



Give Us
This Day®

DECEMBER 2024

Canticle of Zechariah (Benedictus)

Luke 1:68-79

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel;
he has come to his people and set them free.

He has raised up for us a mighty savior,
born of the house of his servant David.

Through his holy prophets he promised of old
that he would save us from our enemies,
from the hands of all who hate us.

He promised to show mercy to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
to set us free from the hands of our enemies,
free to worship him without fear,
holy and righteous in his sight
all the days of our life.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet
of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of their sins.

In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness
and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be for ever. Amen.

Give Us This Day®

AL PRINCIPIO
EXISTIA LA
PALABRA Y
LA PALABRA
ESTABA JUNTO
A DIOS Y LA
PALABRA
ERA DIOS.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
1 First Week of Advent V ☞ Pope Francis <i>Within the Word: The Many Comings of Advent</i> ☞ Harry P. Nasuti	2 V † Bd. Liduina Meneguzzi ☞ Deacon Greg Kandra	3 W <i>St. Francis Xavier</i> † St. Francis Xavier ☞ Kathy Coffey
8 Second Week of Advent V ☞ Fr. Daniel P. Horan <i>Within the Word: Baruch Speaks to a Grieving People</i> ☞ Fr. Craig E. Morrison	9 W <i>Immaculate Conception</i> ☞ Susan Pitchford	10 V <i>[Our Lady of Loreto]</i> † Thomas Merton ☞ Sr. Maria Boulding
15 Third Week of Advent V ☞ Megan McKenna <i>Within the Word: Waiting in Loving Anticipation</i> ☞ Jaime Waters	16 V † St. Virginia Centurione Bracelli ☞ Marilyn McEntyre	17 V † Dorothy Sayers ☞ Fr. James A. Wallace
22 Fourth Week of Advent–Octave of Christmas V ☞ Mary DeTurris Poust <i>Within the Word: Hope’s a Risk Worth Taking</i> ☞ Alice Camille	23 V <i>[St. John of Kanty]</i> † Holy Shepherds ☞ Edward P. Hahnenberg	24 V ☞ Catherine de Hueck Doherty <div>W</div> <i>Nativity of the Lord</i> ☞ Heidi Busse
29 Octave of Christmas W <i>Holy Family</i> ☞ Sr. Jeana Visel <i>Within the Word: Family: A Place to Learn</i> ☞ Fr. George M. Smiga	30 W † Holy Family ☞ Renée Darline Roden	31 W <i>[St. Sylvester I]</i> † St. John Francis Regis ☞ Fr. Kevin O’Brien

Key

- † *Blessed Among Us* by Robert Ellsberg
- ☞ *Reflection/Within the Word* Author
- [] *Optional Memorial*

Vestment colors:

R Red W White V Violet



Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
4 V <i>[St. John Damascene]</i> ✚ St. John Damascene ✚ Fr. Lawrence E. Mick	5 V ✚ St. Crispina ✚ Valerie Schultz	6 V <i>[St. Nicholas]</i> ✚ St. Nicholas ✚ Michael Jordan Laskey	7 W St. Ambrose ✚ St. Ambrose ✚ Sr. Carla Mae Streeter
11 V <i>[St. Damasus I]</i> ✚ Martyrs of El Mozote ✚ Justin Bartkus	12 W Our Lady of Guadalupe ✚ Our Lady of Guadalupe ✚ Christina Leaño	13 R St. Lucy ✚ St. Herman of Alaska ✚ Sr. Kathleen Hughes	14 W St. John of the Cross ✚ St. John of the Cross ✚ Cardinal Basil Hume
18 V ✚ Alicia Domon and Léonie Duquet ✚ Brian Schmisek	19 V ✚ Meister Eckhart ✚ Grace Mariette Agolia	20 V ✚ Origen ✚ St. Bernard of Clairvaux	21 V <i>[St. Peter Canisius]</i> ✚ St. Peter Canisius ✚ Rachel M. Srubas
25 W Nativity of the Lord ✚ Micah D. Kiel	26 R St. Stephen ✚ St. Stephen ✚ Fr. Don Talafous	27 W St. John ✚ St. Fabiola ✚ Sr. Ephrem Hollermann	28 R Holy Innocents ✚ Holy Innocents ✚ St. Quodvultdeus

December 2024

Give Us This Day®

DAILY PRAYER FOR TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Ælred Senna, OSB, *Publisher* ♦ Heidi Busse, *Editor*

Catherine Donovan, *Associate Publisher*

Kendra Richards Ohmann, *Publishing Coordinator*

Lori Dahlhoff, *Special Content Editor*

Robert Ellsberg, *"Blessed Among Us" Author*

Susan Barber, OSB, *Intercessions*

Therese L. Ratliff, *Liturgical Press Director*

Editorial Advisors

James Martin, SJ ♦ Irene Nowell, OSB

Carolyn Y. Woo ♦ Timothy Radcliffe, OP

Kathleen Norris ♦ Ronald Rolheiser, OMI

giveusthisday.org

Give Us This Day, Liturgical Press

PO Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321-7500

Customer Service: 888-259-8470, subscriptions@giveusthisday.org

© 2024 by the Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota.

Printed in the United States of America.

Give Us This Day® (ISSN 2159-2136, print; 2166-0654, large print; 2159-2128, online) is published monthly by Liturgical Press, an apostolate of Saint John's Abbey, 2950 Saint John's Road, Collegeville, Minnesota. Rev. Douglas Mullin, OSB, *Abbot*. For complete publication information see page 380.

CONTENTS

December 2024 ♦ Volume 14, Issue 12

<i>Prince of Peace</i> Kathleen Norris	5
<i>Teach Us to Pray: Come, Lord Jesus!</i> Fr. James Martin	7
<i>Blessing of a Christmas Tree</i> Eric Clayton	8
Prayers and Blessings	10
Prayer at Night	14
Daily Prayer	17
Order of Mass	337
Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word (with Holy Communion)	364
Guide to <i>Lectio Divina</i>	367
Hymns	368
<i>About the Cover</i> Br. Ælred Senna	379

Prince of Peace

Kathleen Norris

How can we speak of peace when the phrase “endless wars” accurately describes our world? If you sense that conditions are worse than usual, you’re right: currently more than fifty nations suffer from armed conflicts, the most since 1946. Yet, during the Advent and Christmas seasons we call on Jesus as the Prince of Peace, a title bestowed on him by the prophet Isaiah. This is more than a prophecy, it’s a promise, but it’s hard for us to hold on to hope.

Recalling the sage advice of Fred Rogers, that when we feel overwhelmed or in danger we must look to the helpers, I’ll seek out the peacemakers, starting with St. Benedict. He views seeking peace as one of the tools for good works that a community needs to survive. Citing Psalm 34, Benedict makes peace an imperative, writing, “Let peace be your goal and aim.” Another translation of the Rule of St. Benedict asks us to “seek and strive after peace,” reminding us that peace is never simply handed to us. Peace is something we work hard to make, so that flawed people like ourselves can learn to get along despite our many differences.

