

A Journey to the Nativity

Adventure 2021

Engage imagination and memory as we set forth on an *Adventure* through scripture and our own lives this Advent. The Sunday gospels (Advent in Year C) provide the context of our journey.

A process known as *spiritual geography* is suggested – it involves mapping your life and faith experiences as you look at, linger with and listen to the weekly scriptures. Questions are posed to guide reflection. How you choose to map is up to you. You may wish to create a word map or you may choose to physically chart the course using symbols to represent highlights, challenges and insights. This is the geography of your life and your spiritual journey. This is your *Adventure*!

Overview:

- Week 1 – *Setting the Course*
- Week 2 – *Examine the Route*
- Week 3 – *Anticipate the Destination*
- Week 4 – *In God's Presence*

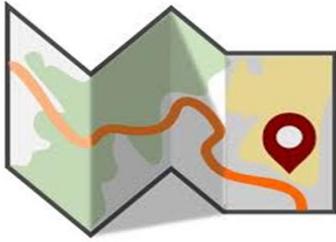
Preparing for the Journey:

- To get the creative juices flowing as we prepare for scripture's lead, sketch a road map of your life to this point including significant highlights and challenges. Use any media you wish.

Itinerary:

- With map at hand...
 - Read through the suggested scripture passage a first time. Highlight a word or phrase that stands out. Reflect on what you highlighted. You might jot down its significance or record any questions it raises.
 - The second time you read through the scripture, be aware of the feelings it evokes. Note the emotions and reflect on them in silence for several minutes.
 - Dialogue with the scripture ... what is it saying to you? Respond to it. You may wish to use some of the questions provided or your own. Trust your pen to pray your questions. Consider charting symbols or words on your "map" to go with your written travelogue. Spend time ... do not rush this process.
 - Bless what you have written/drawn.
 - Read through the scripture a final time and simply BE in its presence. After a few moments of silence – return to your day, holding the "living word" in your mind and heart.
- At the end of the day or the beginning of the next day, reflect on how the scripture, or what it raised in you, impacted your day. Give thanks!

The "Linger" and "Listen" reflections are prompts to help you to mine the richness of your life and the scriptures through each of the four weeks of Advent.



Week 1
SETTING THE COURSE

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

LINGER – Add your responses to your *Adventure* map in some fashion.

- What are the “SIGNS” calling you to embark on this *adventure*?
- Engage your creative mind: write, draw or doodle ... image “WORRIES OF THIS LIFE”
- What does BE ALERT “look” like, “sound” like, “feel” like ... image it?
- Where on your life map have you had to “be alert”?
- Explore the idea of STRENGTH – overpowering and empowering ... when and where on your map have you been strong or been quieted by someone or something stronger?

LISTEN –

Consider prayer as your posture for Advent...every breath an encounter with divine presence

- Breathe in ...
 - all the signs, all the worries, allow them to be transformed by the God within
- Breathe out compassion ... God’s compassion

PRAY inspired by words in the gospel –

- “guard” your heart from being weighed down by worries
- “be alert” praying for strength to recognize those in need of love and those offering love
- “raise your head” to witness God’s glory in everyday situations
- “escape” the “trap” of unawareness – be open to surprise
- breathe often remembering that God is as near and as essential as your every breath
- BE STILL ... let God love you ... as you are ... where you are

St. Theresa’s Prayer

May today there be peace within.

May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received

and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing you are a child of God.

Let this PRESENCE settle into your bones,

and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love.



Week 2

EXAMINE THE ROUTE

Luke 3:1-6



LINGER –

- The first lines of the Gospel define the time, set the context for John the Baptist. How might you define this time, the context of your life? Who are the significant persons? What are the significant circumstances? Use words or pictures or colour to add details to your life map. Where have prophets crossed your path? When have you been prophet?
- Listen to your life. What is it you are being called to “PROCLAIM”? What are the obstacles? Where are the opportunities?
- On your journey to date, has a detour ever been an invitation to change course?
- What might it look like to “PREPARE THE WAY”? What requires straightening, filling, smoothing? For what/whom are you preparing the way?

