

UNIVERSAL APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES (UAPs) & ADVENT PRAYER



UNIVERSAL APOSTOLIC PREFERENCES (UAPs)



Universal Apostolic Preferences are the fruit of a process of discernment lasting almost two years. All Jesuits were invited to take part and in addition our mission partners. It concluded with a confirmation from Pope Francis in a special meeting with Fr General Arturo Sosa. The Preferences give a horizon, a point of reference to the whole Society of Jesus. They capture our imaginations and awaken our desires. They unite us in our mission. The new Preferences are four areas vital for our world today.

1

To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment;

2

To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice;

3

To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future;

4


To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.

The Society of Jesus will pay special attention to these four areas in the next ten years, 2019~2029. We invite you to learn more and take action with us!

We want to make a Gospel difference.

PREAMBLE

THE UAPs & ADVENT PRAYER



Although the Universal Apostolic Preferences (UAPs) may inspire us to confirm current ministries or lead to new ones, they are not primarily about things to do. They represent four ways in which we are searching to discover the signs of the Spirit at work. In a sense, we may see the UAPs as four roads on which we are invited to walk with others. As we do so, we will discover new apostolic companions, many of whom may often be ahead of us. It is also a source of consolation for us that the UAPs express some of the key directions the Church has also identified as part of her mission. At the deepest level, they speak of our desire to be drawn more closely to God and to discern the ways in which God is working in our world.

The UAPs are part of our own process of renewal. They will become important ways into our processes of discernment. If they are to touch us in these ways, it would be good if we could first let them become part of our prayer. The liturgical season of Advent gives us a natural opportunity for this. With Lent, it marks out a time when the Church desires to prepare herself to enter more deeply into the mystery of Christ's incarnation and his work of redemption. In Advent we can let our prayer illuminate the UAPs, asking that we may be open to whatever graces of renewal, insight and understanding God wishes to offer us.

What follows are suggestions for individual and community prayer. In so far as they help, then they will serve our purpose. But they may also stimulate further ideas and reflection at a personal, community or group level.

INTRODUCTION

ADVENT & THE UAPs



With Advent we mark the beginning of the Church's liturgical year. Advent is a season of waiting with hopeful expectation. Although we naturally look towards Christmas and the birth of Christ, the liturgy also invites us to see with the eyes of faith to the end of time, to Christ's expected Parousia.

Advent locates us at a number of different levels.

- ✚ It draws us into the mystery of God who acts in history but is not bound by it. We are invited to contemplate God whose promises are embedded within our time and history, shaping it and slowly bringing it to fulfilment in unexpected ways and through the least expected people. In Advent we encounter God who never ceases to surprise us.
- ✚ The liturgy of Advent is a school in which we learn to listen and to wait with expectation and with hope.
- ✚ Through that *contemplative listening* to scripture our imagination is enlarged: we can see how God does not abandon us or our world but continues with inexhaustible patience to call us to the new life of the kingdom.
- ✚ In the season of Advent, we grow. Our hearts are enlarged to embrace the suffering of the world in God's love. In such a love, we do not get trapped in despair and powerlessness because we know we have a Saviour, 'Emmanuel'.
- ✚ Advent is the time of opening ourselves to the risk of hope, and the power that it gives us to see new possibilities, to be renewed, to let the life that the Holy Spirit who has been breathed into us become our life. The Lord has come, now in our time, and for all time.

In the Contemplation on the Incarnation, Ignatius invites us to look upon the whole world in all its times, places, people and circumstances (Sp. Exx. § 101 ff). We are asked to see this world as God sees, knows and loves it, with all its beauty and its painful truth, "all the nations in great blindness going down to death and to hell." Here, we come to the depth of God's loving mercy. God comes to us in our misery and need, in truth and in love, 'the second person should become man to save the human race.'



The contemplation invites us to attend also to the response of one, small, unseen young woman in Nazareth. She is our teacher and guide in this Advent time. She is the one who can teach us how to listen deeply, contemplatively, and she is the one who can show us how to be open, to say our 'fiat', to the impossible thing that God does.

