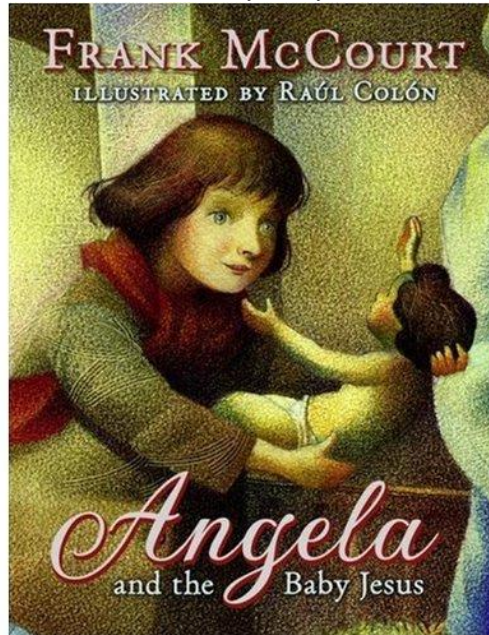


Angela and the Baby Jesus by Frank McCourt/ Raul Colon
Meditative Missive written by Cay Gibson © Advent 2009



Get Ready:

Items you should have on your reading table:

- * Computer
- * Copy of this study (for writing purposes)
- * Holiday Binder (to place these sheets when done)
- * Scented Candle & matches (do not light until told to do so)
- * Pretty gel pen
- * A copy of [Angela and the Baby Jesus](#) by Frank McCourt/ illustrated by Raul Colon
- * a pretty Christmas journal
- * a cup with your favorite holiday brew
- * a nativity-crèche
- * a Bible

* * * * *

Song Meditation:

This is your chance to hear God speaking to you in the stillness, the time and place you have chosen to meet him. Listen for His voice---His call---His word.

Click on and listen to: [What Child is This? by Michael Card](#)

Close your eyes and absorb the music. Breathe in. Breathe out. Meditate on the music.

Focus on the Chorus...

[CHORUS]

This, this is Christ the King,
Whom shepherds guard and Angels sing;
Haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

Theme: Gentleness

Write an Acrostic Poem using the letters that make up the word **GENTLENESS**:

G _____
E _____
N _____
T _____
L _____
E _____
N _____
E _____
S _____
S _____

Find a quote on **Gentleness** that speaks to your heart and write it here. Start looking here: [Brainy Quote](#):

Look up these Bible verses on **Gentleness**, find the one that speaks to your heart and write it here: (*Proverbs 15:1, Proverbs 25:15, Matthew 11:29, Galatians 5:23, Ephesians 4:2, Philippians 4:5, Colossians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 1 Timothy 3, 1 Timothy 6:11, 1 Peter 3:4, 1 Peter 3:15*)

Reading Session:

Pick up the book [Angela and the Baby Jesus](#) by Frank McCourt

Read it slowly, silently, to yourself. Don't meditate long on the pictures, only long enough to follow the story. Read and focus on the story for now. We will come back to do a reflective study of the pictures after you have read the story. Think about what you have read.

Come back for the **Picture Study** when you are ready.

Picture Study:

(Picture Prayer) Turn back to the first page where Angela is in the church viewing the Holy Family.

- * Notice the flickering candles in the right bottom corner of the page.
 - * Now light your scented candle.
 - * Watch the **gentle** glow of the candle.
 - * Feel the warmth of that tiny flame.
 - * What is the first thing you think of when you see a lit candle?
-

Do you have your Advent wreath and candles set on the family table yet? _____
Here is a [PDF file for the Blessing of the Advent Wreath](http://www.usccbpublishing.org/client/client_pdfs/advwrth.pdf). Print a copy and have the blessing at supper tonight. http://www.usccbpublishing.org/client/client_pdfs/advwrth.pdf

Now look at your nativity setting on your reading table. Compare your Holy Family figures with the ones in the picture.

- * How are they the same? _____
- * How are they different? _____

(Picture Prayer) Turn to the third picture of Angela picking up the baby Jesus. How would you describe the expression in this little girl's eyes as she holds the Baby Jesus? Write the first expression that comes to your mind.

(Picture Prayer) Turn to the two-page spread of the little girl running along the street with the baby. One of the themes of this picture book is the connection between the bitter cold night and the coldness of Christ due to our neglect. How have you neglected Christ this past year? What can you do this new liturgical year to commit yourself anew to Him? Imagine the coldness of the still figure in Angela's open arms. Imagine the icy wind pinching through the stockings on her legs. Focus on the theme of coldness and write a brief description of this picture. If you feel unable to do this, make a list of descriptive words that capture the scene and theme:

(Picture Prayer) In the next picture frame, the little girl is attempting to throw the baby Jesus over the wall into her backyard. Look at this picture; examine it closely. Meditate on this section of Psalm 19 which C.S. Lewis described to be “the greatest poem in the Psalms and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.” *

Psalm 19:2-5

The heavens declare the glory of God, the vault of heaven proclaims his handiwork, ²day discourses of it to day, night to night hands on the knowledge. ³No utterance at all, no speech, not a sound to be heard, ⁴but from the entire earth the design stands out, this message reaches the whole world. ⁵

New Jerusalem Bible

* C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958), p. 63. *Reflections on the Psalms* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1958), p. 63.