Seeking peace is made more difficult when dictators and politicians hitch their success to keeping us at odds and convincing us that those who disagree with us are enemies who must be destroyed. In the words of a Calvin & Hobbes cartoon, “enmity sells.” But we can find helpers who aren’t

self-serving and have the good of humanity at heart, like peace activist Christine Ahn and retired Air Force General Dan Leaf, who once commanded the U.S. forces in the Pacific. They're working together to promote diplomacy in the Korean Peninsula, despite daunting odds. Reflecting the wisdom of many veterans, Leaf says, "from my service in combat I know that war should be the last choice."

Peace is not the absence of war but the active restoration of broken relationships. Thomas Merton has said that "we are not at peace with others because we are not at peace with ourselves, and we are not at peace with ourselves because we are not at peace with God." This evokes the great Gospel commandment to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. To live in peace means that none of these loves is lacking or is out of balance with the others.

The Prince of Peace comes to heal the relationship of humanity with its Creator, offering us wholeness. Perhaps our first step toward peace and reconciliation is accepting Dorotheus of Gaza's insight that the root cause of our troubles is that no one will blame himself. And we can savor Paul's definition of the peace of God as a "peace which surpasses all understanding." I find that a relief, because if, in my vulnerable, prideful humanity, I ever came to think that I fully understood God's peace, it surely would be something less than the peace God intends for us. Come, Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace.

Kathleen Norris is an oblate of St. Benedict and the author of many books, including The Cloister Walk and Acedia and Me. She coedits Soul Telegram, a weekly e-newsletter on movies and meaning. Follow her at facebook.com/KathleenNorrisAuthor.

Teach Us to Pray

Come, Lord Jesus!

Fr. James Martin

For me, Advent is the most beautiful of all the liturgical seasons. Some of this has to do with its role as a preparation for Christmas, which for many of us stirs up warm childhood memories of decorating the tree, singing Christmas carols, and, if we're being honest about our childhood, getting presents. (I'm sure we've deepened our spirituality, but memories of presents lying under the tree remain!) Then there are the stunning readings of Advent, which, weekday or Sunday, are almost unsurpassed in the liturgical year.

But there is another part of the season that I love: the expectancy. And I don't mean for gifts, but for God. Advent, as a Jesuit friend used to say, is primarily a season of desire. The people of Israel desire the Messiah. We, for our part, already know that the Messiah has come. "He is Christ the Lord," as the angels announce to the shepherds (Luke 2:11). The Nativity has already happened. Yet, as theologians remind us, the reign of God is the "already," but also the "not yet." We look around us and still see so much war, violence, division, hatred, and suffering. And in our own lives we can see the same lack of good: greed, pettiness, jealousy. Come, Lord Jesus, we pray.

On a spiritual level, we feel incomplete, on the way, journeying toward . . . something more. We desire that the Lord come into our lives in a quite absolute, real way. But that desire must be matched by our own active seeking of the Lord. Looking around. Noticing. Hoping. With as much hope as a kid has on Christmas morning.

James Martin is a Jesuit priest, editor at America magazine, and author of many books.

Blessing of a Christmas Tree

Holy Lord,
we come with joy to celebrate the birth of your Son,
who rescued us from the darkness of sin
by making the cross a tree of life and light.
May this tree, arrayed in splendor,
remind us of the life-giving cross of Christ,
that we may always rejoice
in the new life that shines in our hearts.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

—*Book of Blessings*



One of the many holiday songs on our family's Christmas playlist is the aptly named "Christmas Song" by the Dave Matthews Band.

The song begins not unlike the Gospel of Matthew, chronicling Mary and Joseph's relationship and Jesus' surprising birth—you know, Christmas stuff. But ironically, it's the Easter-themed lyrics of "Christmas Song" that jump out at me.

Those lyrics describe Jesus being nailed to a tree, how in those final moments, as he looks around, he prays to his Father, lamenting how despite his desire to spread a little light in the world's darkness, he sees nothing but the spilled blood of God's children.

Pretty dark for a Christmas tune. "Jingle Bells" this is not.

This so-called Christmas song, rather than lingering in the manger with the magi and the shepherds, takes us on a sweeping journey through Jesus' life, death, and mission of love. The song's most haunting lyrics are repeated again and

again, another lament on Jesus' lips asking why God has so filled him with love when the world seems irrevocably bound by hate.

It's a cry, of sorts—though not the cry of the baby Jesus. Rather, this is the cry of an individual trying to make sense of a world scarred by violence, death, and suffering. Perhaps it's a cry of recognition, too: these scars can only be healed through radically inclusive love.

At Christmas, then, we need to remember how the story goes, *where* the story goes. This tree we bless and decorate points us in that direction, reminding us of God's bigger story and our unique invitation to labor in and for love.

When we step back and connect our story to God's, we realize that the little light we shed here, now, is part of something bigger. Christmas and Easter, my story and yours, it's all connected, all part of God's great story. And it reminds us that through love, God wins the day.

Eric Clayton

Eric Clayton is the author of My Life with the Jedi: The Spirituality of Star Wars and Cannonball Moments: Telling Your Story, Deepening Your Faith. He is also the deputy director for communications at the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States. Learn more at ericclaytonwrites.com.

Advent Prayer of Welcome

Father,
we await the dawning of your Light, Jesus Christ.
May his coming dispel the darkness of hatred and violence,
of fear and despair.
Illuminate our home with the light of his peace and mercy,
that our house may be a place of welcome to all
who knock on our door and come to our table.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, your Light to the world.
Amen.

—Deacon Jay Cormier, *The Advent Wreath: Blessings and Prayers
for Families and Households*



On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

God of love and holiness,
as part of your plan to save us,
you sanctified the Virgin Mary
from the moment of her conception.
May our love for you
be purified by hers,
on this day when we rejoice with her,
whom you predestined to be the Mother
of Jesus, our Lord.
Amen.

—*Proclaiming All Your Wonders*

Honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe

God of glory,
to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary you changed Tepeyac's
barren ground into a fragrant garden of flowers.
Transform the rough places of our hearts and of our world,
so that our lives may bear the imprint of Mary's faith
and love.

—*Benedictine Daily Prayer*



Meal Prayers for Advent and Christmas

All-powerful God,
look kindly on us,
bless this table,
and unite us to all people everywhere
who wait for the coming of your Son,
Jesus Christ, the Lord.
Amen.

Eternal Father,
we praise and bless you
for the goodness you show us
at this meal and throughout this season.
Be with us as we celebrate
the fulfillment of your promise
in the coming of your Son,
Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

—Fr. Michael Kwatera, OSB, and Br. Dietrich Reinhart, OSB

O Antiphons

- December 17 O Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!
- December 18 O Leader of the House of Israel,
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
come to rescue us with your mighty power!
- December 19 O Root of Jesse's stem,
sign of God's love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!
- December 20 O Key of David,
opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!
- December 21 O Radiant Dawn,
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who dwell in
darkness and in the shadow of death.
- December 22 O King of all nations and keystone
of the Church:
come and save man, whom you formed
from the dust!
- December 23 O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!

—*Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*

Peace on Earth

Jesus comes back as a baby
to tell us that God
is not far away.

The angels are still singing:
peace on earth
to people he loves.

Let us ask your defenseless omnipotence
to bend down and to snuff out the arrogance of violence,
to remove hatred from all hearts
and to put love there,
to make it so that soon no nation in the world
will remember
what war is.

