

Advent 2024 Reflections/Action Steps (Week One)

Pilgrims of Hope

This Advent, we journey as “Pilgrims of Hope,” guided by the Beatitudes and inspired by Pope Francis’ vision of hope. As we navigate a world often shadowed by uncertainty, our calendar invites us to look beyond darkness and discover signs of grace and renewal. Each day will be an opportunity to reflect on Christ’s teachings, recognize hope in unexpected places, and learn how we can become bearers of God’s compassionate light. Through the Beatitudes, we’ll explore how simple acts of mercy, peacemaking, and love can transform our hearts and our world, preparing us to welcome the ultimate hope of Christ’s coming.

Sunday, December 1, 2024

Pope Francis: *The Beatitudes are like a Christian’s identity card. So if anyone asks: “What must one do to be a good Christian,” the answer is clear. We have to do, each in our own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount. In the Beatitudes, we find a portrait of the Master, which we are called to reflect in our daily lives. (Gaudete et Exsultate 63)*

Action Step: Read the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. Mt 5:3-12). Are there any words that resonate with you? What is the Holy Spirit calling you to in this special time of waiting?

Monday, December 2, 2024

Pope Francis: *Let us listen once more to Jesus, with all the love and respect that the Master deserves. Let us allow his words to unsettle us, to challenge us, to demand a real change in the way we live. Otherwise, holiness will remain no more than an empty word. (Gaudete et Exsultate 66)*

Action Step: Read the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Luke (cf. Lk 6:20-23). Write down two or three things that you find challenging or that invite a change in your life. Keep the list in your prayer space during this Advent season.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (cf. Mt 5:3)

Tuesday, December 3, 2024

Pope Francis: *Wealth ensures nothing. Indeed, once we think we are rich, we can become so self-satisfied that we leave no room for God’s word, for the love of our brothers and sisters, or for the enjoyment of the most important things in life. ...That is why Jesus calls blessed those who are poor in spirit, those who have a poor heart, for there the Lord can enter with his perennial newness. (Gaudete et Exsultate 68)*

Action Step: Donate gently used clothes, toys, or household items to a local charity.

Wednesday, December 4, 2024

Saint Francis: *Let the brothers not make anything their own, neither house, nor place, nor anything at all. As pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them go seeking alms with confidence, and they should not be ashamed because, for our sakes, our Lord made Himself poor in this world. (The Later Rule VI, 1-3)*

Action Step: Set aside a bag that you can fill with food for your local food pantry. Each time you buy groceries this month, buy one or two items to add to your bag.

Thursday, December 5, 2024

Pope Francis: *Luke does not speak of poverty “of spirit” but simply of those who are “poor” (cf. Lk 6:20). In this way, he too invites us to live a plain and austere life. He calls us to share in the life of those most in need, the life lived by the Apostles, and ultimately to configure ourselves to Jesus who, though rich, “made himself poor” (2 Cor 8:9).*

Action Step: Spend time in prayer thinking about one or two things that you can do to simplify your life and put your focus on Jesus.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (cf. Mt 5:4)

Friday, December 6, 2024

Pope Francis: *A person who sees things as they truly are and sympathizes with pain and sorrow is capable of touching life’s depths and finding authentic happiness. He or she is consoled, not by the world but by Jesus. Such persons are unafraid to share in the sufferings of others; they do not flee from painful situations. They discover the meaning of life by coming to the aid of those who suffer, understanding their anguish and bringing relief. (Gaudete et Exsultate 76)*

Action Step: Write a card or letter to someone who is sad, lonely, or grieving.

Saturday, December 7, 2024

Fr. John Dear: *Millions of people in our world mourn because their loved ones have been killed by war, starvation, or injustice. ...Do we look the suffering of the world in the eye, and take on the task of ending injustice, or do we turn away in denial, and thus postpone our own inevitable confrontation with grief? As we mourn the death of our sisters and brothers around the world, Jesus promises, God consoles us, and we find a peace, even a joy, we did not know possible. <https://johndear.org/blessed-are-the-nonviolent/>*

Action Step: Support the actions of organizations, such as Franciscan Action Network (FAN), who advocate for peace and justice in our world.