

Advent

A Season of Expectation

This Sunday we revisited three well known scenes of the nativity stories: The Shepherds' call (Luke 2. 8-20), The Magi's call (Matt. 2. 1-17) and Mary's call (Luke 1. 26-38)

You might want to pick one of the story and use the following questions for your discussion:

- What does it say?
- What strikes you as important or casts special light?
- What puzzles you?
- Does anything disturb you?
- So what: Ask, what does this mean for me, our home group, our church, our life now?

When you are finished with one story, you can go to the next one.

Alternatively, you might want to reflect on the following considerations:

The Magi (Matt. 2: 1-17)

The Magi are among the most mysterious figures in the Gospel; we don't know how many journeyed to find Jesus, although the total of three has become the popular number. Matthew's Gospel often refers to Old Testament prophecies that were fulfilled in and through the coming of Christ. In writing of the Magi, he pointed his readers to Isaiah 60:

"Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance." The wealth of nations — including gifts of "gold and frankincense" — would be brought by foreign kings, who would worship God in the holy city, "See also (Ps 72:10-11).

The actions and responses of the Magi reveal how the divine light destroys the darkness and leads to worship the true God. First, they saw the star and recognized that it was unique. Second, upon having this epiphany (itself a divine gift of grace), they travelled in order "to do him homage." Third, they came into the presence of Jesus and "prostrated themselves and did him homage." Having worshipped him, they offered gifts.

We, too, are called to worship, for worship is the Christian life.

How do we worship as Christians? Has your practice changed over the years?

Is worship limited to Sunday or can it find a daily expression throughout the week?



Mary (Luke 1. 26-38)

Advent is a season of expectation. Just as Mary lived in expectation, we are also called to live in expectation of the Lord. Living in expectation of the Lord is different than living with our own expectations.

Mary had unmet expectations. She might have wished to stay at an inn and have a warm meal. Yet, they end up seeking shelter with animals. Mary shows us we never know what to expect from God, yet he will surprise us with joy and contentment beyond our own expectations if we simply place our trust in him (visits of the shepherds and the Magi).

How does Mary's story encourage or challenge you?

The shepherds (Luke 2. 8-20)

The shepherds who slept in the fields can be an example of the people on the peripheries. Who are the shepherds whom we push to the periphery? Who have we chosen to alienate or ignore?

Advent calls us to pay attention to them. *Is there a way we can show extra kindness and compassion to those whom we prefer to ignore in our lives?*