—Chiara Lubich, *Christmas Joy*



Monthly Prayer Intention of Pope Francis

We pray that this Jubilee Year strengthen our faith,
helping us to recognize the Risen Christ
in our daily lives, and that it may transform us
into pilgrims of Christian hope.

—Pope's Prayer Network
(Apostleship of Prayer; popesprayerusa.net)

Prayer at Night

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Briefly consider your day: What did I do well? What could I have done better? Whom did I offend? Whom did I help or encourage?

Pray the Act of Contrition or another prayer of sorrow and promise of amendment.

PSALM 134

O come and bless the LORD,
all you servants of the LORD,
who stand by night in the house of the LORD.
Lift up your hands to the holy place,
and bless the LORD.

May the LORD bless you from Zion,
who made both heaven and earth.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Colossians 3:12-15

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful.

ANTIPHON

Protect us, Lord, while we are awake and safeguard us while we sleep, that we may keep watch with Christ and rest in peace.

CANTICLE OF SIMEON

Lord, now let your servant go in peace;
your word has been fulfilled:

my own eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared in the sight of every people:

a light to reveal you to the nations
and the glory of your people Israel.

Glory to the Father . . .

MARIAN ANTIPHON (or another Marian hymn, pp. 374–75)

Loving Mother of the Redeemer,
gate of heaven, star of the sea,
assist your people who have fallen
yet strive to rise again.
To the wonderment of nature
you bore your Creator,
yet remained a virgin after as before.
You who received Gabriel's joyful greeting,
have pity on us poor sinners.

BLESSING

May God grant us a peaceful night and a perfect end.
May the divine assistance be always with us and with all
our loved ones. Amen.



Sunday, December 1

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 148:1, 7-13

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Alleluia!

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise the Lord in the heights.

Praise the LORD from the earth,
sea creatures and all ocean depths,
fire and hail, snow and mist,
stormy winds that fulfill the command;

Mountains and all hills,
fruit trees and all cedars,
beasts, both wild and tame,
creeping things and birds on the wing;

Rulers of the earth and all peoples,
sovereigns and all judges of the earth,
young men and maidens as well,
the old and the young together.

Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for God's name alone is exalted,
whose splendor rises above heaven and earth.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 43:1-3a

Now, thus says the LORD, / who created you, Jacob, and formed you, Israel: / Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; / I have called you by name: you are mine. / When you pass through waters, I will be with you; / through rivers, you shall not be swept away. / When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, / nor will flames consume you. / For I, the LORD, am your God, / the Holy One of Israel, your savior.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Redeeming God, your name is alone exalted. With expectant hope for the fulfillment of the Messiah, we pray: **R/**. God, in your great love, hear our prayer.

Enlighten your Church anew for this Advent season of preparation. **R/**.

Instill in all leaders and authorities humble trust in you and love for the people they serve. **R/**.

Give wisdom and peace to those entrusted with the care of others. **R/**.

Our Father . . .

May God kindle our courage and give us the grace to walk in newness of life with hope, through Jesus, the Light of the World. Amen.

Mass

First Sunday of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Psalm 25 (24):1-3

To you, I lift up my soul, O my God. / In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame. / Nor let my enemies exult over me; / and let none who hope in you be put to shame.

(The Gloria is omitted.)

COLLECT

Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ
with righteous deeds at his coming,
so that, gathered at his right hand,
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah 33:14-16

I will raise up for David a just shoot.

The days are coming, says the LORD, / when I will fulfill the promise / I made to the house of Israel and Judah. / In those days, in that time, / I will raise up for David a just shoot; / he shall do what is right and just in the land. / In those days Judah shall be safe / and Jerusalem shall dwell secure; / this is what they shall call her: / “The LORD our justice.”

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14

R. (1b) To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior,
and for you I wait all the day. **R.**

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
and teaches the humble his way. **R.**

All the paths of the LORD are kindness and constancy
toward those who keep his covenant and his decrees.
The friendship of the LORD is with those who fear him,
and his covenant, for their instruction. **R.**

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul
to the Thessalonians

3:12-4:2

*May the Lord strengthen your hearts
at the coming of our Lord Jesus.*

Brothers and sisters: May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. Amen.

Finally, brothers and sisters, we earnestly ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that, as you received from us how you should conduct yourselves to please God—and as you are conducting yourselves—you do so even more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Psalm 85:8

Show us, Lord, your love;
and grant us your salvation.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

21:25-28, 34-36

Your redemption is at hand.

Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.

"Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make,
gathered from among your gifts to us,
and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here
below

gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.

Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Psalm 85 (84):13

The Lord will bestow his bounty, and our earth shall yield its increase.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Joyful and Vigilant

When these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand.

[R]ight during those moments when everything seems to be coming to an end, the Lord comes to save us. We await him with joy, even in the midst of tribulations, during life's crises and the dramatic events of history. We await him.

But how do we raise our heads and not become absorbed with difficulties, suffering and defeat? Jesus points the way with a strong reminder: "Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy . . . Be vigilant at all times and pray" (Lk 21:34, 36). . . .

We need to be vigilant so that our daily life does not become routine, and, as Jesus says, so we are not burdened by life's anxieties (cf. v. 34). So today is a good moment to ask ourselves: what weighs on my heart? What weighs on my

spirit? . . . What are the mediocrities that paralyze me, the vices that crush me to the ground and prevent me from raising my head? And regarding the burdens that weigh on the shoulders of our brothers and sisters, am I aware of them or indifferent to them? . . .

And let us add an essential ingredient: the secret to being vigilant is prayer. In fact, Jesus says: “Be vigilant at all times and pray” (Lk 21:36). Prayer is what keeps the lamp of the heart lit. This is especially true when we feel that our enthusiasm has cooled down. Prayer re-lights it, because it brings us back to God, to the center of things. Prayer reawakens the soul from sleep and focuses it on what matters, on the purpose of existence. Even during our busiest days, we must not neglect prayer. The prayer of the heart can be helpful for us, repeating often brief invocations. For example, during Advent, we could make a habit of saying, “Come, Lord Jesus.”

..... Pope Francis, *Angelus*

Jorge Mario Bergoglio, SJ, was the archbishop of Buenos Aires from 1998 until his election as pope in 2013. Pope Francis has proclaimed a Gospel of joy and peace, of care for the poor and for the earth, “our common home.”

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 95:1-9

Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD;
hail the rock who saves us.
Let us come before God giving thanks;
with songs of praise, let us hail the Lord.

A mighty God is the LORD,
a great king above all gods,
in whose hand are the depths of the earth,
and the heights of the mountains as well.
The sea belongs to God, who made it,
whose hand shaped the dry land as well.

O come; let us bow and bend low.
Let us kneel before the LORD who made us,
for the Lord is our God, and we
the people of the heavenly pasture,
the flock led by the almighty hand.

O that today you would heed God's voice!
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as on that day at Massah in the desert
when your ancestors put me to the test;
when they tried me, though they saw my work."

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Romans 13:11b-14

You know the time; it is the hour now for you to awake
from sleep. For our salvation is nearer now than when

we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The days are coming when God will fulfill the promises made to us.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of salvation, you are our saving rock. In trust we pray: *R.* Awaken us to your love, O God.

