

A Season of Yes

An Advent Devotional for Women



“Let it be done unto me according to your Word.”



In 2020, when I was in my discernment year with the Consecrated Women of Regnum Christi, I was assigned an apostolate working in high school campus ministry at Pinecrest Academy. The students would pause at noon to pray the midday Angelus over the intercom before lunch.

It amazed me that these words, first spoken by a simple woman from Nazareth, could bring a busy institution aflutter with energetic adolescents and bustling faculty and staff to a halt.

Artistic renderings depict a solemn virgin, of 14 or 15 years, with her eyes upon this messenger of God as he proposes to her the impossible:

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of the ancestor of David. He will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”
-Luke 1:30-33

As I contemplate these words now, I imagine what must have been happening at that moment in history when Mary said to the Archangel, Gabriel, “Let it be done unto me according to your word.”

What else was happening in Nazareth when Gabriel delivered this news to Mary? The Temple was likely buzzing with activity. Maybe they were eating breakfast. Perhaps St. Joseph was working in his carpenter shop. Someone somewhere may have been asleep. There may have been shepherds herding their sheep. Three wise men from the east may have been consulting their charts. And yet, the world was changing. History was changing. With these simple words, you and I were changed, too.

This Advent, let’s explore the impact of Mary’s yes and view our little yesses through the lens of the Angelus Prayer and four qualities that make women unique: Generosity, Sensitivity, Availability, and Receptivity.

A Brief History of the Angelus

As early as the 12th century, the faithful would recite the Hail Mary three times in a row a day, a practice encouraged by St. Anthony of Padua. St. Bonaventure encouraged the recitation of three Hail Marys after Night Prayer along with meditation on the Mystery of Christ's Incarnation. Traditionally, recitation of these three Hail Marys would be preceded by the ringing of a bell so that the brothers and all the faithful nearby would know that it was time to pray the Hail Mary.

Pope Sixtus IV in 1475, was the first to promote the noontime recitation of the Angelus as we know it today. The Angelus continues to be a popular devotion that helps the faithful recenter their day. It can also be recited at 3 hour intervals during the day to help the faithful remember the Incarnation.

The Angelus Prayer

The Angel of the Lord declared to Mary:
And she conceived of the Holy Spirit.

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.

Behold the handmaid of the Lord:
Let it be done unto me according to Thy word.

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.

And the Word was made Flesh
And dwelt among us.

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.

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray:

Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts; that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ, Thy Son, was made known by the message of an angel, may by His Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of His Resurrection, through the same Christ Our Lord.
Amen.

Generosity

a willingness to give help or support, especially more than is usual or expected:



A Reflection on Generosity

He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums.

A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents.

Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them, “Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the other contributors to the treasury. For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth, but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood.”

Mark 12-41-44

We don't know the widow's name in the Gospel of Mark, and we don't have many details about her life before Jesus observes her in the Temple. She is an example of generosity because she gives out of her poverty. Some scholars point out that she had two coins and could have placed only one in the treasury. But she gives all she has to Jesus, and she is the one who Jesus points out to his disciples.

Advent is a time when we strive to be generous, whether with the gifts we give or the time we spend with family and friends. We can be tempted to find the perfect gift and pack our calendars with parties, cookie exchanges, and service projects. These can all be Christocentric activities, but is there something in your life that Jesus sees and points out to the saints and angels in heaven because you are giving out of your poverty? Do that thing twice.

Saintly Example - St. Teresa of Calcutta



A blue and white sari has become synonymous with St. Teresa of Calcutta who left her homeland of Albania and followed God's call to the streets of Calcutta, India to serve the poorest of the poor. The religious order she founded, the Missionaries of Charity, continues to operate all over the world.

While Mother Teresa and her religious sisters live with very few possessions, she is a model of generosity because she gave of herself to those most in need, even when she didn't feel God's Presence. Mother Teresa is known for her worn and deformed feet because she always chose the worst pair of donated shoes for herself, leaving the better ones for the children and the poor. Like the widow in the Gospel of Mark, she, too, gave out of her poverty. This habit of self-sacrifice over was a sign of her love for God and those who He called her to serve.

Challenge of the Week

Take a moment this week to reflect further on the widow and her example of generosity.

Try to picture the image of the widow in the Temple as Jesus watches her.

