

“Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”

John 8:12

Dear Sisters, Associates and Friends,

Greetings! As I was thinking about writing this cover letter, I was reminded of a story about Mahatma Gandhi. One day, a mother brought her seven- or eight-year-old son to Gandhiji (adding “ji” to a person’s name shows respect) and asked him to advise her son not to eat too much salt. The boy loved to eat salt. After hearing the mother’s complaint about her son, Gandhiji looked at the mother, took some time quietly, then said, “Come a month later.” The mother was surprised. What to do?

She came a month later, and Gandhiji advised the boy not to eat extra or too much salt. The mother was confused. Why did it take a month to give this advice to her son? Once she gained the courage, she asked Gandhiji. With a soft smile on his face, he told the mother that he also likes extra salt. So, when she brought the allegation about the boy, he could not advise him not to do what he himself was doing. He also explained that he first practiced himself for a month to rid himself of the habit before giving the advice to her son.

This story contains an important lesson for all of us. Like Gandhi, Jesus uses parables to convey many lessons for us. Parables are among the oldest and most common forms of teaching. In this same way, the reflections of our sisters will serve as a guide to deepen our spiritual journey this Advent season as we welcome Jesus in a new way into our hearts. After each reflection allow yourself time to listen to your heart, your own parable, or whatever personal applications you can make from the reflections.

I am privileged to invite our Sisters Scholastica Elizabeth Ampadu, Lilian Briege Awino, Catherine Before, Martina Dery and Comfort Arthur to offer their insights, and I am humbled by their generous acceptance to share their reflections.

With gratitude,

Sister Angela Golapi Palma, CSC

General Leadership Team Member



First Sunday of Advent

December 2, 2018

*Jeremiah 33:14-16, Psalm 25,
I Thessalonians 3:12-4:2, Luke 21:25-28, 34-36*

Today's readings begin with hope and the reassurance that God's promise of safety, security and love is for me, too.

The psalm reminds me that my desires, created for the Divine, are now disordered. Recognizing my sinfulness and need of a Savior, God sets paths that are right for me, guides me and teaches me his truth, "so as to strengthen your hearts."

In Luke, Jesus offers an attention-grabbing vision of a world out of order. God is begging me not to be overwhelmed with the chaos, but to pay attention to the promise, here and now. Jesus cautions against becoming weary from the anxieties of daily life. I can fret about everything from terrorism to my "to do" list, but Jesus is offering me hope, consolation and endless love. This is very consoling. Relying on Jesus' love releases my fierce grasping to control my life. I can ask God to help me let go of things that do not matter.

Instead of interpreting the signs around us concerning the end times, we are encouraged to experience the signs within us. We believers must wait for a new beginning rather than an ending.

Reflection questions:

How can I be vigilant in living my life today?

Am I overwhelmed with the anxieties of life or am I going to cast my cares on the Lord in prayer?

Sister Scholastica Elizabeth Ampadu, CSC

Second Sunday of Advent

December 9, 2018

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

As Christians we might ask, how can we be glad? And for what? Life has a lot to offer. How open are we to embrace all that God has in store for us? We serve a God who is always on the watch for us, a God who leads his people with joy, mercy and righteousness regardless of the circumstances. Are we choosing to notice?

It is our call as Christians to come to the realization that we are on a journey, like Jesus', that is not easy. We suffer and shed tears just as a farmer sows seeds, toiling and working many hours, not knowing whether the crop will grow or not. Hope is the answer. We hope in God, who will do it for us.

It is the wish of God that all believers be bound in love, knowledge and discernment, that we may be found pure and blameless when the day of Jesus Christ nears. Therefore, to be glad we need to be prepared for the occasion. We may prepare ourselves by listening to the voice of one crying in the wilderness.

Reflection question:

What do you as a Christian wish to prepare yourself for?

Sister Lilian Briege Awino, CSC

Third Sunday of Advent

December 16, 2018

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

This Sunday traditionally calls for rejoicing because we have journeyed halfway through Advent to the promise of Christmas, to receive our Savior Jesus Christ into our hearts. Often, we lose awareness of the joy of knowing that God loves us and watches over us. The readings invite us to rejoice always even though our hearts are filled with expectations; we should have no fears, anxieties or discouragement because our Lord is near. God is Joy. As daughters of God, each of us is called to be bearers of this joy.

In the Gospel, John tells the crowd to be fair and honest in their works and to wait, for “he who is mightier than I is coming; I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals.” What a profound statement from John the Baptist! We are called to be joyful because John has paved the way, modeling how we should perform our prophetic mission, pointing others toward Jesus with passion and humility.

As we prepare for Christmas, God asks each of us to be faithful to the ordinary circumstances of our lives. What should we do? God will give us a specific reply that will lead us to act with justice and charity.

Reflection questions:

How do I manifest the prophetic mission of John the Baptist in my life? community? ministry? family?

What are the joyful moments in my life?

Sister Catherine Before, CSC

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 23, 2018

*Micah 5:1-4a, Psalm 80,
Hebrews 10:5-10, Luke 1:39-45*

In the encounter with the angel Gabriel, we hear Mary greeted in an unusual way. “Hail, full of grace!” was not a typical angelic greeting in Scripture. To be “full of grace” means to have nothing in you that is contrary to grace. This identifying statement gives a nod to her Immaculate Conception: the angel is recognizing her sanctity and sinlessness. Mary is the only one in the Bible to be called “full of grace.”

As we approach the Incarnation, we ask: Who carries the presence of God into the world now? We believe that Jesus commissioned us as people and as Church to be bearers of his good news. Like Mary, we recognize how broken we can sometimes be, how unable fully or adequately we are to contain and communicate the depth of God’s love for humanity. And yet, we consent nonetheless when we recite the words in the “Hail, Mary.” We acknowledge the Immaculate Conception and see Mary’s sanctity in her response to the angel. Mary gave a most profound “yes” to God, which we are all called to emulate by saying “yes” to God’s will for our lives.

Reflection questions:

Where in your life do you need to say “yes” to God?

Is Jesus the king of your life? Will you let him reign in your heart by obeying him?

Sister Martina Dery, CSC

Christmas Day

December 25, 2018

Isaiah 52:7-10, Psalm 98, Hebrews 1:1-6, John 1:1-18

We celebrate the Lord's entry into our world and life as a fragile little baby. God has packaged his infinite love for us in flesh and blood like any of us and given to us this tremendous gift. Our Lord came to share our human lot, becoming one of us, assuming fully our human condition. He emptied himself of divine glory in order to enrich us.

As the Evangelist John tells us today, "From His fullness we have all received grace upon grace." The fragile baby "gave us power to become children of God!" By becoming flesh, he accepted the limitations of the human flesh. He became vulnerable to our natural weaknesses—hunger, thirst, physical weariness and pain. He experienced the emotional trauma that we experience—disappointment, sorrow, hurt, loneliness and rejection. But by his

coming down to our level, he conferred on us humans a divine dignity.

Reflection question:

What am I doing toward restoring the dignity of others, especially the poor and the powerless, migrants and immigrants?

Prayer:

Lord, I realize that in our world today, human dignity often is tragically trampled underfoot by a world order that is founded on consumerism, exploitation, greed and outright injustice to the needy. Lord, grant us the courage to combat anything that denies the dignity of human beings. Help us to restore the dignity of our fellow brothers and sisters.

Sister Comfort Arthur, CSC



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