Nurture compassion, wonder, and faith in all people. *R.*

Inspire practices of respect and dialogue among Christians, Muslims, and Jews. *R.*

Deepen curiosity and human awareness of the interconnectivity of all creation. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the love of God, the peace of Christ, and the joy of the Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us forever.
Amen.

December 1–7

First Week of Advent

Within the Word

The Many Comings of Advent

Even a quick look at the hymnal makes clear the defining word of the liturgical season that begins this Sunday: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”; “O Come, Divine Messiah”; “Come, O Long Expected Jesus.” Indeed, Advent means “coming,” and its hymns and antiphons invite us not only to look forward once again to Christ’s past coming two thousand years ago but also to contemplate anew his future coming at the end of time.

The first readings of this week’s Advent liturgies are similar in the way they look ahead to what God will do “on that day” or “in days to come.” In these readings, the prophets of ancient Israel proclaim how God will decisively break into human history as both judge and redeemer. Some of their visions look forward to the coming of a messianic figure from the line of David who will transform our broken world into one that is more in keeping with what God originally intended. While Christians recognize this figure as the one who has already come at Bethlehem, we still cannot help but long for the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promises at his return. For those whose lives are shaped by remembering and anticipating such past and future comings, Advent also serves as a reminder to watch for the many ways in which God is even now coming into our overly busy and always imperfect present lives.

There is, however, another coming found in these Advent prophecies that should not be overlooked: the coming of both Israel and the nations to Jerusalem, the home of God and

God's anointed. On Monday, Isaiah 2:1-5 describes how "many peoples shall come" to the "mountain of the LORD's house," where they will receive both judgment and instruction in God's ways. Tuesday's reading from Isaiah 11:1-10 describes how a "shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse" to judge with justice, ushering in an idyllic peace on God's holy mountain, while Jesse's "root" will serve as a "signal for the nations" who will seek out his glorious dwelling there. On Wednesday, Isaiah 25:6-10a once again brings the nations to God's mountain, where they will both witness God's salvation and participate in the rich banquet that God will provide.

The pilgrimage seen in these readings is spatial as well as temporal—a journey to God's mountain, God's city, and God's house, as well as to God's future. Yet these readings insist even more upon a spiritual pilgrimage. Those who would come to the place and time where God becomes manifest must become those who are willing to be instructed in God's ways (Isaiah 2:1-5 on Monday), who are just, keep faith, have firm purpose, and trust (Isaiah 26:1-6 on Thursday), who keep God's name holy (Isaiah 29:17-24 on Friday), and who wait for the Lord (Isaiah 30:18, Saturday's responsorial psalm refrain).

The spiritual pilgrimage described here asks that we take at least a few more steps toward the God who has come so far to be with us. It is quite in keeping with such prophecies that the most popular opening hymn of our Christmas liturgies, "O Come, All Ye Faithful," sings not just about God's coming but about our own. With God's grace, may both our Advent and our life pilgrimage end with each of us in the presence of the Lord, faithful, joyful, and triumphant.

—Harry P. Nasuti

Harry P. Nasuti is emeritus professor of theology at Fordham University.

Monday, December 2

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 93

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

The LORD is king, with majesty enrobed.

The LORD is robed with might,
and girded round about with power.

The world you made firm, not to be moved;
your throne has stood firm from of old.
From all eternity, O LORD, you are.

The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
the floods have lifted up their voice;
the floods have lifted up their thunder.

Greater than the roar of mighty waters,
mightier than the surgings of the sea,
the LORD is mighty on high.

Truly your decrees are to be trusted.
Holiness is fitting to your house,
O LORD, until the end of time.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Zechariah 8:20b-22

There will yet come peoples and inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city will approach those of another, and say, “Come! let us go to implore the favor of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts. I too am going.” Many peoples and strong nations will come to seek

the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to implore the favor of the LORD.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Comforting God, you weep with those who weep. In company with the Salvadoran Women Martyrs we pray:

R/. Come, Lord, visit us with peace.

Strengthen the love of missionaries in Central America, and rescue those persecuted for their faith. **R/.**

Inspire constructive use of technology for the spreading of your Word. **R/.**

Console those who grieve the death of a loved one. **R/.**

Our Father . . .

May God bless us, deliver us from harm, and give us peace, through Jesus, the Eternal Word. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Blessed Liduina Meneguzzi

Missionary Sister (1901–1941)

Elisa Angela Meneguzzi, who took the name Liduina in religious life, was born to a peasant family in northern Italy. At fourteen she entered domestic service, working for the next ten years in hotels and for wealthy families until she quit and joined the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales.

In 1937 she was sent to the Ethiopian town of Dire Dawa—at the time under Italian rule. For the next two years she served as a nurse in the city hospital. With the outbreak of World War II, the hospital was taken over by the military. Liduina cared for wounded soldiers of all colors and creeds, including Catholics, Copts, and Muslims. She spoke to them all of the goodness of God and the promise of heaven. In turn she was treasured as an “angel of charity.”

After enduring bombing raids and every kind of violence, Liduina was diagnosed with cancer. She died on December 2, 1941. Her ecumenical witness, courage, and spirit of charity were remembered by all who had known her. She was beatified in 2002. The decree on her heroic virtue noted, “The message that Blessed Liduina Meneguzzi brings to the Church and the world is that of hope and love. A kind of love that is a spur to solidarity, to sharing, and to service.”

“In the course of her brief but intense life, Sr. Liduina poured herself out for her poorer and suffering brothers.”

—Pope John Paul II

The “Blessed Among Us” features are written by Robert Ellsberg, author of numerous books, including the best-selling *Blessed Among Us* (Liturgical Press) and *All Saints*.

Mass

Monday of the First Week of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Jeremiah 31:10; Isaiah 35:4

Hear the word of the Lord, O nations; / declare it to the distant lands: / Behold, our Savior will come; you need no longer fear.

COLLECT

Keep us alert, we pray, O Lord our God,
as we await the advent of Christ your Son,
so that, when he comes and knocks,
he may find us watchful in prayer
and exultant in his praise.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

2:1-5

The LORD will gather all nations into the eternal peace of the Kingdom of God.

This is what Isaiah, son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

In days to come, / The mountain of the LORD's house / shall be established as the highest mountain / and raised above the hills. / All nations shall stream toward it; / many peoples shall come and say: / "Come, let us climb the LORD's mountain, / to the house of the God of Jacob, / That he may instruct us in his ways, / and we may walk in his paths." / For from Zion shall go forth instruction, / and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. / He shall judge between the nations, / and impose terms on many peoples. / They shall beat their swords into plowshares / and their spears into

pruning hooks; / One nation shall not raise the sword
against another, / nor shall they train for war again.

O house of Jacob, come, / let us walk in the light of the
LORD!

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

122:1-2, 3-4b, 4cd-5, 6-7, 8-9

R. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

I rejoiced because they said to me,
“We will go up to the house of the LORD.”

