

The Time to Be Awake

Reflections for Advent & Christmas 2019



By Brian Ashmankas & Dr. Vicki Lott
Published by Pax Christi USA

Enjoy this sneak peek of the 2019 Advent reflection booklet.

First Sunday of Advent

December 1, 2019

Isaiah 2:1-5; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:37-44

“Brothers and sisters: You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake from sleep... Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” Romans 13:13

“Stay awake! For you do not know on which day your God will come.” Matthew 24:42

Today we’re encouraged to stay awake and see the light. Of course, being awake is necessary but not sufficient to see light. In other words, if the sun is shining as bright as ever, and we’re asleep with blankets covering our faces, and shades pulled down, we still won’t see the light. Even if we’re awake outside in the sun but blindfolded, we still won’t see the light.

In order to do our part to address the social injustices that surround us every day, we need to not only stay awake, but we need to also take off the blinders and open the curtains to see the light. To use a colloquialism that became popular a few years ago, we need to “Stay Woke!”

For example, we ought to know the persistently alarming statistic that young black men (ages 15-34) are nine times as likely to be killed by police as other Americans (The Counted Project, as reported in The Guardian, January 8, 2017).

How often do we close our eyes and choose to be unaware of the depth and breadth of racial injustices in our society today? How many ways are we treating our brothers and sisters contrary to the way Jesus taught us to live?

Today, let’s pause a moment to reflect on this question and then take an intentional step to become a better ambassador for justice and peace in our immediate surroundings. (V.L.)

Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

January 1, 2020

Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

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

Luke 2:19

I love Mary. One of the reasons for this is that she has preserved femininity and mysticism in a Church that has not always been friendly to either and often outright hostile. I also love how she questions and ponders. Yes, she famously says “Yes” to God’s plan of salvation, but not before she asks “How can this be?” When unexpected things happen as this plan unfurls, she frequently reflects on them in her heart. Mary is a model for all of us, reminding us that faith is not about certainty and irrefutable laws and doctrines, but a journey of questioning, pondering, and delving into the mystery as we make room in our hearts for an ever-bigger God who is more inclusive, nonviolent, just, peaceful, and loving than we could have ever imagined before.

How do you imagine God? Is the Father just a man in the sky, or can God be feminine, mysterious, and universal too? Are all your images of Jesus white and male, or can He be middle-eastern as He was or even Nigerian, Indian, Korean, Mexican, or female like the disciples He dwells in? Is the Holy Spirit just a meek dove, or can She be a raging fire that transforms our hearts and the world or a small whisper in our ears as well? Mary trusted God, but never claimed to fully understand Her—that was part of the wonderful journey of her faith.

As you begin this new year, consider how you have put God in a box and let Mary be your guide for taking God out of the box. (B.A.)

“The Time to Be Awake: Reflections for Advent & Christmas 2019” is available by pre-order only, and the deadline to order is September 22, 2019.

Order at: [http://paxchristiusa.3dcartstores.com/Advent-Reflection-Booklet p 317.html](http://paxchristiusa.3dcartstores.com/Advent-Reflection-Booklet_p_317.html)