

joy or your hope? If so, write it on a card and carry it with you today and tomorrow. Read it over several times and let it help you express to God the feelings of your heart.

Saturday, 12/19/09 – Read Isaiah 40:3-11

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: In Zechariah's song (which we read yesterday), he speaks of his son John as preparing the way for the Lord. Zechariah may have had in mind today's reading from the prophet Isaiah. See especially verses 3-5. ... How do you prepare for the coming of the Lord? Decorations? Listening to particular songs or music? How do you prepare your heart to welcome the arrival of God?

Sunday, 12/20/09 – Read Isaiah 9:2-7

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: We prepare our hearts for the arrival of God -- even (and especially!) when God seems a long way off. In the imagery of the Bible: light shines in darkness. We prepare in the dark for the coming of the Light. And the Light does come, it does shine, precisely in the dark moments of our lives. ... Is there a darkness in your life these days? Will you name it and write it down. And will you live hopefully, expectantly, confidently that God's Light will shine in your darkness too. ... Hang on to today's reading: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light."

My Faith Journal, December 13, 2009

Advent 3

Frankincense on the Grill

What do I hear God saying to me today?

What action do I intend to take this week?

Each day this week, take a few minutes. Begin with PRAYER. Then READ through the Bible passage indicated on the inside of this guide. WRITE down your own thoughts, reactions, observations. ANSWER THE QUESTION to begin connecting the Bible with your life. Use additional paper or your own notebook if you need more space to write.

Preparing the Way

Monday, 12/14/09 – Read Luke 1:5-25

My Observations _____

A Question to Answer: This week we begin with a part of the birth narrative in Luke's gospel that we don't always stop to notice -- the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah, the parents of John -- who became John the Baptizer. ... Zechariah experienced a vision of the angel Gabriel. And the experience was so powerful that for a time he lost his ability to speak. That's not an uncommon occurrence when someone has an intense experience of The Divine. Sometimes, when that happens, the experience disrupts our ability to function normally for a time. ... Have you ever had an experience like that? Use your imagination too. Can you imagine an experience of God or God's messenger so intense that it affects your functioning for awhile?

Tuesday, 12/15/09 – Read Acts 9:1-19

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: The conversion of Saul (Paul) is another example of the temporary loss of normal functioning after an intense experience of the Divine Presence. For several days, Saul could not see. His sight was restored through the touch of Ananias. ... The church has always known that physical human touch can be a powerful conduit for the communication of God's Presence. The rituals of Baptism, Confirmation, Ordination, and Marriage all involve physical human touch as the bearer of the Divine. ... When have you experienced that? When has the touch of another person made God's Presence real and palpable for you?

Wednesday, 12/16/09 – Read Luke 1:39-45

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: Elizabeth's reason for seeing Mary as blessed is that Mary TRUSTED that there would be a FULFILLMENT (verse 45). It's hard, when the fulfillment hasn't happened yet, when it's not right in front of us -- it's hard to trust that it will come. Is that hard for you? ... The difference between hoping and wishing is that hope is grounded in the promise of God -- not our own personal wishful fantasies. ... Do you have some sense of a fulfillment in your life that's grounded in the promise of God? What is it? Write it down? Will you trust God's promise to you?

Thursday, 12/17/09 – Read Luke 1:57-66

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: God's promise to Elizabeth and Zechariah came true. Their son John was born. ... When has God's promise come true in your life experience? ... Sometimes it takes a long time. Sometimes it takes years and years. But God does work out his purposes in our lives! ... Name an instance in which God's longed-for, hoped-for fulfillment did finally come true.

Friday, 12/18/09 – Read Luke 1:67-80

My Observations: _____

A Question to Answer: When we want to express our deepest feelings, we turn to poetry and song. Zechariah's song (like Mary's song which we read last week) are the overflow of a heart filled with joy, gratitude, and awe. ... As you read through Zechariah's song, let yourself feel into and ponder the phrases. Does one of these phrases particularly express your