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Opportunities

'Fire in the Heart' – an online advent retreat – 25th November 2023.



Advent resources to help you 'burn brighter' this advent.



Praying for growth with the **Advent wreath**.



25 days of Ignatian spiritual gifts – **sign up** to receive a daily email.



Do you have places of unknown, silence and darkness in your life? The season of Advent speaks to such times and **this song** is about waiting and being present in those spaces.



Sign up to receive a daily Advent reflection from Brian Draper.



The picture above is by the artist Sieger Koder entitled 'Annunciation to Joseph.' Here, the Angel appears to Mary, and God speaks to Joseph in a dream.

What is God speaking to you through this painting? Even the most minor details in the painting may bring a message of God to you.

Reflect for a few moments on how you hear God speak to you in your life today.

Advent is a time of waiting. "Be patient, then, brothers and sisters," writes James (chapter 5). "Be patient until the Lord's coming."

Waiting is one activity that tests our patience. A traditional saying expresses it this way: "A watched pot never boils. If you wait and watch anxiously to see something happen, it will seem to take a very long time, or it will not happen at all. We will have all spent endless hours in waiting rooms - in airport terminals, hospital waiting rooms, banks, or just waiting in line for our turn -hours that seem lost and that drag on endlessly.

There are also anguish-filled moments of waiting, when faced with the loss of health, we await the results of a biopsy, an analysis, or a treatment. Or when we are waiting for a favourable solution to a conflict or for a ceasefire to happen.

In your waiting, what is the dream

But there are too moments of waiting that fill the heart with joy, such as the arrival of a loved one, the birth of a family member, or the completion of a project to which we have given our time and dedication.

Over 2,000 years ago, a young girl from Nazareth lived the most wonderful and transcendent wait ever. Mary spent those nine months absorbed in the wonders of God in her womb. "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God" (Luke 1:30). These words, spoken by the angel Gabriel, resounded in her memory, giving her strength and confidence, knowing she was unworthy of such a great blessing and wanting to collaborate with all her being.

Could it be real? Had she dreamt, had she been confused? She must have wanted to shout it out to everyone. Would they understand? Not even Joseph himself was prepared for this great news, and Mary learned to live the secret of her heart with great expectation. Mary's silence was an expression of her confident hope.

The work is God's, and he would bring to a successful conclusion what he had begun.

Advent is a remembrance of that joyful waiting, the confident hope that allowed the Word to become Flesh and give meaning to the life of every human being. It is the Christian hope that knows how to see beyond every sign of death the reality of true life and eternal life. We are called like Mary to be open to the Spirit and wait with confident hope.

Questions:

I wonder what you are waiting for?
I wonder how you wait and if you are good at waiting?
I wonder what the meaning is in your waiting?
I wonder how you wait for God?
What does it mean for you that Christ was born?
What does it mean for you to be born?

Wishing you Advent and Christmas blessings from the Barnabas Team!

