Thursday of the Second Week of Advent
December 10, 2009

Scripture: Isaiah 41:13-20; Psalm 145:1, 9, 10-11, 12-13; Matthew 11:11-15

Reflection:
On first reading, today’s scriptures are difficult to sync up with the joy of the impending Christmas celebration. Worms, maggots and violence just don’t fit. But if we dig down to another layer of thinking, maybe we should be reflecting on life and death.

The gardeners among us will tell us of the value of composting. It’s actually a pretty violent process where organic materials are broken down and become enriched fertilizer that allows seedlings an opportunity for more robust growth. I think today’s readings are pushing us to look at what needs to go to the compost heap from our daily lives. Of what should we divest ourselves, so that new growth can take place? Maybe anger or frustration. Maybe self-preference or ingratitude. Maybe self-doubt or just plain boredom with life.

Letting go is so much harder than it seems on the surface. But God tells us over and over, “Fear not, I will help you... I will not forsake you.” Indeed, we are painted a picture of a lush and verdant valley where nothing is denied us. God’s word is enough.

Suggested Action:
Choose one “weed” in your life that keeps you from realizing the fullness of God’s life in you. While you are throwing it to the compost heap, use this prayer:

Breathe in: Fear not.
Breathe out: I will help you.

Sister Jane Snyder, IHM
Scranton, Pennsylvania
Friday of the Second Week of Advent  
December 11, 2009

**Scripture:** Isaiah 48:17-19; Psalm 1:1-6; Matthew 11:16-19

**Reflection:**
In our first reading the Prophet Isaiah speaks of the destiny of Israel and what would have been possible had the Israelites kept God’s commands and been faithful, echoing God’s promise to Abraham.

The Gospel also gives us an example of this unfaithfulness in Jesus’ day. Matthew has us look at that generation of Jews whom Jesus compares to spoiled children in the marketplace, always dissatisfied, manipulating, critical, refusing to hear and accept what is being said to them by him, focused on their own game-playing. Jesus comes as Wisdom Incarnate walking around among the children of Israel inviting them to change, to choose the life he came to offer as the one sent by the Father. His message comes to us today. Yet, like the allegory, do we refuse to believe or even recognize his divine presence among us?

During this Advent time let us ask the Spirit of Truth to help us recognize our own game-playing that keeps us from choosing the life Jesus offers us as Wisdom made Flesh.

**Suggested Action:**
In your prayer space place a small child’s game. Then in your journal write how you see yourself in the marketplace, proving by your actions that you are truly living the words and teachings of the Incarnate Wisdom of God.

Sister Gloria Frank, IHM  
Cresco, Pennsylvania
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe  
December 12, 2009

Scripture: Zechariah 2:14-17; Psalms 45:11-17; Romans 8:28-30; Luke 2:15-19

Reflection: “See, I am coming to dwell among you, says the Lord. Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day and they shall be his people and he will dwell among you.” -Zechariah 2:14-15

Though penned by the prophet Zechariah hundreds of years before Christ’s humble beginning in Bethlehem, and an even greater number of years before 1531 when Mary appeared to Juan Diego in Guadalupe, these words captured the mystery of both the momentous appearance of the God-Man on earth and the Son of God’s Mother in her miraculous visitation to an Aztec Indian on Tepeyac Hill. In both events, Mary presented Jesus to the poor and oppressed: the lowly shepherds who lived under the yoke of their Roman conquerors and the Mexican peoples who strained under the greedy dominance of their Spanish conquistadors.

As the shepherds knelt before the Infant God and his gentle Mother, they felt compelled to share the “good news” with all whom they would meet. As the pagan Aztecs heard, then spread the word about the image of Mary on the tilma, they, and thousands like them, would also come to believe in the Son of God. Mary offered them life in Jesus and they had but to choose it—and they did!

As God worked within the lives and histories of those in Palestine and Mexico, so will we find God truly present in our own age and circumstances. We can choose new life in the face of many challenges even as they did and, as with them, that choice will make all the difference!

Suggested Action: On this beautiful feast, let us reflect on Mary’s role as a sure sign of God’s closeness to and presence among all peoples in the best and worst of times. Let us give heartfelt thanks!

Sister Linda Anne Greenberg, IHM  
Scranton, Pennsylvania
Third Sunday of Advent  
December 13, 2009

Scripture: Zephaniah 3:14-18; Isaiah 12:2-6; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18

Reflection:
Let nothing hold you back: Shout for joy; be glad and exult; be not discouraged. Rejoice!

It sounds as if this Advent message is written as an antidote to the year we have just experienced with its uncertainty, failure of financial stability, underemployment, and a housing collapse so large that more than 200 tent cities exist across many hard-hit states in order to house the new homeless. We are a nation at war. Where find a job, or rent money? Where find joy? Where rejoicing?

Yet Luke urges optimism: Share with each other; make do with enough and not more; practice gratitude and experience satisfaction. The one who is mightier comes; the one who is worthy blesses; good news is on the way. Dare to believe!

We get to choose how we see the circumstances of our lives and how we respond to them. Others look for our witness, our faith, and our hope to sustain them in times of trouble and announce a life of meaning and hope in the God who saves.

God is giving us this holy spirit every time we turn our eyes toward generosity, understanding, and acceptance. God asks that we bring integrity and justice to the Christian life we profess, and that we do it in small, concrete, daily ways that manifest our desire to live in God’s own joy.

Suggested Action:
Dare to rejoice today! Find a favorite prayer spot and play a CD of your favorite Advent-Christmas music. If you dare, invite a friend to join you and sing out loud your praise and joy. Then clean out a closet and give your surplus to someone in need! Your joy will be complete.
Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent
December 9, 2009

Scripture: Isaiah 40:25-31; Psalm 103:1-10; Matthew 11:28-30

Reflection:
They who hope in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar as with eagles’ wings. -Isaiah 40:31

Come to me all you who labor and are burdened and I will grant you rest. -Matthew 11:28

Today’s words are filled with hope and possibility, drawing us to move to a new and different place without fear. The richness of living in the moment means we are constantly given a gift to choose what that moment will be. Trusting the moment to the Lord means we will be strengthened and not grow weary. When all about us appears dark, our belief in God’s watchfulness will move us to a peaceful realm that no earthly pain can penetrate. This moment-to-moment living means we cannot be static or comfortable—even when it is easier to remain unhappy or resistant.

The daily willingness to commit to the moment will assure us of an unburdened and restful life, relinquishing the past and the future. Embracing the moment opens the door to a journey where we are meant to go.

Suggested Action:
Take moments today to give over burdens. Enjoy these moments. Rest.

Sister Jean Leonard, IHM
Scranton, Pennsylvania