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when You spoke to Magdalen about the *one thing necessary*? “How well this great Saint understood! Illumined by the light of faith, she recognized her God beneath the veil of His humanity, and in silence and in the union of her powers, she listened to His word; she could chant, ‘My soul is always in my hands’ and also that little word *Nescivi!* I knew not. Yes, she knew nothing but You, my God! No matter what noise or disturbance went on around her, *Nescivi!* She could have accusations made against her, *Nescivi!*” (E.T. II, 2). Even when she was obliged to leave Your adorable feet to perform some task, her heart remained fixed on You. And after she had finally found You risen again, she had to leave You, at Your command, to run to announce Your resurrection to the Apostles, but her soul remained established in an attitude of profound calm, recollected and concentrated upon You.

With Your help, may I too so live!

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BEHOLD THE SAVIOR COMES

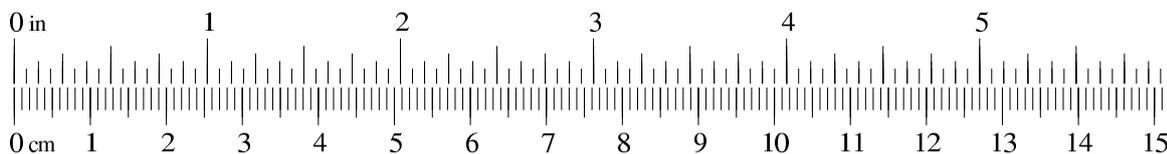
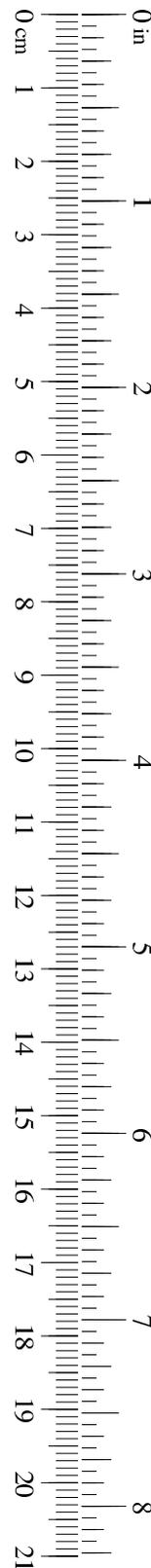
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRESENCE OF GOD – I place myself at the feet of Jesus and ask Him to prepare my heart for His imminent coming.

MEDITATION

1. “Call together the nations, tell it among the people and say: Behold our Savior cometh!” (RB). The message becomes more and more urgent: in a few days, the Word of God made flesh will show Himself to the world. We must hasten our preparations and make our hearts worthy of Him,

The incarnation of the Word is the greatest proof of God’s infinite love for men; today’s liturgy very appropriately recalls to our mind the wonderful words: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee” (Jer 31,3). Yes, God has loved man from all eternity, and in order to draw



him to Himself, He did not hesitate to send “His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (*Rom* 8,3). With hearts full of love, we must run to meet Love who is about to appear “incarnate” in the Infant Jesus. May it be a love that is faithful in great things as well as in small, an ingenious love that is always seeking opportunities to repay God’s infinite love. “Love is repaid by love!” This is the motto which has made saints, and spurred a multitude of souls to greater generosity.

With this love prepare for Christmas, be in this love faithful, for as St. Paul says in the Epistle (*1 Cor* 4,1-5), “What we desire is that everyone may be found faithful.”

2. “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. Every valley shall be filled; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.” The voice of John the Baptist, the great Advent preacher, is heard again in today’s Gospel (*Lk* 3,1-16), inviting us to prepare “the way of the Lord.”

