

## **Advent Bible Study**

*The Light of Grace*

Dec. 23 Session IV

Love: Mary

### **Opening Prayer**

Almighty God,

in your grace and steadfast love,

you promised to send the Messiah, the Savior.

The promise was repeated through the centuries

as the prophets reminded your people of your covenant promise.

Finally, when the time was right,

you kept your promise.

It was time for the Savior to be born.

The angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah.

She was to name him Jesus.

Your covenant promise was fulfilled in the gift of your Son,

our Lord Jesus Christ,

who gave himself as the sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Lead us by your Spirit to walk in love,

reflecting our Lord's care

and compassion in the world.

Hear our prayer in Jesus' name.

Amen.

### **What is Love?**

For Thomas Aquinas, to love (agape) means to consistently will and choose the good of the other. To love neighbor as self means seeing their sharing in the good as fundamental of your own sharing in the good. To love God, whose good we cannot will, is to love what God loves, which, of course, is the neighbor's good. The Second Vatican Council, under the influence of Karol Wojtyła, further enriched this definition of love by linking the willing of another's good to an additional and necessary gift that must accompany that willing.: the gift of self. *Agape (Greek) traditionally denotes a selfless, unconditional love.*

It cannot be said too often that agape love is not desire, and not delight. Desire and feelings generally have a different nature than love, and if we don't understand this clearly we will remain helpless to enter into love and to receive it into ourselves. Desire and feelings fall into the domain of impulse, not that of choice. They aim at their satisfaction, not at what is better and possibly best. Choice considers alternatives and

weighs what is best. If it is surrendered to God, united with his will, it will be able to do what is best. That of course is the nature of love. It seeks what is best. That is why it enables a person to refrain from hating their enemy, which they might very well want to do, and to seek what is good for them along with all others involved. This certainly does not mean you just give in and do what the enemy (or friend) wants or let them have their way. That might be the worst thing you could do to them.

Isaiah 43:1-3

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 1:46-55,