Look at the picture again and absorb the meaning of this psalm with the picture of Christ against a backdrop of stars and sky.

Open your Bible to Psalm 19 and read the whole psalm in context. I found it inspiring to search for a translation of this Psalm which was poetic and graceful, and which spoke to my personal style. You might want to do a search as well until you find a translation that suits you.

(Picture Prayer) Observe the picture of Angela entering the home with the baby Jesus and being met by her brother Pat. Have you noticed friction between your children lately? Have there been bickering and arguments and dissent? Tattle-telling? Conflicts? Jealousy?

Take a moment to offer your children and their sibling rivalries to the infant Jesus this Advent. Entrust your children to Christ. Trust in Christ to renew all relationships. Commit to bringing them to a closer relationship with the Infant Jesus and, in so doing, their own brothers and sisters.

Write your prayer for your children here:



Some ways to help bring your children closer to the Infant Christ:

- * Read Bible stories of Jesus as a young baby and boy. This helps young children identify with Jesus as a young boy. Some favorites would be the story of the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15) and the story of Jesus in the temple (Luke 2: 41-52).
- * Talk to your child about what he thinks Jesus was like as a young boy.
- * In the beginning of Mel Gibson's *The Passion* there is a scene in which Jesus is shown as a young child. Find and watch only this small section with your child. Discuss.
- * Remind your child that he can always pray to Jesus if he is ever lost or lonely or a new kid in the neighborhood.
- * Place a holy card of the Infant Jesus of Prague in your child's Christmas stocking.
- * Have your child prepare a soft spot in the manger for Jesus to sleep on Christmas Day. Have him place straw (yellow yarn works nicely) in the manger for every good deed he does during Advent.

(Picture Prayer) On the picture of Angela walking up the stairs and Pat talking to Mother in the kitchen, you will see a blurred picture of the Madonna with child on the wall. Also, on the wall above the bed you will see another similar picture.

Do a [Google search for images of Madonna and Child](#) and find the image that smiles at and speaks to your heart and soul. Which one best shows the theme of warmth and **gentleness** to you? There are many versions in great art representing the Blessed Mother and Child Jesus. As always, when surfing the web, be guarded in viewing material.



Madonna and Child (Galleria Borghese, Rome)/ Oil on canvas/ c. 1742/ Pompeo Batoni



Virgin with a Rosary (Museo del Prado, Madrid)/ Oil on canvas/ c. 1950-55/ Murillo

(Picture Prayer) Now go to the picture of the mother and her children taking the baby back to the church. Think of your own faith journey, your own walk with Jesus, and how Christ has led you closer to His Father through the eyes and wisdom of your children.

Prayer Meditation:

Look at the baby Jesus in your crèche. See the face of each of your children in the small figurine. Pray to the Infant Jesus for the intentions of each of your children.

Prayer to the Infant Jesus

O Jesus, Who has said, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you," through the intercession of Mary, thy most holy Mother, I seek, I knock, I ask that my prayer be granted. ~ (Mention your request.)

O Jesus, Who has said, "All that you ask of the Father in My Name, He will grant you," through the intercession of Mary, thy most holy Mother, I humbly and urgently ask Thy Father in Thy Name that my prayer will be granted. ~ (Mention your request.)

O Jesus, Who said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My word shall not pass," through the intercession of Mary, thy most holy Mother, I feel confident that my prayer will be granted. ~ (Mention your request.)

(Picture Prayer) We are now at the last pages of this book. The child Jesus is safely returned to his resting spot in front of his watchful mother. Angela is still concerned about the baby being warm. Fr. Creagh explains, “When we’re not here, his mother, Our Lady, makes sure he’s nice and warm.” He speaks to her “in a low **gentle** way.”

Why does the priest have tears on his cheeks? Why is he so **gentle** with Angela? How do you express the **gentleness** of Mary and Christ to your children?

Do you think the other adults are touched by the child’s concern as well? Why?

How would you feel if your child brought home the infant Jesus from the church nativity?

How would you feel if your child gave you the explanation Angela gave her mother: “He was cold in the crib and I wanted to warm him up.”?

**We can all prepare our homes to keep the Infant Jesus warm this Advent Season?
What will YOU do?**



My Advent Preparation Guide

First Week of Advent

Second Week of Advent

Third Week of Advent

Fourth Week of Advent
