**DECEMBER Faith365**

**A CALL TO JOY**

**WELCOME:**

Call to be in the moment, to be still, to leave the cares of life to the side, if for just a moment. Take a moment and go around the table and introduce yourself. We are now in the season of Advent, which for many is a time of preparation for Christmas. Often people will bemoan the commercialism of the season and the stress. This time of year can be difficult with travel and also with family tensions that may exist throughout the year. Pause for a moment. No matter where you find yourself on the Advent journey, what gives you joy? **So, let’s go around, introduce yourself and share what give you joy.**

*While the lyrics for the song of meditation are provided, today we are using a video of the song. Be present to the images and what you think is the story of the video.*

**SONG OF MEDITATION**

Down every road we come  
Through driving snow we come  
All running on empty but still dying to make it home  
In spite of everything  
To simple truths we cling  
To follow the guiding star of love in our hearts and homes  
  
So come on you faithful friends  
Glory to the bitter end  
We're coming up to midnight  
Sing 'Hallelujah'  
  
Yeah come on all you faithful, believe  
Let's sing it out for Christmas Eve  
'Cause it's coming up to midnight  
Sing 'Hallelujah'  
Hallelujah  
Step in, shake off the snow  
Safe in the fire glow  
Raise up our voices  
Send them echoing on and on  
  
Yeah come on you faithful friends  
Glory to the bitter end  
We're coming up to midnight  
Sing 'Hallelujah'  
  
Yeah come on all you faithful, believe

Let's sing it out for Christmas Eve  
'Cause it's coming up to midnight

Sing 'Hallelujah'  
Hallelujah

**REFLECTION:** Allow some time for participants to reflect on the video. There are no right or wrong answers; invite participants to share what they felt or experienced in watching it.

After the participants have had a chance to respond you can include the following as background: Tom Chaplin, lead singer of the British group Keane, recorded this song called “Midnight Mass” as part of a solo album. The inspiration for the video was the real -ife story of a much-loved man who ran a dog club in London.

**FOCUS:** Even if advertising and shopping for Christmas begins well before Thanksgiving, the seasons of Advent and Christmas are quite short, compared to other liturgical seasons. It is packed with events, decorating and shopping, cultural and family traditions, as well as the usual tasks of work, home and school. It is also easy to forget, unless we are experiencing it, many people enter this season of the year in sorrow, worries about health or jobs. For some, this will be the last Christmas on earth.

As followers of Christ, this season calls us to find joy and peace, even in the midst of struggles and darkness. That, after all is the message of the season, too often replaced with Hallmark Card messages. Christmas speaks to the truth that God has entered the human story –with all the joys and struggles—in Jesus. So today our focus is to take a step back, and take a long look at our lives today. Where do we find joy; what brings us peace?

As we begin, a few reminders: (don’t need to read word for word…paraphrasing is fine)

**PARTICIPATE** Everyone has some wisdom; while no one is forced to share, sometimes the comment you think is not profound actually is the one that many remember.

**BE PRESENT** Make every effort to leave problems and things you need to do at the door; please turn off or silence cell phones.

**BE COMFORTABLE WITH SILENCE** Don’t be afraid if there is silence or feel the need to say something –unless you want to—just because no one is speaking.

**BE GENTLE ABOUT DIFFERENCES** We may see things differently, but we are on the path together.

**OUR AGENDA IS PEACE NOT POLITICS** Be cautious about injecting political agenda that is not central to the conversation. No bashing of individuals, but respect always for those with whom we do not agree.

And so we begin with this passage from Luke’s gospel.

**Would someone like to read this for us?**

When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us. ”So, they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

**Let us now take time to reflect and share on the following questions:**

**WHAT DID I HEAR?**

**WHAT DO I THINK IT MEANS?**

**WHAT CHALLENGE DOES IT OFFER?**

**FILM**

Advent Health is a medical system that has 45 hospitals in 9 states, as well as hospice and skilled nursing facilities. The following short video highlights a program involving individuals who had been treated for cancer.

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

What image or phrase stood out for you in the film?

What does hope mean to you? What does it look or feel

like? When have you experienced it in your life?

How does faith in Christ and your faith as a Catholic

inform your understanding of hope?

There is a back story to the conductor Richard Hickham’s

involvement: his own mother died of cancer when he was

a young man. Have you had an experience when hope

guided you from a challenge to an opportunity?

In a voiceover, one of the choir members say how standing with others in the choir is a miracle. Have you ever felt the

call to stand with others for some purpose or need? Have you experienced discipleship as standing with others?

Grayson, the young man who has faced cancer twice, said

he feels the connection between the bell he rang after treatment and the bell he rings in the choir. What hinders

our ability to see the connection between the challenging

and the joyful parts of our life? What connection do you

wish you made more frequently between the story of

Christ’s birth and the story of your life.

Deb recalls after treatment was finished, looking at the sky

and wondering, “was it ever the blue before?” Has there

been an experience that helped you see things in a new way? What would you like to notice and see in a new way

as you celebrate Christmas?

Dawn says: As long as we have breath and have a heartbeat we have hope. Does that statement reflect an experience in

your life?

Advent comes from a Latin word meaning, “to come. . .”

How could you better spend Advent so you might experience the coming of Jesus and the hope he brings?

Is there a place in your life where you wished you had more

hope? Is there anything about this video that gave you an

insight as to how hope is possible?

**PRAYER AND RESPONSE**

We will close with a time of silent prayer. For our prayer, we will use a bell of mindfulness. It will be rung three times. For each time, you are asked to focus on asking the Lord to provide for you first, the GIFT OF FAITH, second the GIFT OF HOPE, and as the last time it is rung, THE GIFT OF LOVE.

**Let us take a moment of quiet to recall the blessings in our lives.**

**Lord, grant us the GIFT OF FAITH---ring bell PAUSE**

**Lord, grant us the GIFT OF HOPE---ring bell PAUSE**

**Lord, grant us the GIFT OF LOVE---ring bell PAUSE**

Let us pray together the prayer Jesus taught us.

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Thank you for coming and blessings for your Advent journey.

**MIDNIGHT MASS**

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Through driving snow we come  
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Glory to the bitter end  
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Sing 'Hallelujah'  
  
Yeah come on all you faithful, believe

Let's sing it out for Christmas Eve  
'Cause it's coming up to midnight. Sing Hallelujah, Hallelujah

**LUKE 2: 15-20**

When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.”

So, they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child.

All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds.

And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.

Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

**WHAT DID I HEAR?**

**WHAT DO I THINK IT MEANS?**

**WHAT CHALLENGE DOES IT OFFER?**

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**THURSDAY at 10:00am**

**Terri Hansford**

**Trudy Healy Hope Pepe**

**Norene Lynch Charlotte Kent**

**Marjorie Hale**

**Gloria Epp Pam Mayewski**

**Pat Hirst Rose Kowalczyk**

**Kathy Moubarak**

**THURSDAY at 7:30pm**

**Joanne Hughes Camille Sinclair**

**Mark Izzo John Riganati**

**Vincent Ottomanelli Barb Richards**

**Jack McCullagh Sandy Tarca**

**SUNDAY at 9:45am**

**Colleen & John Lang Mary DeCicco & John Wallmark**

**Mary Ann Mertz John McCaffrey**