



Blessed
are
you Mary
bearer
Of hope
for
each of us

Gathering

We gather in silence for a few moments allowing ourselves to become aware of God's presence with us and among us and to become aware of the presence of each other.

Praying

Christ heralded by the angels, open our eyes to your presence.

Christ born of the Virgin Mary, give us strength and protection to all expectant mothers.

Christ born in a stable, give hope to the homeless.

Christ visited by the shepherds, strengthen all who work on the land.

Christ adored by the wise men, guide all leaders.

Christ exiled in Egypt, give comfort to refugees

Christ loved by Mary and Joseph, prompt us with your inclusive love to be community minded and selfless.

Pause

Let us pray together

God ever present, yet always expected,
open our hearts to the signs of you coming
and our minds to the unfolding of your promise
as we journey throughout this time of Advent. Amen.



Reflection

The four weeks of Advent are preparing us for the revelation of God's extraordinary work in and through a humble and blessed women. Mary, a young Galilean, who dared to believe in the impossible, embraced the unknown and waited for a promise to be revealed.

We can all find it difficult to wait. Open-ended waiting challenges us. We tend to wait for something very concrete, for something that we wish to possess. We often want the future to go in a specific direction and if it does not happen the way we want, we become disappointed, disillusioned, angry, frustrated and we can easily slip into despair. When life does not turn out the way we planned, we must let go and open ourselves up to new possibilities. This is a very radical stance to take towards life in a world pre-occupied with control.

Like Mary, we must remind ourselves, *"I don't know what this all means, but I trust that good will come out of it and I remain open to all possibilities"*.

We must be always fully present to the "now" moment in the certainty that something is happening where we are, so that we can be present to it.

Believing that this moment is *the* moment.

Mary was present to the moment. That is why she could hear the angel's message. She was alert, attentive to the voice that spoke to her and said, *"Do not be afraid"*.

Mary's journey has blessed ours. Her Yes dares us to embrace the unknown. The words she heard we will forever remember, and we too will not be afraid.

What is touching my heart? (Pause)

Be not Afraid

Be not afraid in any way
I am here with you now
I'll hold you close and shelter you
with tender love
For you are precious in my eyes
Be not afraid I am with you now.

Monica Brown – Be still and know God is here



Litany

You who are receiving difficult news	Do not be afraid
You who are anxious and scared	Do not be afraid
You who are fragile in mind and body	Do not be afraid
You who are struggling to hope	Do not be afraid

Pause for a moment to hold reverently those whom we have remembered

Pray together: Hail Mary, be with us in our time of need.

You who are doctors, nurses and paramedic	Do not be afraid
You the givers of care	Do not be afraid
You the elderly and you the young	Do not be afraid
You who are separated from loved ones	Do not be afraid

Pause for a moment to hold reverently those whom we have remembered

Pray together: Hail Mary, be with us in our time of need.

You who live in war and civil unrest	Do not be afraid
You who have endured natural disasters	Do not be afraid
You who live on the streets	Do not be afraid
You who are denied a homeland	Do not be afraid

Pause for a moment to hold reverently those whom we have remembered

Pray together: Hail Mary, be with us in our time of need.

Blessing

God of the promise in you we hope, Maranatha!
God of Mary bless us.

God of the promise for you we wait, Maranatha!
Jesus born of Mary bless us.

God of the promise on whom we rely, Maranatha!
God of Mary bless us with joy and peace. Amen.

