

**Pocket Guide 1 for the
Immersed in Christ Faith
Formation Series**
**An Intensive, Five-Step Journey in
Making Real the Promises of Our
Baptism**



Praying as a Christian

Advent and Christmas

**Using the Advent and Christmas Season to Grow Into
the
Fullness of Your Baptismal Consecration as a Christian**

A Three-Legged Stool

This booklet is meant to support you in your spiritual life. But there are three legs that support this booklet! If one is missing, the whole idea falls over. The three legs are:

An intentional spirituality: This plan only works if you have decided to take some control over your spiritual life: to be proactive rather than just reactive. Unless you have a plan already, the choice is either to just keep going along as you are now or to choose deliberate, conscious, planned forward motion. Which do you want?

Based on Baptism: The suggestions in this booklet are meant to implement a specific five-step plan of spiritual growth, a “fitness program” for living the Christian life in its fullness. The Five Steps are simply the commitments intrinsic to Baptism itself. Because all five are essential elements of the life of grace, these helps to living them are complementary to every Christian spirituality or way of growth. They will help you if you decide you want to simplify your spiritual life, and at the same time intensify it, by concentrating on living out the five basic mysteries and commitments of Baptism.

Following the liturgy: These suggestions follow and use the *liturgical seasons* (Advent-Christmas, Lent, Easter-Pentecost, Ordinary Time) to invite successive reflection on each of the five mysteries and promises of Baptism. Reciprocally, comparison with the baptismal mysteries enhances our understanding of and participation in the liturgical seasons. Everything in Christian life comes into sharper focus when seen through the lens of Baptism.

Focus for Advent - Christmas

GOAL: To use the Advent and Christmas seasons to appreciate more the Good News of Jesus as Savior.

DOCTRINE FOCUS	LITURGY FOCUS	SACRAMENT FOCUS
<i>Evangelization: The Good News of “the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Read: Vatican II: <i>The Church in the Modern World</i>; Paul VI: <i>Evangelization in the Modern World</i>; David Knight: <i>Why Jesus?</i></i>	<i>The Introductory Rites at Mass. Enter into the prayer of praise. consciously with enthusiasm .</i>	<i>Baptism: as giving us divine life and a new identity as Christ. Read: David Knight: <i>Living the Sacraments</i>, chapters 1-2 (on Baptism).</i>

Attitude Adjustment

Using the liturgical seasons is mostly a matter of *awareness*. During each season, cultivate awareness of one particular mystery, promise and commitment of Baptism. This will help each become an abiding element of your consciousness, embodied in lived response.

During Advent and Christmas try to grow in appreciation of the Good News of Jesus as *Savior*. He became human so that we might have “life to the full” — here as well as hereafter. He continues to be “*Emmanuel—God-with-us*” by working *with us, in us* and *through us*, his body on earth, to “save” and lift up everything we are involved in. During this season look at who he is and how he wants to enhance your life here and now. Enter into the *New Evangelization*.

How can you do this? Here are some things that will help:

Keep the season in the senses:

Create an environment that “assails your senses” all day long to keep you conscious of what Advent and Christmas mean.. Be creative..

- *Use Colors* to create a “tone” around you. During Advent favor dark blue or violet in dress and decoration. For Christmas: white, red, green.
- *Make an Advent wreath*. Light one more of its four candles each week at supper. Put smaller wreaths, or just a tiny sprig of greenery with a blue or purple ribbon, around your house, office, workshop, car etc. as reminders.
- Save the tree for *Christmas Eve*. Or if you put it up sooner, use only blue or purple lights while still in Advent.
- *Sing or play* “mood making” music during the Advent and Christmas seasons.

Prayer focus:

Prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Give time whenever you can to quiet, grateful dwelling on the mystery of Christ’s birth. Appreciate the Good News. When your mind is unoccupied, gravitate to thoughts about Jesus as Savior. .