As we enter the season of Advent and live in its liturgy, we might ask her, the mother of the Lord, to pray with us and for us that we, too, might be filled with the grace of these 'Advent dispositions',

"I will ask for the grace that I desire. Here it will be to ask of our Lord the grace not to be deaf to his call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish his holy will." (Sp. Exx. §92)

The UAPs are ways of contemplating our life as Jesuits in the world of 'today', and also in the world of 'God's today' – the Kairos of the Kingdom among us. Our focus can be universal, or we can make it more local. The UAPs can give us ways into contemplating the mystery which Advent itself unfolds for us. They invite us to a 'contemplative listening'. In each of the areas they direct us to we can hear and follow the Spirit who is calling to us. Often, too, we will come to recognise those who are already on the way before us; those who can lead us and teach us.

Among the graces of Advent is openness and humility. These give us the freedom to learn how we can best serve, 'our Lord who has become man, for me.' (Sp. Exx. §104)

Whether we take them for our personal prayer, shape them as themes for community prayer and liturgy, or develop them to share with our collaborators, we can use the time of Advent to attend to the invitation contained in each UAP. These are the graces or dispositions that we can ask for:

to show,

to walk,

to accompany,

to collaborate.

They indicate the habits of our heart as well as the means by which we wish to serve the Church and the world in all its needs.



PRAYING WITH THE PREFERENCES DURING ADVENT

THE UAPs

1

To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment;

2

To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice;

3

To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future;

4

To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.



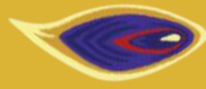
Each UAP will open up its own world for us to contemplate. If, for example, it is 1st UAP, that might direct us to the needs in the Society's life: what needs to be healed, what needs to be renewed? Or it could lead us into thanksgiving for all those who have been graced by the Spiritual Exercises. We might take the time to listen prayerfully to the deeper longings and needs of the world that does not know Christ or, for whatever reason, refuses to believe in Him. How might we be moved to respond to **this** world 'to show the way to God?'

Here are some suggestions for praying with the UAPs during Advent.

✚ Take one UAP as the theme for each week in Advent.

Or

✚ Let the Advent readings for the week suggest a UAP. For each Sunday one of the UAPs is suggested, but you may find that the readings take you to another UAP and that, too, is fine.



The other UAPs could be approached in the same way.

✚ Following the pattern of the Spiritual Exercises, we might begin each prayer asking what grace we are seeking. It might be that the UAP itself suggest this. We could conclude each prayer with a colloquy.

✚ How ever we choose to pray and reflect on the UAPs through Advent, the main thing will be to let Advent illuminate the preferences and desire to hear more clearly and deeply the call of Christ.

✚ You will see that the suggested Advent reflection has been given the general structure of prayer in the Spiritual Exercises. If, however, you have a structure or develop one which is more suitable for you, the community or the group then it would be good to use this. The most important thing is to find those helps which are most conducive to prayer in this way.

✚ In the same spirit, the points of reflection are not intended to be exhaustive but may serve as 'points of entry.' They are of value only in so far as they are helpful.

The following notes are for each Advent Sunday. If you have developed other material please share it with your province, Conference or with the General Curia (fede@sjcuria.org).

REFLECTIONS

1ST SUNDAY ADVENT 2019



Scripture

Is.2:1-5; Ps.121; Rom.113:11-14; Matt.24:37-44.

Composition of Place

I see myself standing humbly before the Lord who loves me.

Grace I/we seek

I ask for the Grace to experience myself as a pilgrim.

Suggestion: UAP 3

To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future.

✚ The readings announce the coming of the Lord. They ask us to 'be awake', to engage all our senses, and especially interior senses, that we can see what the Lord is doing and how he is bringing about the fulfilment of his promises. (Matt.24:37-44)

✚ They invite us to ponder the very nature of God who is active within history as its Lord. Who is this God for whom we are waiting? Who is this God who is faithful to us and his creation?

In rich and vibrant imagery, the prophets capture the beauty and the glory in which the God who is coming 'recreates' all that God has made and especially we who are made in his image.

