**Mary and the Season of Advent**

In a special way during the Advent Season, our minds and hearts turn to the Blessed Virgin Mary. As Isaiah prophesied: “The virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). During the Advent Season, we have the beautiful Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. We honor Mary as the “glory of our people,” the “greatest joy of Israel,” the “highest honor of our race” (Hymn for the Office of Readings for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception).  God preserved Mary "from all stain of original sin, so that in her, endowed with the rich fullness of your grace, you might prepare a worthy Mother for your Son and signify the beginning of the Church, his beautiful Bride without spot and wrinkle" (Preface: The Mystery of Mary and the Church).

Mary is the perfect disciple of Christ, the one who gives her complete assent to the plan of God, her perfect *fiat*: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

Mary finds all her joy in God; the Liturgy of the Church frequently attributes to Mary the words of Isaiah: “I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bride adorned with her jewels” (Isaiah 61:10).

Let us, during this Advent Season, imitate Mary’s faith and, like Mary, “ponder” and “treasure” the mysteries of Christ in our own hearts (see Luke 2:19). Let us surrender our lives to the Lord, let us seek to find the “joy of our soul” in him alone. Let us cry out in the very words of Mary spoken at the Visitation to Elizabeth, her beautiful *Magnificat,* which is prayed every evening in the Liturgy of the Hours:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children forever (Luke 1:46-55, Gospel Canticle for Evening Prayer).