

Advent week #4

Love



December 22-25, 2019

God has created all things for good; all things for their greatest good; everything for its own good. What is the good of one is not the good of another; what makes one man happy would make another unhappy. God has determined, unless I interfere with His plan, that I should reach that which will be my greatest happiness. He looks on me individually, He calls me by my name, He knows what I can do, what I can best be, what is my greatest happiness, and He means to give it me.

- St. John Henry Newman



I always thought the fourth week of Advent was a little odd. I mean it could be as short as a day. Sometimes Christmas Eve and the fourth Sunday of Advent coincide. This year, it is only a couple days. The theme I'm focusing on for this very short week is love.

Love, however, is present in all the weeks. It is easier to have hope when you feel loved. It is easier to work for peace when you feel peace in your heart knowing you are cherished. It is easier to experience joy when you are brimming with love.

So maybe that is the truth we should carry with us this week - that we are loved by God, no matter way. We can not earn it, we can not lose it.

Repeat to yourself this week often: I am loved. I am loved. I am loved.

- Who in my life makes me feel loved?
- Do I feel like my family knows I love them? How do I demonstrate this love to them?
- What grace(s) can I ask from God to help me be more aware of God's unconditional love for me?

Consider engaging with others in conversation about how they best feel the love of God and others this week.

Lord, I desire nothing more than to feel how much you love me. Sometimes, however, I forget that Your love is unconditional. Grant me the grace to know that the love you have for me can not be earned or lost. Then help me to love others that way. Amen.



A DAILY EXAMEN ON LOVE

The examen is a daily reflection created by St. Ignatius Loyola that invites a person to examine their day - looking intentionally for where they found God and where God was more difficult to find. Consider praying this Examen daily during week #4 of the Advent Season.

I spend a moment quieting myself, inviting the holy Spirit to help me examine my day.

I look back on my day since I woke up. Who or what helped me feel loved today?

I pause in gratitude to celebrate with God these tangible moments of love.

When was it difficult for me to feel loved today?

I ask God for forgiveness for any of my reactions today that might have made others feel unloved.

I look towards the rest of my day (or tomorrow). What do I need from God in order to believe in this love God has for me? What do I need to spread this love to others?

I pause to ask God for what I need.

Lord, as I end this examen, help me to know that you created me for some special purpose. And that there is no one else like me in this world.

Amen

A DAILY REFLECTION ON SCRIPTURE

Quotes are chosen from the daily Scripture readings from the Catholic Lectionary. Daily readings can be found at uscgb.org.

Sunday: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home." (Mt 1: 20)

"Do not be afraid!" What fear(s) are keeping you from feeling God's love?

Monday: "Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors" (Lk 1: 64-65)

How has God blessed me lately? What has my response to this blessing been?

Tuesday: "In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk 1: 78-79)

Tonight I await the birth of Jesus. God's message of love to the world. Do I believe Jesus came for me?

Wednesday: "So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger... And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." (Lk 2: 16, 19).

On this Christmas Day, as I look around at the people I love or consider those I love who are far away from me, what would I like to keep in my heart - what would I like to remember and carry with me beyond this Christmas day?



"Behold the one beholding you and smiling."

— Anthony de Mello



"God is too busy loving us to have any room for disappointment."