✚ The future is not just a time; it is the event of God who is coming towards us. History has its 'telos' its final purpose in which all created relations come to their fulfilment in Christ. We are entrusted with this saving knowledge and asked in our own time to live this future time, 'in the light.' It means that the untruths, the false narratives, the distortions and exploitations, will all be exposed in the light of God's justice (Rom.13:11-14), all those innocent ones who have suffered, whose lives have been used and then discarded as of no account, Now, their voices heard; they come not from a past but from a future for in God's eyes their lives have an infinite value and their names are names that are known. God keeps their memory and in Christ they are raised as his friends. (UAPs 2-4)





✚ The future that God gives, and the prophet sees, is not only an end to all wars, but the abolition of fear.

✚ To us is the invitation, 'come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.' To leave behind all that hinders us and become pilgrims walking 'on his paths..... in the light of the Lord.'

In Advent God gives us time to renew body and soul; to recover perspectives and to establish once again the true and lasting values that shape and govern our lives. (Matt.24:37-44; Closing prayer of the Mass for this Sunday; UAP 1).

There is a sense renewal and fulfilment in the readings, especially the psalm. Although the prayer is for Israel it could also be for the Church, 'for the sake of the house of the Lord our God....'

The offer is one of peace: to have the grace of peace, the 'shalom' of the Lord, coming to rest within us, to be ministers of that peace to others. Ps.121

Reflection

What does the Lord ask me to see? What is the knowledge and the desire he wishes to place in my heart?

Colloquy

I speak to the Lord about my fears and doubts; also, about my desires and longing as we pray in this first week of Advent.

REFLECTIONS

2ND SUNDAY ADVENT 2019



Scripture

Is.11:1-10; Ps.71; Rom.15:4-9; Matt.3:1-12.

Composition of Place

I see myself standing humbly before the Lord who loves me.

Grace I/we seek

I ask for the Grace of a more open heart to the world around me and especially to those who are suffering and in need.

Suggestion: UAP 2

To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice.

✚ Here, Isaiah, gives us a portrait of the Messiah, of Christ. As we contemplate it, we can see that it is also a portrait of the new life of grace in us, in our world. We could take all of the qualities, all gifts of the Holy Spirit, (for the spirit of the Lord rests upon him), and pray that these gifts, this life of the Holy Spirit, might come to indwell in us. They all have a relational character, so we might ask how they direct to renew our own commitments and our relationships. Especially important here is the grace of reconciliation for the things we have done or said or omitted to do. The ways in which we have not honoured the life of the Spirit, or in some way refused to be a bearer of the life of the Kingdom for others and for our world.

✚ Isaiah also gives us a portrait of a new type of society in which there is justice, equity, corruption and evil are not tolerated; a society where there is a desire for peace and the flourishing that comes as its gift. This is not a utopian dream, but a Christian reality grasped in hope; we pray for it each time we pray the Lord's prayer, 'your kingdom come.' (UAP 2;3)

✚ Almost in reverse of the prophet's vision, we can turn the fertile planes into deserts and the teeming seas into dead and stagnant pools of human waste. Now, God asks us to see an ecological healing; a vision of a renewed creation which is truly God's gift to us, 'our common home'. (UAP 4)





✚ Paul gives Isaiah's portrait a face: the face and the person of Christ. He asks us to let our lives 'give glory to God and the Father of a Lord Jesus Christ.' What better way can we find to do this in those acts of compassion and love, those healing and restoring acts, when we leave ourselves behind and live for the good of the other, for the good of the plant we are allowed to call home.

✚ The Gospel also gives us a portrait: the prophet in whom all the prophets meet, John the Baptist. One who recognised the Lord even from the womb and even there bore witness to him. John reminds us that God is free even to act beyond God's covenant for there is no boundary to God's love, justice and mercy. (UAP 3) Knowing Christ always comes with a mission, to make him known, (*To show the way to God*); to offer his gift to all women and men, especially the poor and outcast (UAP 2), indeed the whole of creation itself (UAP 4).

With John, with all who come to announce the *kairos* of the Lord, it is always a moment of decision and judgement. We cannot be neutral in the presence of Christ. He asks us to choose, and so we need the grace, 'to judge wisely the things of earth and hold firm to things of heaven'.

✚ The psalm speaks about the responsibility of the King or the government to protect the poor and the vulnerable from exploitative economic forces and the violence which they do.

Advent invites us to choose and to set out upon a new way, the way of the Lord, the way into the world that waits and longs for him even when it does not yet know him.