This invitation is especially a call to humility; John was not only the herald of this virtue, but its model too. We know, by the testimony of Jesus Himself, that he was “more than a prophet” and that “there hath not risen among them, that are born of women, a greater than John the Baptist” (*Mt* 11,9.11). John claimed to be nothing more than a mere voice, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord,” and declared that he baptized only with water, while another would come who would baptize in the Holy Spirit, another of whom John protested himself unworthy to loose “the latchet of His shoe” (*Jn* 1,23.27). And further, speaking of the Savior’s coming, John adds, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (*ibid.* 3,30). Today’s Office gathers up all this magnificent testimony of St. John the Baptist, as if to give us a concrete idea of the profound sentiments of humility with which, in our heart, we ought to make smooth “the way of the Lord.” If the valleys, that is, our deficiencies, are to be filled up by love, then the mountains and hills, that is, the vain pretenses of pride, must be made low by humility.

A heart filled with self-love and pride cannot be filled with God, and too small will be the place reserved in it for the sweet Babe of Bethlehem.

COLLOQUY

O almighty, omnipotent, eternal God, what greater proof of love could You give Your poor creatures than the gift of Your Word, Your only-begotten Son? For our sake, You clothed with human flesh, like the flesh of sin, Him who is eternal splendor, the perfect image of Your substance!

“God of goodness, who art above all goodness, You alone art sovereign good! You gave us the Word, Your only Son, to live with us, to assume our evil, corrupt nature. Why did You make us such a gift? Out of love, because You loved us even before we existed.

“O eternal Greatness, O fathomless Bounty, You lowered Yourself to ennoble mankind! Wherever I turn, I can see nothing but the abyss and fire of Your charity” (St. Catherine of Siena).

“Whenever I think of Christ, I should remember ... how great is Your love, O Father, which in Jesus has given us a pledge of such great tenderness; for love begets love and although I am only a beginner and very wicked, I shall strive ever to bear this in mind and awaken my own love. Once You, O Father, do me the favor of implanting this love in my heart, everything will become easy for me and I shall get things done in a very short time and with very little labor. O my God, give me this love, since You know how much I need it, for the sake of the love You bore us and through Your glorious Son who revealed it to us, at such great cost to Himself” (T.J. *Life*, 22).

Love will fill the valleys in my heart, and humility will level its mountains and hills. Destroy my pride, arrogance, and vanity, O Lord, by the powerful fire of Your love. By the might of Your all-powerful arm, tear out of my heart every fiber which is infected with the poison of self-love, and which, therefore, does not belong to You. O Lord, I, too, wish to decrease, decrease that You may increase in me, so that on Christmas day You may find my heart entirely empty and free and therefore ready for the total invasion of Your love.

## THE CALL TO THE APOSTOLATE

PRESENCE OF GOD – I place myself in the presence of Jesus, the Head of the Mystical Body, the Church, begging Him to show me how to collaborate with Him in the work of saving souls.

### MEDITATION

I. “Prepare ye the way of the Lord” (*Lk 3,4*). This cry of St. John the Baptist is implicitly a call to the apostolate, to that apostolate practiced by St. John himself, when he tried to prepare the hearts of his brethren for the coming and for the work of the Messiah. This invitation is addressed to us, too, not only by St. John, but also by Jesus, who wants to make of every Christian a collaborator in His work of Redemption.

We know that Jesus alone has merited the vast, precious treasury of grace necessary to redeem and sanctify the whole human race. Yet He has not disdained our humble cooperation; rather, He has positively willed “to have need of us.” Pope Pius XII says in his Encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*: “It is manifestly clear that the faithful need the help of the divine Redeemer.... Yet this, too, must be held ... Christ requires the help of His members.... This is not because He is indigent and weak, but rather because He has so willed it for the greater honor of His spotless Spouse.”

The Spouse of Christ is the Church; the Church is the “company” of His faithful, that is, we ourselves. Certainly, Jesus had absolutely no need of us. As He alone merited grace for us, so He alone can apply it directly to each soul. “It was quite possible for Him personally to impart these graces immediately to men; but He wished to do so through a visible Church that would be formed by the union of men, and thus through that Church every man would perform a work of collaboration with Him in dispensing the graces of Redemption” (*ibid.*). Jesus then, in His infinite goodness, has willed to associate us with Him, to give us the honor and joy of being His collaborators in the greatest work to be accomplished in the world: the salvation of souls.