Consider the following questions:

- When you picture the widow, what does she look like? Is she young? Old? How is she dressed? Does she have children?
- What might she have been thinking when she dropped her coins into the treasury?
- Why do you think Jesus chose to point out the poor widow who gave little rather than the wealthy who gave large sums?
- What might Jesus want to tell you with this Scripture passage?

Pause today at 6AM or 9AM to pray the Angelus Prayer

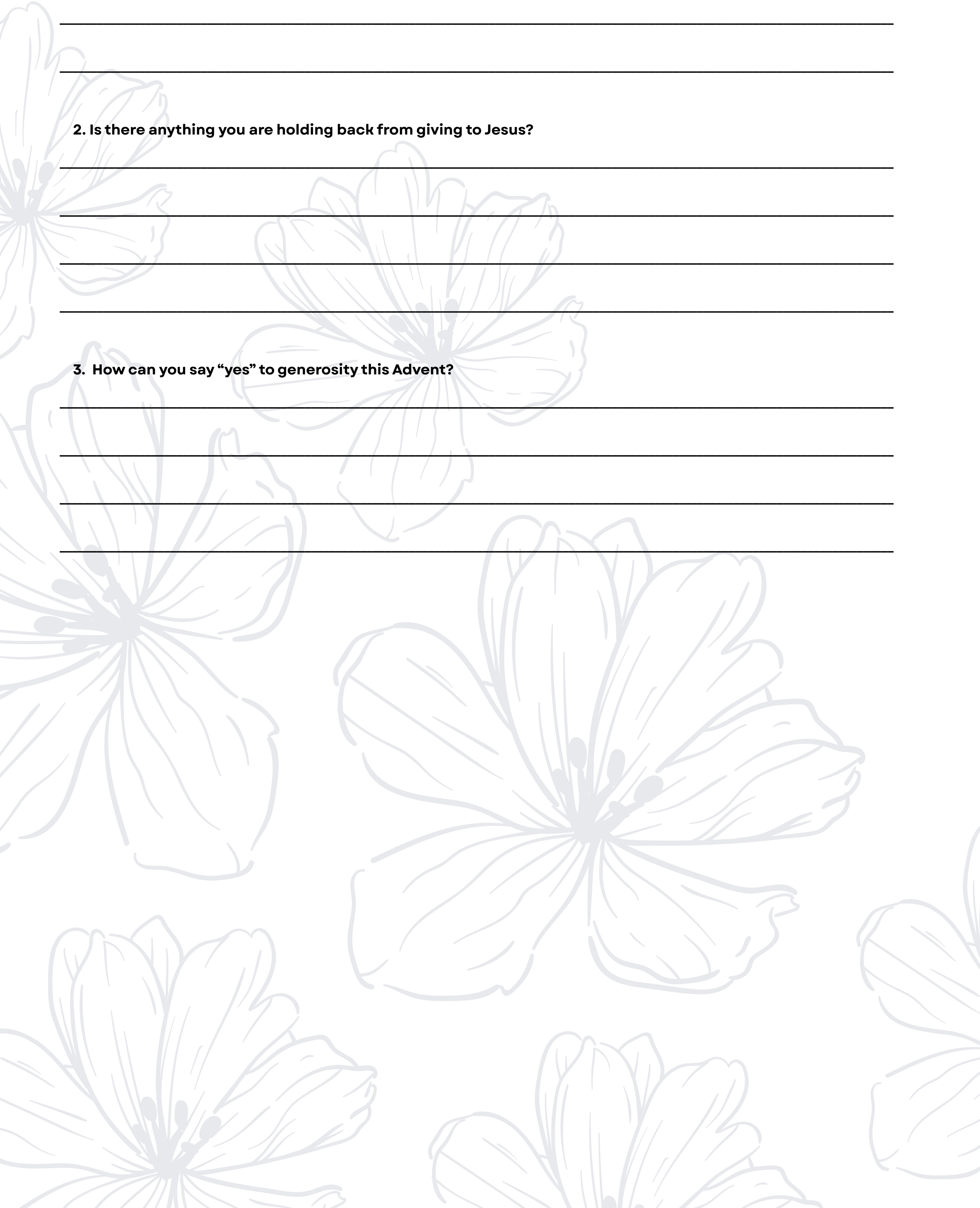
What evidence of Mary's generosity do you see in the Angelus Prayer?

