



# The Word

Mary Undoer of Knots,  
Bless you today and  
forever. Amen!

## Liturgical Reflections

### HOLY FATHER'S INTENTIONS FOR DECEMBER

**Universal:** That the scandal of child-soldiers may be eliminated the world over.

**Evangelization:** That the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel which gives joy and hope to life.

The month of December is dedicated to the Immaculate Conception, which is celebrated on December 8. The first 24 days of December fall during the liturgical season known as Advent and are represented by the liturgical color purple. The remaining days of December mark the beginning of the Christmas season. The liturgical color changes from purple to white or gold — a symbol of joy, purity and innocence.

The liturgy of Advent focuses on remembering Christ's first coming at Bethlehem which then directs our mind to Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. The readings focus on the people of the Old Testament awaiting the Messiah, John the Baptist, heralding the way for Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary and her maternal preparations.

Christmastide begins with the First Vespers (Evening Prayer) of Christmas on December 24th and ends on the Sunday after Epiphany. Christmas and Easter are the only solemnities with octaves attached in the revised calendar. The Christmas octave differs from Easter in that it includes some major feasts: **St. Stephen** (December 26), **St. John the Evangelist** (December 27), and **St. Thomas Becket** (December 29), the feast of the **Holy Family** (December 30) and **St. Sylvester I** (December 31). The octave closes on January 1, the **Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**.

The month of December is filled with expectation and celebration. Preparation is the key word for the first 24 days of December. Everyone is getting ready for Christmas — shopping and decorating, baking and cleaning. Too often, however, we are so busy with the material preparations that we lose sight of the real reason for our activity.

Christmas is a Christian feast — and we must reclaim it as such! In the same way that a family eagerly prepares for a baby, so in Advent should we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child. We should keep Advent as a season of waiting and longing, of conversion and of hope and keep our thoughts on the incredible love and humility of our God in taking on the flesh of the Virgin Mary. Let us not forget to prepare a peaceful place in our hearts wherein our Savior may come to dwell.

The best person we can turn to for help during Advent is Mary, Christ's and our Mother. She awaited the day of His birth with more eagerness than any other human being. Her preparation was complete in every respect. Let's crown our preparation and borrow something of Mary's prayerfulness, her purity and whole-hearted submission to God's will.

## MINISTRY MUSINGS

Ministry should invade our whole life.

### Christmas Tips to Evangelize Loved Ones

by Sr. Theresa Aletheia Noble 12/24/2015

Do you have family members who are away from the Church?

Are you not sure what to say to them when they are home for Christmas?

#### 1. Be Peaceful as We Await the Prince of Peace:

It is easy for everyone to get stressed out during Christmas. My family usually has at least one major blowup per family visit. But, *you* can be a sign of contradiction in the midst of stress. Focus on Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and find your tranquility in him.

You may ask, "What does that have to do with my loved ones?"

Your example will not go unnoticed, especially if you tend to be anxious or were the primary instigator of arguments in the past.

When we change our behavior because Jesus *has changed us*, it makes others want what we have.

#### 2. Stay Focused on Jesus:

There are a lot of distractions during the Christmas season, including cards, gifts and parties. All of these things are good but we can lose sight of the spiritual aspect of Christmas.

When I went home for Christmas as a fallen-away Catholic, I always knew that my parents would continue with the traditions of my childhood. We would carry Jesus to the manger on Christmas day, light Advent candles, and say prayers before opening gifts.

My parents' piety was sometimes irritating to me. But what I didn't realize was that all of these things built a foundation in me, a gut instinct that recognized that a Christmas without the spiritual can be glittering and glitzy, but ultimately empty of transcendent meaning.

#### 3. Look for Opportunities to Share Your Faith:

Heaven kisses earth on Christmas. Families get together. Rivalries pause. Stores close. Wars cease ([at least temporarily](#)). It is as if time has stopped. Jesus, the God who came to save us, is truly with us in a special way.

During this year's peaceful Christmas intermission, look for opportunities to talk to your loved ones about your faith. Just share the wonder of knowing a God who loves you and who has been there for you this year of Mercy. Point out how he has worked in your life and don't be afraid to point out how you think God may have worked in the lives of your loved ones.

#### 4. Be Normal, Loving and Down-to-Earth:

This may sound like odd advice, but when I was away from the Church, I was most moved by Christians who interacted with me first on a human level. I was impressed by Christian friends and relatives who loved me for who I was and appreciated my gifts, my thoughts, and my time.

When I felt like people were interacting with me as a means to an end, (i.e. just to convert me), I was turned off. People are not here for us to try out "strategies" on. They are here for us to love, to accompany.

This mode of evangelization is effective because this is how Jesus interacted with the people he met. The *person* standing in front of Jesus was always the most important thing to him. The people knew this, and it was *this* kind of love that changed them.

#### 5. Don't Be Afraid to Reach Out:

There is a spirit during Christmas that fills people with openness toward one another.

This is the perfect time to reach out, to invite, to ask simple questions.

*"Why did you stop going to Church?"*

*"Would you be open to coming with me sometime to X (Mass, adoration, or any other Catholic event)?"*

*"How do you feel about God these days?"*

Questions, rather than statements begin conversations. And Christmas is a time of grace that may just allow conversations to turn into baby steps back to the Church.

**So, fear not. God is with you.** In our interactions with others, he is there, guiding us and opening the hearts of those we love.

### Important Items

**There are many parish celebrations offered this Holy Season. Encourage someone you know to volunteer and help with these celebrations. We need to reach out to those around us so they may experience the same sense of belonging you cherish.**

**Take time to be still and know GOD**

**Ministry of Consolation Debriefing is December 17 at Christ the King**

**Take time to be still and know GOD**

#### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!!!!!!!!**

**The honor of your presence is essential. Saturday, February 25, 2017 we will be "Reignited" by the enthusiasm of Dr. Patricia Hughes from the Diocesan Office of Liturgy. This is a Required Training. Details will follow.**