And now we have set foot
within your gates, O Jerusalem. **R.**

Jerusalem, built as a city
with compact unity.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the LORD. **R.**

According to the decree for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the LORD.
In it are set up judgment seats,
seats for the house of David. **R.**

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!
May those who love you prosper!
May peace be within your walls,
prosperity in your buildings. **R.**

Because of my relatives and friends
I will say, “Peace be within you!”
Because of the house of the LORD, our God,
I will pray for your good. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

See Psalm 80:4

Come and save us, Lord our God;
let your face shine upon us, that we may be saved.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

8:5-11

*Many will come from the east and the west
into the Kingdom of heaven.*

When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully." He said to him, "I will come and cure him." The centurion said in reply, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I say to you, many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the Kingdom of heaven."

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make,
gathered from among your gifts to us,
and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here below
gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON Cf. Psalm 106 (105):4-5; Isaiah 38:3
Come, O Lord, visit us in peace, / that we may rejoice
before you with a blameless heart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,

profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them
to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

God's Extravagant Love

"Lord, I am not worthy . . ."

We hear those words coming from the centurion in the Gospel, and they are strikingly familiar. We say them ourselves during Mass just before Communion. We pray to have our souls healed, to be made better than we are, in order to receive the Body of Christ worthily.

But in these early days of Advent, as we prepare for Christmas and the celebration of Christ's birth, do we realize how often God comes to us—here and now—dwelling with us in our unworthy world?

We find him in the calloused hands feeding the poor and hungry clustered along the border in El Paso. We find him in the arms cradling the sick in Calcutta. We find him in the eyes of priests hearing confessions, anointing the dying, and comforting the grieving in chapels, hospitals, and homes from Manila to Manhattan.

God is here with all those who are changing diapers in a shelter, boxing meals in a food pantry, and singing in a children's choir preparing for a Christmas concert.

It is a miracle, all of it, and during this season of anticipation and hope, let us take a moment to marvel at God's

extravagant love. This season, we remember that the savior's name, Emmanuel, means "God with us." And we realize: he *is* with us. Still. Despite everything.

What a wonder it is! We are not worthy.

Deacon Greg Kandra

Greg Kandra is a Roman Catholic deacon serving the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York. Author of The Busy Person's Guide to Prayer, he is an award-winning broadcast journalist and maintains The Deacon's Bench blog.

[illegible]

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

PSALM 127

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

If the LORD does not build the house,
in vain do its builders labor;
if the LORD does not guard the city,
in vain does the guard keep watch.

In vain is your earlier rising,
your going later to rest,
you who toil for the bread you eat,
when God pours gifts on his beloved while they slumber.

Yes, children are a gift from the LORD,
a reward, the fruit of the womb.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
so are the children of one's youth.

Blessed are the warriors
who have filled their quivers with these arrows!
They will have no cause for shame,
when they dispute with their foes in the gateways.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:23-25

You have been born anew, not from perishable but from
imperishable seed, through the living and abiding
word of God, for: / “All flesh is like grass, / and all its glory
like the flower of the field; / the grass withers, / and the
flower wilts; / but the word of the Lord remains forever.” /
This is the word that has been proclaimed to you.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Say but the word and I shall be healed.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of majesty and grace, your transforming Word is our salvation. In confidence we pray: *R/*. Your will be done, O God.

Answer the prayers of physicians, nurses, and surgeons. *R/*.

Safeguard law enforcement, security guards, and emergency personnel. *R/*.

Heal divisions in government, and help us care for those who are vulnerable. *R/*.

Our Father . . .

May God prosper the work of our hands, hearts, and minds, through Jesus, the Living Word of God. Amen.

Tuesday, December 3

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 33:12-15, 18-22 (opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

Blessed the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people God has chosen as a heritage.
From the heavens the LORD looks forth,
and sees the whole human race.

From the heavenly dwelling God gazes
on all the dwellers on the earth,
God who shapes the hearts of them all,
and considers all their deeds.

Behold, the eyes of the LORD
are on those who fear him,
who hope in God's faithful love,
to rescue their soul from death,
to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul is waiting for the LORD,
our God, our help and our shield.
In you do our hearts find joy;
we trust in your holy name.
May your faithful love be upon us,
as we hope in you, O LORD.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 23:1b-4

The oracle of David, son of Jesse; / the oracle of the man
God raised up, / Anointed of the God of Jacob, / favor-

ite of the Mighty One of Israel. / The spirit of the LORD spoke through me; / his word was on my tongue. / The God of Israel spoke; / of me the Rock of Israel said, / “One who rules over humankind with justice, / who rules in the fear of God, / Is like the light at sunrise / on a cloudless morning, / making the land’s vegetation glisten after rain.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse; the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Gracious God, you instilled the joy of the Gospel in the heart of St. Francis Xavier. In hope we pray: *R.* Fill us with your spirit, O God.

Instruct the hearts of those who, like St. Francis, seek your greater glory. *R.*

Strengthen those who seek freedom from digital addiction. *R.*

Restore well-being and hope in those who suffer from environmental disasters. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the faithful love of God be upon us as we place our hope in Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. Francis Xavier

Jesuit Missionary (1506–1552)

Francis Xavier was one of the original six companions of St. Ignatius Loyola who took vows in the Society of Jesus. In 1541, armed with a papal decree naming him apostolic nuncio to Asia, he embarked on a perilous journey to Portuguese Goa—the beginning of one of the greatest of all missionary journeys, lasting altogether eleven years, and from which he would never return.

After work in Goa and other islands in southern Asia, he began to receive reports of the highly advanced kingdom of Japan, as yet unknown to Westerners. Determined to make Japan his next mission, he landed there in 1549. Quickly recognizing the sophistication of Japanese culture, Francis changed his approach to mission. Previously he had seen himself building on barren ground. Now he felt a need to comprehend the local culture, to discover its latent strengths and virtues, and to find ways of connecting these with the Gospel message.

After two years in Japan, long enough to implant a small Christian community, Francis set his sights on a new frontier: China, still closed to foreigners. But that prize would elude him. While sailing to China in 1552, he became seriously ill. On an island off the coast, he was taken off his ship. There he died on December 3 at the age of forty-six. He was canonized in 1622 and later named a patron of foreign mission.

“It often happens to me to be hardly able to use my hands from the fatigue of baptizing: often in a single day I have baptized whole villages. Sometimes I have lost my voice and strength altogether with repeating again and again the Credo and the other forms.”

—St. Francis Xavier

Mass

St. Francis Xavier, Memorial

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Psalm 18 (17):50; 22 (21):23

I will praise you, Lord, among the nations; / I will tell of your name to my kin.

COLLECT

O God, who through the preaching of Saint Francis Xavier won many peoples to yourself, grant that the hearts of the faithful may burn with the same zeal for the faith and that Holy Church may everywhere rejoice in an abundance of offspring. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 11:1-10

The Spirit of the LORD God shall rest upon him.

On that day, / A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, / and from his roots a bud shall blossom. / The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: / a Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, / A Spirit of counsel and of strength, / a Spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, / and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. / Not by appearance shall he judge, / nor by hearsay shall he decide, / But he shall judge the poor with justice, / and decide aright for the land's afflicted. / He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, / and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. / Justice shall be the band around his waist, / and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.

Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, / and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; / The calf and the young

lion shall browse together, / with a little child to guide them.
 / The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, / together their
 young shall rest; / the lion shall eat hay like the ox. / The
 baby shall play by the cobra's den, / and the child lay his
 hand on the adder's lair. / There shall be no harm or ruin
 on all my holy mountain; / for the earth shall be filled with
 knowledge of the LORD, / as water covers the sea.

On that day, / The root of Jesse, / set up as a signal for
 the nations, / The Gentiles shall seek out, / for his dwelling
 shall be glorious.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

R. (see 7) Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of
 peace for ever.

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
 and with your justice, the king's son;
 He shall govern your people with justice
 and your afflicted ones with judgment. **R.**

Justice shall flower in his days,
 and profound peace, till the moon be no more.
 May he rule from sea to sea,
 and from the River to the ends of the earth. **R.**

He shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
 and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
 He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
 the lives of the poor he shall save. **R.**

May his name be blessed forever;
 as long as the sun his name shall remain.
 In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed;
 all the nations shall proclaim his happiness. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Behold, our Lord shall come with power;
he will enlighten the eyes of his servants.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 10:21-24

Jesus rejoices in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him."

Turning to the disciples in private he said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. For I say to you, many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive, O Lord, these offerings we bring you
in commemoration of Saint Francis Xavier,
and grant that, as he journeyed to distant lands
out of longing for the salvation of souls,
so we, too, bearing effective witness to the Gospel,
may, with our brothers and sisters,
eagerly hasten towards you.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Matthew 10:27

What I say to you in the darkness / speak in the light, says
the Lord, / what you hear whispered, / proclaim on the
housetops.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May your mysteries, O God,
kindle in us that fire of charity
with which Saint Francis Xavier burned for the salvation
of souls,
so that, walking ever more worthily in our vocation,
we may obtain with him the reward you promise
to those who labor well in your harvest.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

The Best Christmas Gift

Fergit your to-do lists. Pause the weighty responsibilities, the endless tasks to accomplish in the next three weeks. Resist the marketing pressure of “only twenty-one shopping days left . . .” Today, take time to rejoice in the Spirit, as Jesus does. Sit quietly with the readings’ promises, then maybe grin a little.

What’s offered? All we want and need, reassurance that “profound peace” comes to the distracted, frightened children hiding beneath our bustling adult veneers. Some envy children at Christmas, how easily they enter into wonder and tinsel beauty. Jesus places us, even old and jaded, in their company.

Entering that vulnerability, we can set aside our ego-driven demands, our harsh judgments, to be as neighborly to others and ourselves as Isaiah’s unlikely pair of cow and bear. Parents cringe at the image of the child’s hand hovering near the cobra, until we remember how often we’ve been saved from dangers, often of our own making. Disasters skirted. Accidents avoided. And when we fall, God is like a faithful parent, scooping us up.

Furthermore, that all-embracing Spirit makes peace between the warring factions within us—fears and fantasies, angers and envies so wild they make the wolf and leopard look tame. We learn to embrace the forces within before we can welcome anyone else. Then the fullness of peace seeps in as we await the One who's already come, like a bud blooming on a dead stump. Jesus unites us with the divine heart so that, as Julian of Norwich says, “between God and the soul, there is no *between*.”

All other gifts are on loan here except Love. That lasts.

Kathy Coffey

Kathy Coffey is a mother of four, a speaker and retreat leader. An award-winning writer, she is author of When the Saints Came Marching In and the recently released A Generous Lap: A Spirituality of Grandparenting. For more information, see her website: kathyjcoffey.com.



Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 119:49-56

Remember your word to your servant,
by which you made me hope.
This is my comfort in sorrow:
that your promise gives me life.

Though the proud may utterly deride me,
I do not turn from your law.
When I remember your judgments of old,
these, O LORD, console me.

I am seized with indignation at the wicked
who forsake your law.
Your statutes have become my song
wherever I dwell.

I remember your name in the nighttime,
and I keep your law.
This has been my lot,
for I have kept your precepts.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Romans 15:8b-9, 12-13

Christ became a minister of the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, but so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written: / "Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles / and sing praises to your name." / And again Isaiah says: / "The root of Jesse shall come, / raised up to

rule the Gentiles; / in him shall the Gentiles hope.” / May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the holy Spirit.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The root of Jesse will be a signal for all peoples, a sign of salvation.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of truth, your covenant of love gives us life. In awe we pray: *R.* Faithful God, hear our prayer.

Give justice to those who are oppressed, unjustly accused, or held captive. *R.*

Confirm our faith by your divine guidance. *R.*

Give unending life to those who have died with their hearts fixed on Christ. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing so we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Wednesday, December 4

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 19:8-11

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

The law of the LORD is perfect;
it revives the soul.
The decrees of the LORD are steadfast;
they give wisdom to the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right;
they gladden the heart.
The command of the LORD is clear;
it gives light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is pure,
abiding forever.
The judgments of the LORD are true;
they are, all of them, righteous.

They are more to be desired than gold,
than quantities of gold.
And sweeter are they than honey,
than honey flowing from the comb.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 31:23-25

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: When I restore their fortunes in the land of Judah and in its cities, they shall again use this greeting: “May the LORD bless you, Tent of Justice, Holy Mountain!” Judah and all its cities,

the farmers and those who lead the flock shall dwell there together. For I will slake the thirst of the faint; the appetite of all the weary I will satisfy.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

We have eaten, been satisfied, and had much left over, for the Lord has blessed us.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Righteous God, your judgments are true and just. In hope we pray: **R/**. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Establish your peace in the Holy Land, and heal those whose lives have been ravaged by war. **R/**.

Give wisdom, health, and fortitude to Pope Francis. **R/**.

Gladden the hearts of those who seek you in the single vocation. **R/**.

Our Father . . .

May God bless us with peace, satisfy our hope, and lead us along the path of wisdom, through Jesus our brother. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. John Damascene

Doctor of the Church (ca. 657–749)

John Damascene grew up in the Muslim city of Damascus, where he inherited his father's office as collector of revenue. In time he resigned this post and entered the monastery of St. Sabas in Jerusalem. There his theological creativity and his enthusiasm for composing hymns aroused the resentment of his more straitlaced fellow monks.

It was for his defense of icons, however, that his lasting reputation was assured. The controversy over icons was as bitter as any dispute over the Trinity. Critics charged that the veneration of icons was idolatrous. Their defenders responded that it was not the icon that was venerated but the spiritual reality it represented. According to St. John, what was at stake was the capacity of material things to serve as a vehicle for divine grace. This, he argued, was the very basis of the Incarnation—the question of whether Christ, a true man, was truly the image (icon) of the invisible God.

The status of icons was not resolved until the Second Council of Nicaea (787), long after John's death. In the meantime, he was denounced by critics as an idol worshiper. Ironically, it was only his residence in Jerusalem—a city under Muslim control and thus beyond the power of the Christian emperor—that assured his safety.

St. John was proclaimed a Doctor of the Church in 1890. His feast is celebrated on December 4.

"I do not worship matter, I worship the God of matter, who became matter for my sake, and deigned to inhabit matter, who worked out my salvation through matter."