Journaling Questions

1. Looking back on the Scripture reading, who do you relate to most in the passage? Why?

2. Is there anything you are holding back from giving to Jesus?

3. How can you say “yes” to generosity this Advent?



Sensitivity

the ability to understand other people's feelings



A Reflection on Sensitivity

“You’re too sensitive!”

Throughout my childhood, this is a statement that I heard more times than I can count. Fights with siblings, reprimands from parents, and even gentle corrections from teachers would bring tears to my eyes. I was often told that I needed to “toughen up” and not be a doormat or else everyone would take advantage of me.

Tired of the same old response to my sensitivity I decided that it would be better to hide my emotions. If I cried, I did it behind closed doors. If I was angry, I let it bubble up inside of me. As you can imagine, this also didn’t go well for anyone. Through prayer, counseling, relationship building, and visits with my own spiritual director, I began to see my emotions as friends rather than enemies. Embracing my sensitivity has been an ongoing journey. Rather than being a burden that made me resentful, my sensitivity has become a gift that helps me to love and serve others.

Saintly Example – St. Therese of Lisieux



St. Therese of Lisieux, known as the Little Flower for her little way of love and leaving roses for those who entrust their intentions to her, was a very sensitive child. As the youngest of 5 girls, St Therese was “the baby of the family” who cried frequently and struggled with controlling her emotions. In her autobiography *The Story of a Soul*, St. Therese describes what has come to be known as her “Christmas conversion.”

At the age of 13-year-old St. Therese eagerly awaited receiving gifts that by French custom would be left in her shoes after midnight Mass. She overheard her father remarking in annoyance “Well, fortunately, this will be the last year!” when he saw that her shoes were out waiting for presents by the fireplace. Her eyes filled with tears, but she then received a pivotal and life-changing grace to overcome her hurt and turn it into service. She explains it, “I felt charity enter into my soul, and the need to forget myself and to please others; since then, I’ve been happy!”

Through her sensitivity, St. Therese of Lisieux noted her father’s emotions, and with God’s grace recognized an opportunity to become more charitable. Throughout her autobiography, St. Therese recounts many instances where she was sensitive to her sisters in the convent who experienced her little way of love.

Challenge of the Week

Listen to Msgr. James Shea’s talk [The Weight of Our Brokenness](#) and consider the following questions.

Have you ever felt like you are battling your emotions?

What influence does the enemy have on your emotions?

How can the truth of the Incarnation (John 1:1-14) help you to manage rather than reject your emotions?

Pause today at noon to pray the Angelus Prayer

What evidence of Mary’s sensitivity do you see in the Angelus Prayer?

Journaling Questions

1. How would you describe our culture’s perception of sensitivity? Is it positive? Negative? Neutral?

2. St. Therese recounts her own sensitivity in an encounter with one of her religious sisters in The Story of a Soul. What stands out to you about this story?

“For a long time I had to kneel during meditation near a Sister who could not stop fidgeting; if it was not with her rosary, it was with goodness knows what else. Maybe no one else noticed it; I have a very sensitive ear. But you have no idea how much it annoyed me. I wanted to turn around and glare at the culprit to make her be quiet, but deep in my heart I felt that the best thing to do was to put up with it patiently, for the love of God first of all, and also not to hurt her feelings. So I kept quiet, bathed in perspiration often enough, while my prayer was nothing more than the prayer of suffering! In the end, I tried to find some way of bearing it peacefully and joyfully, at least in my inmost heart; then I even tried to like this wretched little noise. It was impossible not to hear it, so I turned my whole attention to listening really closely to it, as if it were a magnificent concert, and spent the rest of the time offering it to Jesus. It was certainly not the prayer of quiet!”

3. How can you say “yes” to sensitivity this Advent?

Availability

the state of being able to be reached and/or present, often denoted by quantity



A Reflection on Availability

Afterward he journeyed from one town and village to another, preaching and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Accompanying him were the Twelve and some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, Susanna, and many others who provided for them out of their resources.