✚ Here, it may be useful to reflect upon the verbs of the UAPs: *To show the way to God; To walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice; To accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future; To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.*

Reflection

How can I show in my life and in my relationships this new life of the Spirit?

Or,

Have I found the grace I sought? How can I respond?

Colloquy

That I may become more a 'portrait' in the image of Christ, in my thoughts, loves, words, and deeds.

REFLECTIONS

3RD SUNDAY ADVENT 2019



Scripture

Is.35:1-6,10; Ps.145; James 5:7-10; Matt.11:2-11.

Composition of Place

I see myself standing humbly before the Lord who loves me.

Grace I/we seek

I ask for the Grace of appreciation of the beauty ...and the fragility ...of our common home.

Suggestion: UAP 4

To collaborate in the care of our Common Home.

✚ The Word of the Lord does not only create as in Genesis 1, it is *recreative*. It is the Word of Life and whenever it enters our world, our lives, it brings life. This is the recreative power that we see at work in Isaiah's vision of the creation redeemed and restored.

It is also about the human creation, the society we make for ourselves. Is it too a place of human flourishing or do we make of it a desert in which the human spirit dies slowly from lack of hope and compassion?

Isaiah sees that Israel's restoration and glory is not only for Israel but for all humanity. In powerful imagery which resonates with so many situations today, the prophet speaks of the joy of being finally ransomed, set free from bondage and slavery, and also of returning home from exile. Each one of us who has been touched by Christ and His Spirit will recognise the experience.

Yet, he is also expressing Israel's mission, to ransom and to bring the exile home. This is the great work of reconciliation and salvation and it is a mission that belongs to every Christian whether it is expressed in our own circle of family and friends or through our commitments to bring about justice and protest the many forms of oppression. It our service of the Kingdom.



✚ In these Advent days the Spirit is poured out upon us and our world. We can ask that the Spirit dwell more deeply in our hearts; give us courage and overcome our faint heart and renew our strength when we grow weary of the struggle. (Isaiah.35:1-6, 10).

✚ The psalm witnesses to the decisive difference God makes to the world. It is the God who comes to our help, especially those who stand in need of an advocate: the vulnerable, the needy, those who are outsiders..... The healing of society is also the healing of creation. Luke echoes the psalm ch.7.22.

Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we discover that we are not alone, he walks with us. “It is the Lord who keeps faith forever....’ Ps.145.

✚ As we renew our faith in the incarnation and are held in wonder at what God has done for us, we need, too, the grace of patience.

✚ Advent does not disguise the darkness that can touch us. Now, in the Gospel we find ourselves before John in prison.

In all our prisons we can come to doubt; to wonder if we have made a mistake or somehow got it wrong. In prison the whole of purpose of John’s life is disclosed. He shows us that hoping, trusting is also the work of a prophet. Patience is faith waiting on God.

John also teaches us how to be bold. To ask for the consolation, the assurance that we need, and to let God choose the moment to respond; that *kairos* which is the best time for God’s purpose.



John receives a magnificent response, for it is in prison, knowing how precarious his life is in the hands of Herod, that he hears the gospel: all the prophecies all fulfilled. His hope was not in vain, but the answer is not in the great earth-shattering events or even the great world transforming events that might have been expected. It is in the person of Jesus.

The answer to our deepest and most profound questions, those on which we have staked our life, come with a person; it comes in a person: Jesus. Can we believe in him?

✚ Jesus is the answer that John sought, and so his prison was transformed from a place of doubt and loss to a place of liberation, hope and faith. In our walking and accompanying, in our listening and in the self-gift of our presence, above all with our faith, all our prisons can be places of transformation for even there, we can glimpse the advent of the gospel; there, too, we find Christ (UAPs 2-4).

✚ Maybe this is our Gaudete Sunday?

Reflection

To stay with one or two of the above points and open my mind and heart to
where the Spirit wishes to take me.

Or,

Have I found the grace I sought? How can I respond?

Colloquy

The grace to be a bearer of truth and of hope in the name of Christ.