At Mass during Advent and Christmas make a special effort to enter enthusiastically into the *Introductory Rites*. Listen to the words. Notice the themes of *evangelization*. Let the words excite and lead you in the *prayer of praise*. Praise increases appreciation. During Advent “miss” the *Gloria*. During Christmas exult in what it proclaims. *Sing* to get into the spirit of praise. “Where you don’t find enthusiasm, put enthusiasm and you will find it.” Participate in Mass like a truly *evangelized Christian*, rejoicing in Jesus the *Savior*.

A Rhythm of Prayer Throughout the Day

Transform your day with the “two minute” prayers below:

Waking prayer:

As soon as you awake, recall your *Baptism* and say:

“Jesus, I give you my body. Live this day with me; live this day in me; live this day through me. Let me think with your thoughts and speak with your words and act as your body on earth.”

If you are young, energetic, and alone in your room, say this on your knees with your arms extended in the form of a cross. This puts passion into your prayer.

Morning prayer:

Once out of bed, recite Zachary’s Canticle (*Luke 1:68-79*):

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; he has come to his people and set them free. He has raised up for us a mighty Savior, born of the house of his servant David. / Through his holy prophets he promised of old that he would save us from our enemies, from the hands of all who hate us. / He promised to show mercy to our ancestors and to remember his holy covenant. / This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our enemies, free to worship him without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all our days of our life. / You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give his people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. / In the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. *Add:* Glory to the Father....

Prayer throughout the day:

Before every action say the WIT prayer: **“Lord, do this with me, do this in me, do this through me!”** (Use reminders until you form the habit: e.g. your password, a handkerchief or ribbon over your door knob, phone, keys).

Noon prayer:

Around noon take time, even if just while walking down the hall, to “check in with God” and review your day.

Answer one or more of these questions:

- **What do I have to be grateful for today?** (Say thanks to God).
- **Did I remember to say the WIT prayer? Did it make a difference?**
- **What is the best decision I made today? Did I involve Jesus in it?**

Close with the WIT prayer (expanded): *“Jesus, I give you my body. Live this day with me; live this day in me; live this day through me. Let me think with your thoughts and speak with your words and act as your body on earth.”*

Evening prayer

Before or after supper, sit alone or with your family in front of the Advent wreath or Christmas tree. Light the candle(s) for the week. Sing an Advent hymn or Christmas carol. Take a moment of silence to remember the best thing you have experienced through your interaction with Jesus today. If others are with you, let all share their experiences. Then recite reflectively the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55):

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 ancestors, to Abraham and to his children forever. *Add:* “Glory to the....”

Night prayer:

Keep the Bible on your pillow. Promise God you will read *one line* every night. Because this is a commitment you can keep, it will encourage you to persevere. Most nights you will probably read three or four lines. Then put the Bible on the floor, on top of your shoes. When you get up in the morning, read another line. This minimal, “token” use of Scripture will gradually transform your life.

Before you go to sleep, recite the Cantic of Simeon (*Luke 2:29-32*):

Now, Master you may let your servant go in peace; according to your word. / For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples. / A light for revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel. *Add:* “Glory to the....”

Immersed in Christ
A Baptismal Way of Life

Jesus came that we might “have life and have it to the full.” To live the life of grace in a full and conscious way, we need to embrace and keep in focus the five commitments of our Baptism:

As Christians (focus: Advent-Christmas) we let Jesus as *Savior* act *with us, in us and through us* to “save” and lift up everything we do. This means *interacting with him* all day, every day.

As Disciples (focus: Lent) we live lives *characterized by reflection* on the message of Jesus. For this we must *commit time* to learning, reading, reflection and prayer.

As Prophets (focus: Easter-Pentecost) we promise to make *constant changes* in our lifestyle, asking about everything we say, do, use and choose: “How does this *bear witness* to the truth and values of Jesus?”

As Priests (focus: Ordinary Weeks 11-22) we *minister* to every person we deal with. We mediate divine life to others by *giving physical expression* to our faith, hope and love, using our bodies to communicate divine truth, love, healing and life.

As Kings (focus: Ordinary Weeks 23-34) or *Stewards of Christ’s Kingship*, we *take responsibility* for establishing God’s reign over every area and activity of human life on earth: over home, school, work, Church and government, This commits us to *work for change* wherever we are.