Luke 8:1-3

We hear a lot in Scripture about the 12 apostles who followed Jesus. As Catholics, we also hear about His Mother, Mary, who surely accompanied her Son in His public ministry, but there's not as much focus on the women who followed Jesus. Three women who are mentioned in the Gospel are Mary Magdalene, who experienced healing, Joanna, who was married, and Susanna, about whom no details are included. Scripture says that these women "accompanied" Jesus and his Apostles. The word "accompany" has Latin roots which can be translated to "to break bread together." In our daily terminology, we can use the phrase "breaking bread" to refer to the Holy Eucharist or to share a meal with others, both of which require our attention and availability to others. Just as the women in the Gospel of Luke were available to Jesus by following Him and by providing their resources, we are also called to share this gift of availability.

Saintly Example - Servant of God, Michelle Duppong



Servant of God Michelle Duppong, grew up the fourth of six children on her family's farm in North Dakota. Her chores included gardening, mowing, and helping take care of the sheep. Raised Catholic, Michelle frequently attended Catholic conferences with her family and later became a FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) Missionary at four college campuses. She then became the Director of Faith Formation for the Diocese of Bismark. The people she served said that she radiated joy and that she spoke to a person as if he/she was the only one in the room.

Michelle was diagnosed with cancer in December 2014. Upon receiving her diagnosis, Michelle looked at the doctor and said, "Doctor, how are you today?" As she battled cancer, those who were close to her reported that she was always more concerned with others' problems than her own. Michelle passed away on Christmas day in 2015, and in the year between her diagnosis and death, her parents say she reached over 230,000 lives through her Caring Bridge page.

After her death, Michelle's sister, Lisa, had a dream with Michelle saying, "Leese, it's beautiful."

Since then, the family has heard from many people who believe they have had prayers answered through Michelle's intercession.

Information taken from: <https://michelleduppongcause.org/>

Challenge of the Week

Invite family or friends to watch the documentary, [Radiating Joy](#). Share your favorite snacks, turn off your mobile devices, and be completely present while watching the documentary.

Consider the following questions together or on your own.

1. Michelle says, "God has made each and every person that has lived and will ever live to be a saint. And, at each and every moment, He gives you and me every grace necessary for us to be saints. He's giving it to you right now, at this very moment. And all we need to do is say yes and receive this grace so that His life can dwell in us." What are some places in your life where you have been more open to God's grace? Are there any places where you need to accept His grace into your life?

2. Being available to others may mean being detached from seeing or knowing what the results of your sacrifices will be. How can you go about living your faith in this way?

3. Like Christ on the cross, Michelle didn't forget about those around her as she suffered. What difficult or painful experiences can you offer up to God for the salvation of souls? What would your reaction be if you were in Michelle's place?