Supplementary reflection

Patience is the way we live in time and give time to let things disclose themselves. Patience is the gift of time for things to happen and for things to change. Often, we think of patience as an acquired wisdom or a way of inaction. It is really the reverse: patience is *receptive attention*, an openness which comes from really caring and believing; patience is our way of showing a real trust in God. It is more about knowing when and how to act than not acting at all. Patience is discerning time; it is the gift of caring – giving time to know how and when to care. We cannot be patient if we do not trust God or trust the good that is growing or has the potential to grow in another. (Jm.5:7-10). Patience is ‘waiting on God.’

REFLECTIONS

4TH SUNDAY ADVENT 2019



Scripture

Is.7:10-14; Ps.23; Rom.1:1-7; Matt.1:18-24.

Composition of Place

I see myself standing humbly before the Lord who loves me.

Grace I/we seek

I ask for the Grace of feeling close to Jesus in His journey and His ministry.

Suggestion: UAP 1

To show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment.

✚ Here it would be good just to take the key themes of the readings: the birth of the child, the giving of the name, the gift of Christ to all the nations, and pray or reflect upon them within the Contemplation on the Incarnation.

✚ Here, too, one might take each of the UAPs and pray them through the name, 'God is with us. For the poor, for the young, for creation, what would it mean to hear, to believe, to experience, 'God is with us'?

Reflection

To see my life, my place of work and ministry, my country etc. as the places of Christ's action.

How would they change or be transformed if they could see, know and love him?

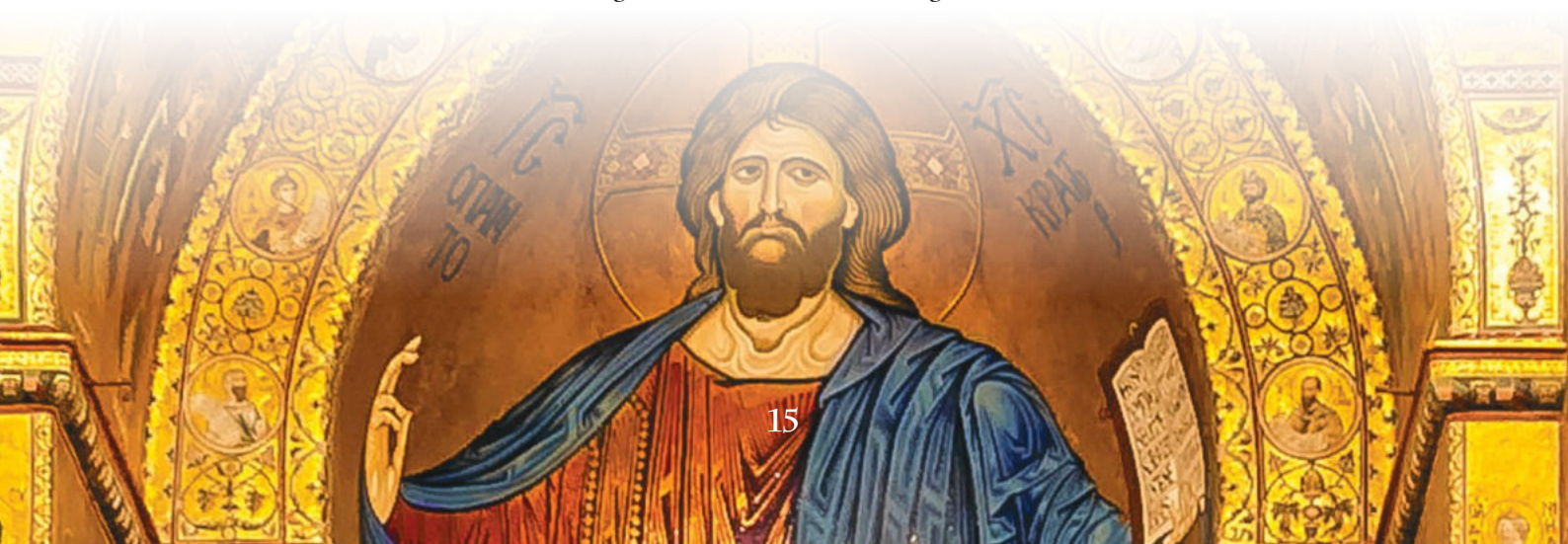
If they could say 'God is with us'?

Or,

Have I found the grace I sought? How can I respond?

Colloquy

To ask for the graces that I need to bring Him to others.





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