—St. John Damascene

Mass

Wednesday of the First Week of Advent

[St. John Damascene, opt. memorial]

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Habakkuk 2:3; 1 Corinthians 4:5

The Lord will come and he will not delay. / He will illumine what is hidden in darkness / and reveal himself to all the nations.

COLLECT

Prepare our hearts, we pray, O Lord our God,
by your divine power,
so that at the coming of Christ your Son
we may be found worthy of the banquet of eternal life
and merit to receive heavenly nourishment from his hands.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 25:6-10a

*The LORD invites us to his feast and
will wipe away the tears from all faces.*

On this mountain the LORD of hosts / will provide for
all peoples / A feast of rich food and choice wines, /
juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines. / On this mountain
he will destroy / the veil that veils all peoples, / The web that
is woven over all nations; / he will destroy death forever. /
The Lord GOD will wipe away / the tears from all faces; /
The reproach of his people he will remove / from the whole
earth; for the LORD has spoken.

On that day it will be said: / “Behold our God, to whom
we looked to save us! / This is the LORD for whom we looked;
/ let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!” / For the
hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

R. (6cd) I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

In verdant pastures he gives me repose;
Beside restful waters he leads me;
he refreshes my soul. **R.**

He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
With your rod and your staff
that give me courage. **R.**

You spread the table before me
in the sight of my foes;
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows. **R.**

Only goodness and kindness follow me
all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for years to come. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Behold, the Lord comes to save his people;
blessed are those prepared to meet him.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

15:29-37

Jesus heals many and multiplies the bread.

At that time: Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee, went up on the mountain, and sat down there. Great crowds came to him, having with them the lame, the blind, the deformed, the mute, and many others. They placed them at his feet, and he cured them. The crowds were amazed

when they saw the mute speaking, the deformed made whole, the lame walking, and the blind able to see, and they glorified the God of Israel.

Jesus summoned his disciples and said, "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way." The disciples said to him, "Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?" Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" "Seven," they replied, "and a few fish." He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over—seven baskets full.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray,
be offered to you unceasingly,
to complete what was begun in sacred mystery
and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 40:10; 35:5

Behold, our Lord will come with power / and will
enlighten the eyes of his servants.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We implore your mercy, Lord,
that this divine sustenance
may cleanse us of our faults
and prepare us for the coming feasts.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Feasting and Communion

We stand today, in this first week of Advent, between two great days of feasting: Thanksgiving and Christmas. And we will likely have many Christmas parties between those two celebrations. Today's readings speak of two miraculous feasts. Isaiah foresees a "feast of rich food and choice wines," while Jesus provides food for a multitude from seven loaves and a few fish.

The richness of Isaiah's feast and the wonder of the multiplication of the loaves naturally focus our attention on the food and drink. Yet we know that the joy of our celebrations also depends on the context of the meal, the people with whom we share it. The food and drink are essential, of course, but they really serve to bring people together and to facilitate sharing of love and life with one another.

The goal of such gatherings is communion, shaping and deepening the bonds between the diners. Isaiah speaks of God gathering "all peoples" and wiping away "the tears from all faces." Salvation involves becoming united with all people and with their Creator. Jesus focuses on the people and their needs, "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd." The miraculous meal unifies the crowd: "They all ate and were satisfied."

The eucharistic language around that meal (gave thanks, broke, and gave) reminds us that the Eucharist, too, is not just about the bread and wine but is intended to bring us into communion with one another and with the Lord. At the end of Mass, we might make Isaiah's words our own: "This is the LORD for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!"

Fr. Lawrence E. Mick

Lawrence E. Mick is a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and a writer and consultant on the liturgy and sacraments.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 119:57-64

You, O LORD, are my portion;
I have promised to obey your words.
With all my heart I implore your favor;
as with your promise, have mercy.

I have pondered my ways,
and turned my steps to your decrees.
I make haste; I do not delay
to obey your commands.

Though the nets of the wicked ensnare me,
your law I do not forget.
At midnight I will rise and thank you
for your righteous decrees.

I am a friend of all who revere you,
who keep your precepts.
O LORD, your faithful love fills the earth.
Teach me your statutes.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Acts 17:24-28a

The God who made the world and all that is in it, the Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands because he needs anything. Rather it is he who gives to everyone life and breath and everything. He made from one the whole human race to dwell on the entire surface of the

earth, and he fixed the ordered seasons and the boundaries of their regions, so that people might seek God, even perhaps grope for him and find him, though indeed he is not far from any one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being.’”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

This is the Lord to whom we looked to save us.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Saving God, your love fills the earth and the heavens.

In trust we pray: *R.* Be with us, O God.

You are our inheritance: renew the faith of those who have lost hope. *R.*

You author life: protect the dignity of the unborn. *R.*

You are forever present: calm those who feel weary, anxious, or troubled. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the favor of God be with us and establish the work of our hands, hearts, and minds, through Jesus, in whom we live and move and have our being. Amen.

Thursday, December 5

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 15

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

LORD, who may abide in your tent,
and dwell on your holy mountain?

Whoever walks without fault;
who does what is righteous,
and speaks with heartfelt truth.

Whoever does not slander with the tongue;
who does no wrong to a neighbor,
who casts no slur on a friend,
who looks with scorn on the wicked,
but honors those who fear the LORD.

Whoever keeps an oath, whatever the cost,
who lends no money at interest,
and accepts no bribes against the innocent.

Such a one shall never be shaken.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 24:3-5

By wisdom a house is built, / by understanding it is established; / And by knowledge its rooms are filled / with every precious and pleasing possession. / The wise are more powerful than the strong, / and the learned, than the mighty.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

If you listen to my words, you will be like the wise who build a house on rock.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of wisdom, you are the source of all hope and peace. In faith we pray: **R/**. God, teach us your ways.

Help us to listen for the prompting of the Holy Spirit in all that we do today. **R/**.

Transform refugee systems to reflect your hospitality and care for our neighbors. **R/**.

Prosper efforts to lessen the use of plastics and to keep waters clean. **R/**.

Our Father . . .

May the praise of God be always on our lips and in our hearts, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. Crispina

Martyr (d. 304)

Crispina, a Christian noblewoman from North Africa, was the mother of several children. During a period of anti-Christian persecution in 304, she was arrested and brought before the proconsul of Theveste. From the transcript of her trial, she emerges as a woman of exceptional courage and self-possession. Clearly unimpressed by the power of her judge, she confronted his threats with stern patience and uncompromising dignity.

When the proconsul proclaimed that she must be stupid not to worship the gods of Rome, she replied that she worshiped none other than the true and living God: “A religion that inflicts torture on those who do not adhere to it is not a religion. . . . I have remained a stranger to your rites, and as long as I live I shall never honor them.”

When her judge asked whether she wanted to live a long time or die in torment, Crispina replied: “If I wanted to die and deliver my soul to the ravages of eternal fire, I would put my faith in your demons.” Upon hearing the sentence of death, she proclaimed: “I bless my God and thank him for the grace he accords me in thus freeing me from your hands. Thanks be to him.”

After marking herself with the sign of the cross, she knelt and offered her neck to the executioner.

“I sacrifice to the eternal God who made the sea, the green fields, the sand of the desert. What have I to fear from those who are only his creatures?”