Questions adapted from FOCUS.org

Pause today at 3PM or 6PM to pray the Angelus Prayer

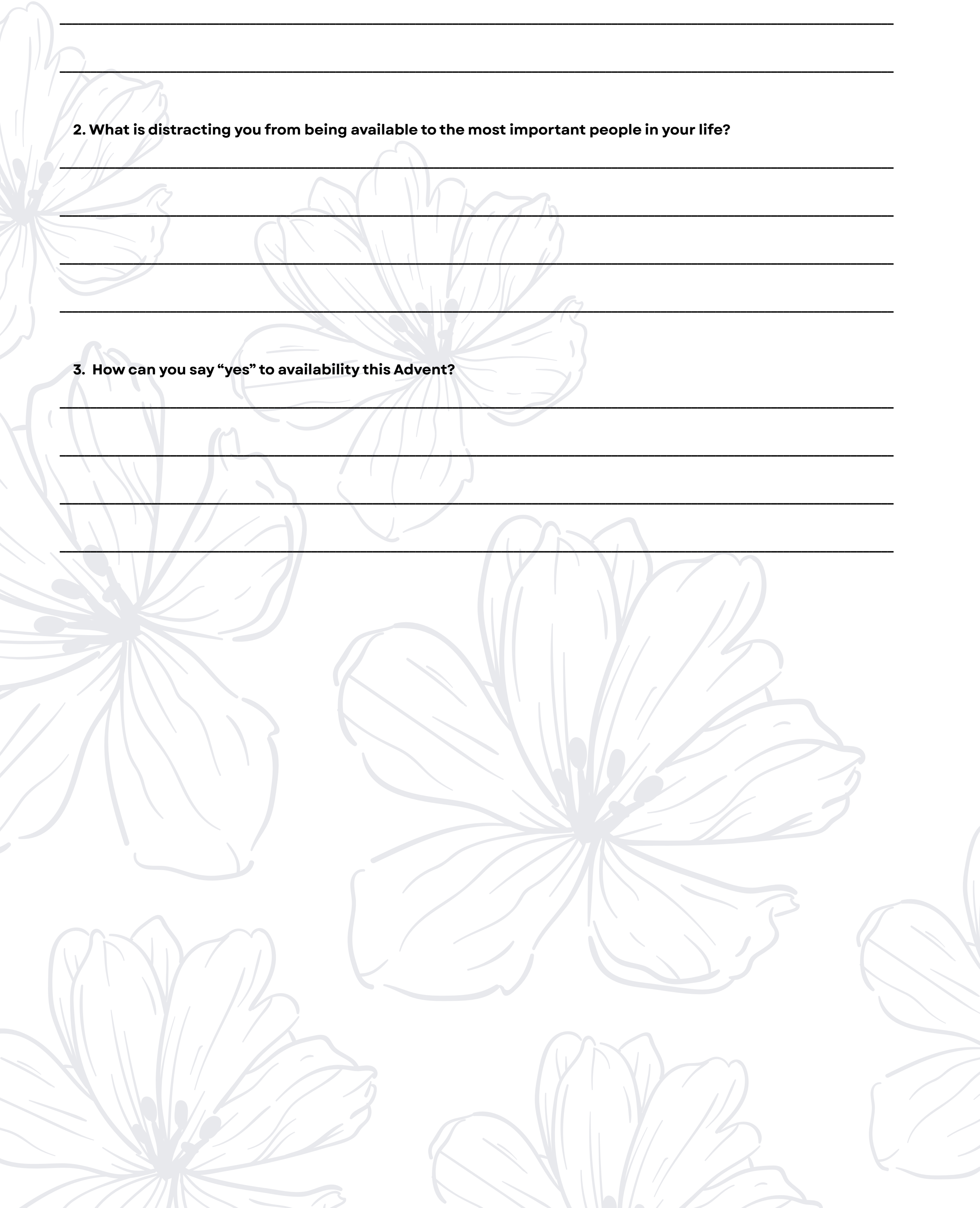
What evidence of Mary's availability do you see in the Angelus Prayer?

Journaling Questions

1. Which of the women disciples in Luke 8 do you relate to the most?

2. What is distracting you from being available to the most important people in your life?

3. How can you say “yes” to availability this Advent?



Receptivity

willingness to accept what is extended to you as a gift



A Reflection on Receptivity

I don't deserve this.

No, I just couldn't

You didn't have to do that.

Have you ever caught yourself saying these words when someone gives you a gift or does something kind for you? Welcome to the club!

There may be many reasons for choosing not to receive what someone else is offering us. Perhaps we really don't believe ourselves to be deserving or we don't want to inconvenience the giver. But did you know that receptivity is written into the body of every woman? Our physical bodies indicate that we are meant to receive and the masculine body is meant to give. In fact, our receptivity is an indication of unique role as mothers who are the first to receive the gift of new life at conception. Mothers then share this life with the rest of the world by placing the child in the arms of the child's father, of the child's siblings, of family and friends. A woman receives openly and gives willingly.

Saintly Example



Mother Mary is the greatest example of receptivity. She received Jesus at the Annunciation, St John at the foot of the Cross, the Apostles at Pentecost, the entire Church and all of humanity as her children, and God's perfect Plan for her in everything.

Mother Mary and her role in salvation history are often disputed between Catholics and Protestants, but she is still the most excellent example of womanhood. As the Mother of God, she is also our Mother who humbly takes us to her Son, Jesus.

Our job is not to compare ourselves to her but to learn from her the way any daughter learns from her mother. Just as our own mothers experienced the joys and sorrows of raising children, Mary can guide us through our joyful and sorrowful mysteries. As she has received us as her children, let's also receive her as our mother.

Challenge of the Week

Select one or more of the Scripture passages below and reflect on Mother Mary's receptivity.