LISTEN –

Let prayer be your posture as you *Live Prophetically*

- BE prayer - greet the people you encounter with kindness
- LISTEN to your own heart – silently – attentively as you pray scripture
- WRITE about hopes that are stirred as you reflect on what it means to be prophet
- BREATHE – “Yah” as you inhale, “weh” as you exhale and know God in each breath; trust; say yes (yah) to “the way” (weh)
- END each day with a Prayer of Gratitude ... name that for which you are thankful, let your heart smile and rest in God’s gaze ... knowing God is grateful for YOU



Prayer

based on Phil 1:4-6, 8-11

*I pray with joy for and with all of you,
rejoicing in your faithfulness to engaging for the gospel.
I am confident that the One who began good work in you,
will continue to complete it.*

*I pray that your love of God and all creation
may increase through this journey with scripture;
that you might grow in knowledge and every kind of perception
as you continue to discern what it is to live into fullness of life.*

Amen



Week 3

ANTICIPATE THE DESTINATION

Luke 3:10-18

LINGER –

- The Gospel cites various groups all asking: “What should we do?” How might you imagine John’s response if you were to pose the question? You may want to image this in various areas of your life – work, home, organizations to which you belong, etc.
- How might you respond to the challenges of the responses you image?
- Do the responses you imagine fill you with “expectation” like we are told the people asking the question of John were? If so, what do they leave you “expecting”?
- How do you define “good news” – what would it look like? What has it been in your life? As you map “good news” points of your life, pay attention to where they are in relation to the twists and turns...

PRAY –

Let your prayer be *filled with expectation* ...

Look and listen...

- for the experience of “good news” in the silence, in the busyness. Map the highlights of your life’s *Adventure* to date ... use words, images, etc. – bask in awareness
- notice the sky ... dark or bright, cloudy, or clear – add “sky-lights” to your map

Feel...

- the beating of your heart ... when sitting still ... during a brisk walk
- your breath – it comes and goes every few seconds often un-noted – plot “rest stops” on your *Adventure* map – stop to refill “joyful expectation”

Smell...

- the crispness of the winter air
- seasonal cooking ... savoury and sweet ... what memories are stirred...map them?

Taste...

- savour the foods of the season ... eating mindfully ... with gratitude
- make a cup of tea ... savour noting that “dried” leaves transform in hot water ... hmmm

Prayer

Excite in me a wonder at the wisdom and abundance of creation

Excite in me a hunger for peace in the world, my home, myself

Excite in me patience to wait and watch for growth in and around me

Excite in me a joy that is responsive and infectious

Wake me to Presence in all, through all, and with all.

- Author unknown



Week 4

IN GOD'S PRESENCE

Luke 1:39-45



LINGER –

- Mary visits Elizabeth. Consider the circumstances and the journey. Recall the people in your life with whom you share your confusion and your joy? At what points in your journey have they appeared? Perhaps plot these times in a creative way.
- We are told that Mary went “in haste” – why might this be? When has “haste” been the pace of your journey – was it necessary? Did it help? Where did you end up? What did you learn?
- Ponder Elizabeth’s welcome ... has there been a time in your life when you experienced such a welcome? When, where, by whom? Image it on your map.
- When have you affirmed another’s essence – named a truth – invited another to celebrate what appears too much to bear? How did it feel? What was the other’s response? Might there be an opportunity on the path ahead?
- When have you felt a “leap of joy” within? What were the circumstance? Who was involved? Is this a highlight for your map?

PRAY – Be aware of the *wonder and awe* you discover in *God’s presence*

- Listen to the voices all around you – hold the chatter, smile, and pause – noticing it, respond only if you must ... observe how it feels to simply wonder, to pause in awe – to ponder with Mary
- Gift yourself time to be quiet ... sit, maybe lie down ... somehow, ground yourself in place, touch everything you can reach, appreciate the textures ... invite God to feel these earthly things through your hands ... then, next time you touch a person, imagine you are God’s touch
- Open the front door or a window – let the cool air in, breath deeply... wonder at the fact that God’s spirit is in the wind and mingles with God’s spirit in you as you breathe
- Listen to or play a favourite piece of music – savour each note

PRAYER for ADVENT

*Holy and always present God,
we watch and wait for you to startle us to wakefulness in this Advent season.*



*Come, open the inns of our minds and hearts
to the miracles of your compassion in our lives.*

*Come, make your own transforming way in the desert of our confusion
so we may walk with Jesus the way of justice, mercy and peace.*

*Come, fulfill through us, Mary’s vision of mercy stretching to all,
and our lives magnifying your grace. AMEN* (Adapted from Ted Loder)