

FIRST WEEK  
OF ADVENT  
**THE WAY OF  
NAZARETH**





---

# FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## SUNDAY

AND [JESUS] WENT DOWN WITH  
THEM AND CAME TO NAZARETH,  
AND WAS OBEDIENT TO THEM;  
AND HIS MOTHER KEPT ALL  
THESE THINGS IN HER HEART.  
AND JESUS INCREASED IN  
WISDOM AND IN STATURE, AND  
IN FAVOR WITH GOD AND MAN.

LUKE 2:51-52

## A HOME IN NAZARETH

Although Advent is a time of joyful anticipation, it is also a time when we can do some penance and order our hearts to prepare the way for the coming Christ child. What I call living a Gospel-centered life, St. Francis would call “the way of penance.” Advent is not penitential in the same way Lent is, but there has been a long-held tradition in the Church to offer up prayer vigils, fasts, and offerings during Advent. I suggest you begin this Advent by *responding to God* through prayer and fasting. Choose what daily habit you will begin or daily sacrifice you will make for the next four weeks, and be intentional about sticking to it.

As we begin the first week of preparation for the Christmas feast, I invite you to join me in the school of Nazareth. Throughout Advent, we’ll be studying the followers of Christ—the saints—as well as Joseph and Mary. We will see many good examples of humility, joy, and trust, but now it is time to visit the Holy Family and make ourselves at home with them in Nazareth.

Nazareth is a place where just enough rain falls for some growth. This is the norm of our own spiritual growth—there is just enough to keep on going. We would prefer to swim in consolation, and we often feel like something is wrong when we do not experience it. Yet most of our spiritual growth occurs in desolation or just on the border of it. This is Nazareth. Here Jesus can grow. It is rare that in the light one can see the stars. The sun must set so that we may see what lies beyond.

By contemplating Nazareth, we create space where our hearts can become Jesus’s home. Jesus will increase within us and grow in stature if we walk alongside him in Nazareth and live in obedience. There is a freedom in knowing that, in being subject to proper authority, we are free. Though the winds of the world batter against this age-old secret of spiritual growth, it is in the

quiet, ordinary humility of Nazareth where we are allowed to see the stars in the night.

We do not experience the dark for the sake of darkness. We do not feel desolate for the sake of desolation. These are opportunities for Christ to grow in us. For it is in this darkness and desolation that we exercise the life of faith, grow in knowing who God is and who we are, and grow detached from things that are ultimately unnecessary.

**R E F L E C T**

- 1. What is it that hinders your heart from growing in union with God?
- 2. What can you learn from the school of Nazareth about the ebbs and flows of the spiritual life?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## PRAY

HELP ME, LORD, TO HOLD FAST. THE TRAGEDIES SEEM TO MOUNT, AND THE UNCERTAINTIES ARE RISING TO MY NECK. THERE IS A LONELINESS IN FOLLOWING YOU. GRANT ME THE GRACE TO ACCEPT THIS. GRANT ME THE GRACE TO BE OBEDIENT TO YOUR WORD. GRANT ME THE GRACE TO SEE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS AND HEAR SINGING IN THE SILENCE.

---

# FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

## MONDAY

NATHAN'A-EL SAID TO HIM, "CAN  
ANYTHING GOOD COME OUT  
OF NAZARETH?" PHILIP SAID TO  
HIM, "COME AND SEE."

JOHN 1:46



## THE LITTLE PLACE

Can anything good come from Nazareth? This was the question of Nathaniel when he was about to meet Jesus. Let us consider the call of this little town. Nazareth was not wise according to human standards; Athens would have been chosen for this. Nor was it a powerful center of military might; Rome would have done well here. Nor was it of noble birth; Jerusalem would have made more sense. So then, why Nazareth? Why, of all places on God's creation, was this town chosen for the place where Jesus would be raised?

The *Catechism* reminds us that “during the greater part of his life, Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labor” (531). In Nazareth, Jesus was able to experience the ordinary drudgery of a hidden life, the same kind of life most of us experience.

You are Nazareth. You, oh little soul longing to grow closer to God, are like this place. Perhaps you do not have the highest learning by human standards. Perhaps you are not the strongest or the most noble. It is precisely by acknowledging that you are little that the Lord can grow within you as he did in a little place.

Can anything good come out of a little place like Nazareth? A little place like your own neighborhood? A little place like your own family with its quirks, with its brokenness and disappointments? A little place like your school or workplace, where you seem to toil without end toward a goal that is hard to see? Can anything good come out of little places like these?

If we join the disciples and follow Jesus the Nazarene, we will see.



## REFLECT

1. In what ways do you experience feeling little?
2. How can you offer the little, everyday occurrences in union with Mary and Joseph in Nazareth and remain with them in the presence of Jesus?

[illegible]

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## PRAY

LORD, I WILL FOLLOW EVEN IF I FEEL LIKE A FAILURE. I WILL FOLLOW EVEN IF IT SEEMS THAT I'M NOT DOING IT RIGHT. YOUR PRESENCE, LORD, IS MY FREEDOM. THOUGH ALL AROUND ME COVER ME WITH PRAISE, IT DOES NOT SATISFY MY HEART. THOUGH MANY MAY SHARE FLATTERING WORDS, IT IS NOT THIS THAT CAN SUSTAIN ME, BUT ONLY SAY A WORD AND YOUR SERVANT SHALL BE HEALED. YES, LORD, SAY THE WORD. LET YOUR WILL BE DONE IN ME. GRANT ME THE GRACE TO LOVE YOUR WILL.