Luke 1:26-38 - The Annunciation

Luke 1:39-44 - The Visitation

Luke 2:1-20 - The Nativity

Luke 2:22-38 - The Presentation in the Temple

Luke 2:41-52 - The Finding in the Temple

John 2:1-12 - The Wedding at Cana

John 19:25 - 30 - The Crucifixion

Acts 1:13-16; 2:1-13 - Pentecost

Pause today at 9PM to pray the Angelus Prayer

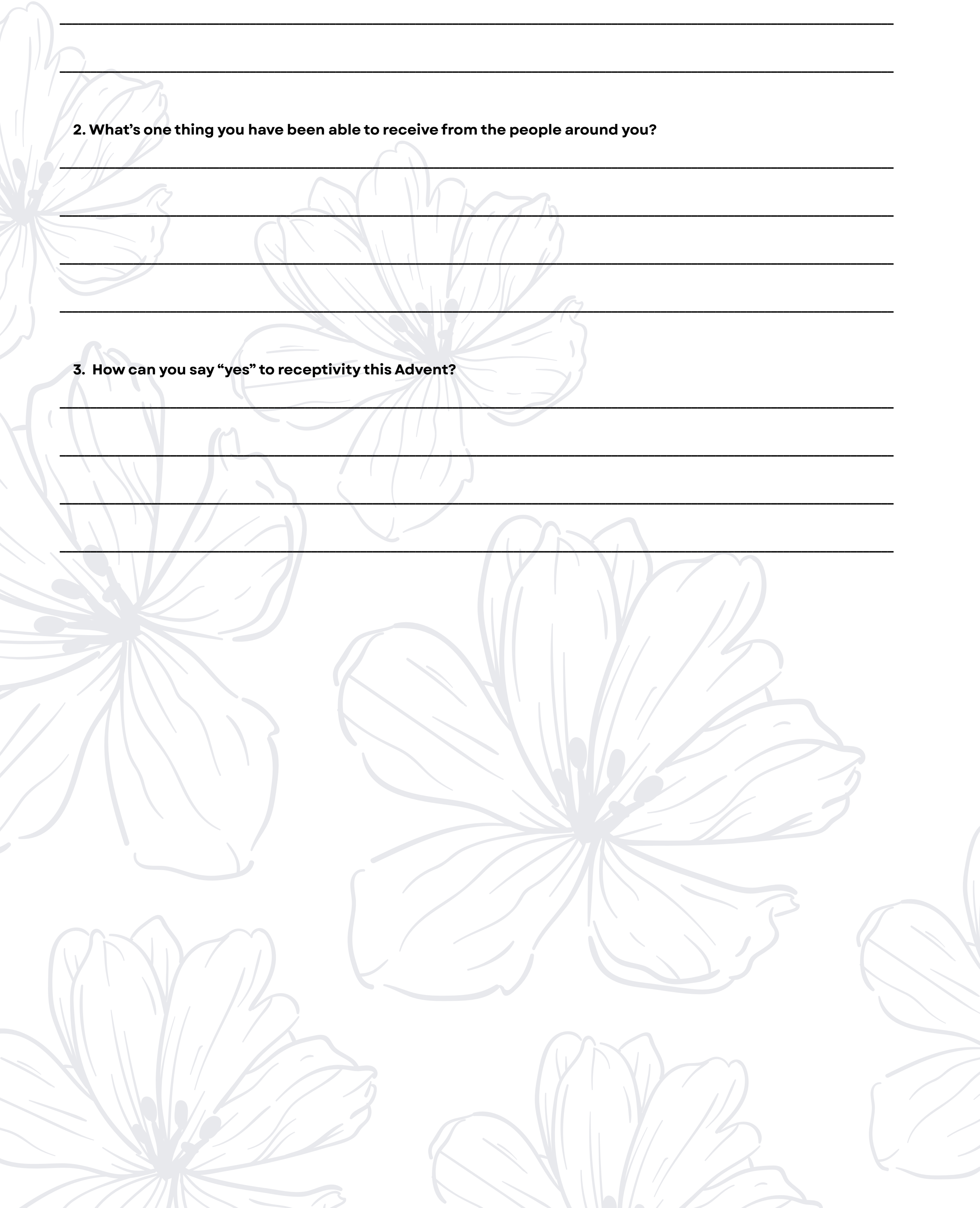
What evidence of Mary's receptivity do you see in the Angelus Prayer?

