

Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

Turning to Mary in Advent

Sarah Reinhard

I'm Sarah Reinhard, and we're going to be talking about turning to Mary in Advent. Let's start with a prayer.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen. Lord, thank you for the gift that comes to us at the end of Advent, the gift of your Son as a cute, loveable little baby. It's hard to believe. It happens every year, and yet it is hard to believe every year. Help us, as we talk about Mary in this talk, to better understand how she will bring us closer to that Son of yours, and how she will help us turn to him more confidently and more often. Mary, please guide us as we open ourselves to the Holy Spirit, and to your Son. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.

Well, turning to Mary in Advent. It actually makes a lot of sense, because Mary was pregnant during Advent. During my first pregnancy I was pregnant during Advent, and I found myself feeling for Mary in a whole new way. Because I was ready to pop all of December, and I was joyful and miserable, and I would never want to be on the back of a donkey when I was that pregnant. So in my mind, every time I've considered the end result of Advent, which is Christmas and the birth of the child, I couldn't help but think of Mary as an actual human being, which I think is sometimes hard for us. We see her so often on a pedestal, as a statue at the front of church, right. She's way up there, we're way back here, and she's way up here and we're way down here. It's very difficult to relate with Mary. So for me, being pregnant during Advent gave me an insight that was really a grace in my life, and a way to see her as a human being, and not as someone that maybe we put too much importance on. Because let's just say this: You can't put too much importance on Mary. You really can't. She's Jesus' mother. He gave her to us. She's our mother too. So it's natural to turn to her in Advent.

So, how do you do that? I mean, to me it makes sense that you would want to do that, but maybe not. Maybe it feels weird to you to turn to Mary in Advent. So I'm not going to try to convince you that you should want to, because I won't convince you. I'm not a very convincing person. But I can tell you for me, Mary's job is to

Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

bring us to Jesus. When we turn to her in Advent, what she's trying to do, what her goal will be is always to bring us to her Son, to that manger where the baby is lying waiting for us just to pick him up and, like, smell his head. I don't know. Maybe I'm a little... My youngest is a toddler, and I just... I know the days of being able to smell his little baby head are so much shorter now than they were when he was much smaller. And there's something about baby head that is magical. Not magical, that's totally the wrong word. Therapeutic maybe, if you're a mom and you're feeling a little stressed. Something therapeutic about baby head.

Now, I know, you may not have a baby, you may not even have children, you may not even like children. I sure didn't like them before I had them. I'm not sure I even like them now, but that's a different story. But Jesus was a baby, and He was a child, and so He was fully human, and His mom was too. So turning to her in Advent, maybe that will help us see Him as a human, and make Him more approachable. He's someone with a mom. He's someone who probably got dirty, he probably tripped and scraped his knees. If He's like every other little boy I've ever known, He climbed on things, He played, He got dirty and grimy, and He was probably ornery in that innocent way that all little boys are. So what must his mom have been like? I'm sure she felt some frustration, as all moms do, as all women do, just being a woman, right. Being a man. All humans experience frustration.

So how can we turn to Mary this Advent? Well, the purpose of Advent is to prepare us for this great feast, right. The church doesn't do anything halfway. So we have 4 weeks of penitential season when we strip down the church and take all of the extra decorations out. Not quite as much as we do during Lent, it's true, but it's like a mini-Lent. We're wearing purple, things are very bare, there's not a lot of decoration. We're very focused on preparing ourselves, because we are the gift that we give the Christ child. So we're preparing ourselves for Christmas, which is a feast, a season, it's a season. It's not just a day. In fact, Christmas is so special it's an octave. In church, like the definition, what that means I'm not a theologian, but I teach religious classes to children. So, I'm sorry if I sound that I'm looking down on you, because I'm not, but to me this is so exciting. Christmas is an octave in the church. What that means is an octave is 8 days equals 1 day. It doesn't make any sense to us as adults. Kids get this totally right away. They're like "Great. Means we just celebrate for 8 full days." Yes, that's right. This is so important that we celebrate it for 8 whole days. The only other feast that gets this kind of importance in the church is Easter, and isn't that interesting? Because we should be turning to Mary around Easter time too. The birth and the death of her Son, both of those. We can't have one without the other. We can't have Christmas without Easter, and we can't have Easter without Christmas.

Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

So as we prepare for this great feast of Christmas, it's only natural to turn to Mary. So the first way to turn to Mary as we're preparing in Advent is to get to know her. Now, how do you get to know somebody who is not next door? Well, there are tons of books. There are tons of websites. And those are great things. I have done a lot of reading, I am a reader, I love to read. So, if you are a reader and you love to read, I would encourage you to pick up a book about Mary. There's no shortage. If you need a recommendation, I'm happy to make one, but I don't want to limit what you might pick. You might decide to look up what *the Catechism of the Catholic Church* has to say about Mary and reflect on that. I would recommend you start with what the saints have written and said about Mary. There's not a lot about her in scripture. But what there is in scripture is very telling. So you can get to know her by reading about her, but you can also get to know her by spending time with her. I know, sounds weird. It is weird. I can't get over how weird it is to be Catholic, and how wonderful. It's very tangible. We're very hands-on people, aren't we?

