved, his child. What more could I want?

Karen Bonfig, PBVM Associate

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

Feast of the Epiphany
Sunday, January 3, 2016

“Astrologers from the east arrived one day in Jerusalem inquiring, ‘Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.’” Matthew 2:2

Epiphany is the Feast of Finding God – Good News for all God-seekers.

The mystical nature of our God-journey draws us to the counsel of wise ones, the characters in today’s Gospel account.

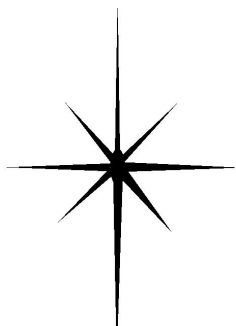
The Wise Men learned from the Creator of the Cosmos. Students of the night sky, they studied the stars and constellations. Then, graced by night vision, they sought their God; they followed the star; and were drawn to discover God in new places!

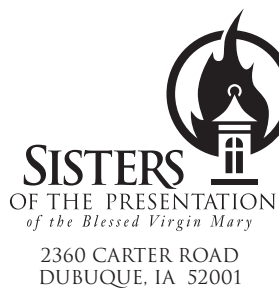
Name your shimmering star. What is its wattage? Where does it beckon you? Are you, too, prepared to risk leaving the comfortable and familiar to look for God at the margins/on the edge?

In the days ahead what will you need: an astral compass, astrologer glasses, wise counsel, another route, ...? What gifts do you bring? What is your wonderment quotient?

Joan Lickteig, 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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