Journaling Questions

1. What do you think challenges women’s receptivity the most?

2. What’s one thing you have been able to receive from the people around you?

3. How can you say “yes” to receptivity this Advent?



Additional (Optional) Prayer Exercises

Set up a prayer space at home:

Just as having a specific place at home for eating or cooking, having a specific place for prayer can be life-changing! You can set up a small area for prayer by placing a crucifix, Bible, Rosary, prayer cards and other holy items in a corner of your home. If you have a small table, you can place an article such as a tablecloth or candle on it to designate the liturgical season.

Ask Jesus how He wants to be loved:

We might get wrapped up in doing many things during Advent to prepare for Christmas to show our love for the coming Jesus. But have you considered asking Jesus how He wants you to love him? He is the Lover who knows your heart. He might want you to give Him an hour in Eucharistic Adoration. He might want you to serve Him through the poor. He might even want you to prepare and Advent party with family and friends. You can gain some insight on this if you ask Him!

Think of Advent as a mini-Lent

Advent is a mini-Lent because it is also a penitential season in our liturgical calendar. This is most visible in the purple vestments and altar linens and the removal of the Gloria during Mass. Both Advent and Lent are sacred journeys remembering important events in the life of Jesus. Just as we prepare for an important trip or vacation, we prepare for the Nativity and Passion and Resurrection of Jesus by adopting practices in prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Advent also reminds us that while Christ Incarnate came into the world at Christmas, He will also come again to judge the living and the dead and reign forever as King of the Universe. When He comes, we want to be prepared to face His judgment.

Pray the Rosary

There are many ways to pray the Rosary. During Advent, you can specifically meditate on the joyful mysteries surrounding the birth of Jesus or you can pray for a person or special intention on each decade or Hail Mary bead. (You can even record who or what you pray for and see how God has worked on that intention through the intercession of Mother Mary!)

Prayer at your Nativity scene

St. Francis of Assisi popularized the use of a Nativity scene during Advent and Christmas. If you have a Nativity scene at home, place a copy of this prayer near it so it can remind you of Jesus' humble birth.

“O Jesus, You are the Light that illumines for us the face of God.
How humble you are, O God!
While we desire to be great, You, O God, become small.
While we strive to be first, You, O God, take the lowest place.
While we want to dominate, You O God, come to serve.
While we seek honors and privileges, You, O God, seek to wash our feet.

What a difference between you and us, O Lord!
O Jesus, meek and humble, take away the pride of our hearts;
deflate our arrogance; give us your humility
that coming down from our pedestal,
we will meet you and our brothers and sisters.
It will then be Christmas and we shall rejoice! Amen."

-Nativity Prayer from Our Lady of Sorrows - St. Anthony in Hamilton, NJ

Pray the O Antiphons

The Antiphons are brief prayers prayed sequentially beginning on December 17 until December 23. They help us to reflect on different titles of Jesus that are specifically referenced in the Book of Isaiah. You can pray with the titles and Scripture references below or follow a more specific prayer on [this website](#):

O Sapientia (O Wisdom) See Isaiah 11:2–3; 28:29.
O Adonai (O Lord) See Isaiah 11:4–5; 33:22.
O Radix Jesse (O Root of Jesse) See Isaiah 1:1; 11:10.
O Clavis David (O Key of David) See Isaiah 9:6; 22:22.
O Oriens (O Rising Sun) See Isaiah 9:1.
O Rex Gentium (O King of the Nations) See Isaiah 9:5; 2:4.
O Emmanuel (God with us) See Isaiah 7:14.

Celebrate the entire Octave of Christmas

Christmas begins on December 25, but it goes on for 8 days! This means we get to celebrate until the Solemnity of the Epiphany on January 6th. You can choose to celebrate the octave as big (do something special each day of the octave) or as small (continue wishing people Merry Christmas) as you'd like. Just remember that we get to celebrate for 8 days!

Thank You

Thank you for joining me in prayer and reflection this Advent season.

Thank you for taking a chance on my first attempt at writing a seasonal devotional.

Thank you for your desire to grow in holiness and relationship with Jesus.

My prayers are with you now and always. Please pray for me as well.

For more reflections and resources, please check out my website, www.flowerinthedesert.com

If this devotional has been helpful, please consider making a donation to my ministry on Venmo: @mamontenegro20