So, how do you spend time with Mary? Well, that's tip number 2 actually. The second way to turn to Mary in Advent. So, get to know her, do some reading, look up about her life. And the saints have written tons about her. Second, pray the Rosary. I know, it's intimidating. So don't start. If you hear the phrase "Pray the Rosary" and you catch yourself wanting to go into the fetal position and hide, it's okay. Calm down, it's not as hard as it sounds. Start off with one decade of the Rosary. So that's an "Our Father" and 10 "Hail Mary's". And while you're praying those 10 Hail Mary's, you think about the life of Christ, and specifically the Rosary has them broken down into categories called mysteries. So, one part. One of them is the nativity of Christ. So, the birth of Christ. So you can spend those 10 Hail Mary's thinking about what that might be like. Now, as we ponder these things, and as you pray the Rosary, it's important to think, not overthink it, and not get too intimidated, because it sounds scary if you're new to it. It sounds scary to some people who aren't new to it. Because it sounds like it's a bunch of time.

If you get an app, there are many apps out there that you can do an audio Rosary. Sometimes I find those help me stay on track. But the idea behind praying a Rosary, and this is what I really appreciate about it, is that we all feel this need to be busy, and do things, and multitask. So the Rosary, the praying of the Hail Mary's over and over in that repetitious cycle helps keep that part of your mind that needs to be doing this, and needs to be, you know, doing something all the time, it gives that part of your mind something to do. "Here, you do this." And then there's another part of your mind that's free then to think "What does that look like? What does the birth of Christ look like? What must that have been like for

Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

Joseph? What must that have been like for Mary? What must that have been like for Jesus? What must it have been like for the shepherds, who came into a stable and saw the savior laying in a feed trough.” There are many ways to approach it, and there are many... it’s an endless devotion. So, praying that definitely brings you closer to Mary.

St. John Paul II called the Rosary the “School of Mary”, which is a depiction I love, and love to think about as well. So, I would encourage you, if praying a Rosary is intimidating, or you haven’t done it for a long time, that there are a couple of ways you can look at it. First of all, you can just jump in the water and just pray the whole thing. You can use an app, you can get booklets, you can get just get one of those little pamphlets that tells you how to do it, and get a Rosary and just do it. The second approach is to ease into it, and to start with a decade of a Rosary, maybe continue that for a little while, and then go to 2 decades of the Rosary, and then do 3 decades of the Rosary. And before you know it you’ll be up to 5, which is a full Rosary, and there are 3 different sets of mysteries. So there’s a full, full. I don’t even know what it’s called, a complete Rosary? There are actually 4 sets of mysteries. I’m wrong. 4 sets. So there’s The Glorious, The Luminous, The Joyful, and The Sorrowful. And I did those... I did those in the wrong order. You can follow Christ’s life from beginning to end with the mysteries, and I didn’t give them to you in the right order, but you can look this up, okay. This is homework I’m going to give you and tell you. Spend time with Mary this Advent, pray the Rosary. And if that means you learn how to pray the Rosary this Advent, that will be your win.

Okay. The third thing. So first, I’m encouraging you to get to know Mary. Second, I’m encouraging you to pray the Rosary. Third, I’m going to encourage you to visit Jesus. Why would I encourage you to do that? Now, there are a number of ways you can visit Jesus, but first let’s talk about why should you visit Jesus? Well, he’s the one who gave us His mother as our mother. By getting to know Jesus, you’ll just want to get to know Mary even more. And not that focus is Mary, it never is, but where Mary always guides us back to her Son, Jesus. So visiting Jesus is a way of turning to Mary.

Whether that is at an adoration chapel, where they have exposition, like a pretty monstrance, and the Host, the consecrated Host in the middle of it, so that you get to pray in front of the actual body of Christ, or if it’s a tabernacle in the church, because Jesus is there. Really there. The candle’s lit, Jesus is there physically, physically there in that church. You can’t beat that. There’s no one better to go visit. So, let’s recap. How can you turn to Mary this Advent? You can get to know

Pray More Advent Retreat - Transcript

her, study her life, read what the saints have to say about her. You can pray the Rosary, because meditating on Jesus' life through the Rosary, through the lens of his mother will help you turn to her. And third, visiting Jesus in the blessed sacrament.

Alright, thank you so much for your time. I look forward to hearing how you turned to Mary, and what you found helpful about this. Let's end with a prayer.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Lord, thank you so much for this time together, and thank you for the gift of your Mother, in addition to the gift of your Son. Help us to turn to her this Advent, and to make this Advent a truly blessed preparation as we face Christmas coming so quickly. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.