—St. Crispina

Mass

Thursday of the First Week of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Psalm 119 (118):151-152

You, O Lord, are close, and all your ways are truth. / From of old I have known of your decrees, for you are eternal.

COLLECT

Stir up your power, O Lord,
and come to our help with mighty strength,
that what our sins impede
the grace of your mercy may hasten.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

26:1-6

Let in a nation that is just, one that keeps faith.

On that day they will sing this song in the land of Judah:
/ “A strong city have we; / he sets up walls and ram-
parts to protect us. / Open up the gates / to let in a nation
that is just, / one that keeps faith. / A nation of firm purpose
you keep in peace; / in peace, for its trust in you.”

Trust in the LORD forever! / For the LORD is an eternal
Rock. / He humbles those in high places, / and the lofty city
he brings down; / He tumbles it to the ground, / levels it
with the dust. / It is trampled underfoot by the needy, / by
the footsteps of the poor.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

118:1 and 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a

R. (26a) **Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**
or: R. Alleluia.

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his mercy endures forever.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in man.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in princes. **R.**

Open to me the gates of justice;
I will enter them and give thanks to the LORD.

This gate is the LORD's;
the just shall enter it.

I will give thanks to you, for you have answered me
and have been my savior. **R.**

O LORD, grant salvation!

O LORD, grant prosperity!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD;
we bless you from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God, and he has given us light. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Isaiah 55:6

Seek the LORD while he may be found;
call him while he is near.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

7:21, 24-27

*Whoever does the will of my Father
will enter the Kingdom of heaven.*

Jesus said to his disciples: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make,
gathered from among your gifts to us,
and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here below
gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Titus 2:12-13

Let us live justly and devoutly in this age, / as we await
the blessed hope / and the coming of the glory of our
great God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them
to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

A Time to Build Up

The imagery in today's readings invokes the art of construction, from Isaiah's "strong city" with "walls and ramparts to protect us" to Jesus' parable of the "wise man who built his house on rock." As Advent begins our liturgical year, we might turn our thoughts to building our own sturdy house of faith, from the foundation up. We don't want to be "like a fool who built his house on sand."

This new year begins at the close of a very long year: our existing houses may require some maintenance right about now. Advent, the season of patient preparation, reminds us to take the time to repair and fortify our metaphorical houses to welcome Jesus. Soon the joyous strings of Christmas lights will blink and beckon from our actual houses, symbolizing the light of Christ coming into our weary world. We will welcome God's holy radiance into our homes.

But we know from experience that we will need a firm foundation of faith to meet the unknown challenges of the coming year, to withstand the rains and floods and winds that will surely come to knock us about and even try to collapse our structures. If our houses are built on the rock of Christ, we can face any trial or tragedy that threatens to wreck us. We can rest in the prayer that God's will be done.

May our houses stand strong and resilient, secure in the Advent promise of God dwelling among us.

Valerie Schultz

Valerie Schultz is a freelance writer and essayist. She is author of Overdue: A Dewey Decimal System of Grace and A Hill of Beans: The Grace of Everyday Troubles.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 96:7-13

Ascribe to the LORD, you families of peoples,
Ascribe to the LORD glory and power;
Ascribe to the LORD the glory of God's name.

Bring an offering and enter God's courts;
worship the LORD in holy splendor.
O tremble before God, all the earth.

Say to the nations, "The LORD is king,"
who made firm the world in its place,
and who will judge the peoples in fairness.

Let the heavens rejoice and earth be glad;
let the sea and all within it thunder praise.
Let the field and all it bears rejoice.

Then all the trees of the wood will shout for joy
at the presence of the LORD who comes;
God comes to judge the earth.
The Lord will judge the world with righteousness,
and the peoples with faithfulness.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

1 Thessalonians 2:10-13

You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers. As you know, we treated each one of you as a father treats his children, exhorting and encouraging you and

insisting that you conduct yourselves as worthy of the God who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

And for this reason we too give thanks to God unceasingly, that, in receiving the word of God from hearing us, you received not a human word but, as it truly is, the word of God, which is now at work in you who believe.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Trust in the Lord forever! The Lord is an eternal Rock.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

All-powerful God, you are clothed in glory and splendor.
In joy we pray: *R.* God, come to our aid.

Enliven those who preach and teach your Word. *R.*

Embolden us to speak the truth in love. *R.*

Spark creativity and increase resources for those who work to help others out of poverty. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the Lord make our love increase for each other and establish our hearts in holiness before God at the coming of Jesus. Amen.

Friday, December 6

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 119:97-104

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

O LORD, how I love your law:
my meditation all the day!
Your command makes me wiser than my foes,
for it is with me always.

I have more insight than all who teach me,
for I ponder your decrees.
I have gained more understanding than my elders,
for I keep your precepts.

I keep my feet from every evil path,
to obey your word.
I have not turned away from your decrees;
you yourself have taught me.

How sweet is your promise to my tongue,
more than honey in the mouth.
I gain understanding from your precepts,
and so I hate all false ways.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Micah 7:7-9

As for me, I will look to the LORD, / I will wait for God
my savior; / my God will hear me! / Do not rejoice over
me, my enemy! / though I have fallen, I will arise; / though
I sit in darkness, the LORD is my light. / I will endure the

wrath of the LORD / because I have sinned against him, /
Until he pleads my case, / and establishes my right. / He will
bring me forth to the light; / I will see his righteousness.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or
another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Generous God, you lavished love and grace upon
St. Nicholas. In company with him we pray: *R.* Lead us to
your light, O God.

Fulfill your promises for those who are persecuted for
their faith. *R.*

Prosper efforts to reach out to children who lack good
education, sufficient material goods, or emotional
support. *R.*

Give wisdom and courage to those who are making
vocational decisions. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God keep us from every evil path and guide us along
the everlasting way, through Jesus our Savior. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. Nicholas

Bishop of Myra (Fourth Century)

St. Nicholas is one of the most popular of all saints: patron of Russia and Greece and of many classes of people, from children to prostitutes. Many hundreds of churches are named after him, and his feast day is an occasion for ardent celebration in many parts of the globe. But as for his biography, it may be summarized in the simple statement that he served as bishop of Myra, a provincial capital in Asia Minor sometime in the fourth century.

The most curious development in his cult has been the amalgamation of this fourth-century bishop with the features of a Scandinavian elf. The transfiguration of St. Nicholas into Santa Claus has been traced to Dutch Protestants living in New Amsterdam. As the story made its way back to England, the familiar features of Father Christmas gradually took shape until he had achieved iconographic status.

In this role there are at least echoes of certain ancient legends. In one story Nicholas rescued three young girls whose father, for want of a dowry, was about to sell them into prostitution. Nicholas tossed three bags of gold through their window, enough to pay the dowry for each sister. In another story he restored three little boys to life after they were murdered by an evil maniac. Well does he deserve to be remembered as the patron of children, honored not just as the purveyor of toys but as a protector of the innocent, particularly the victims of human trafficking.

“The Giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic His giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves.”

—Attributed to St. Nicholas

Mass

Friday of the First Week of Advent

[*St. Nicholas, opt. memorial*]

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Behold, the Lord will come / descending with splendor to
visit his people with peace, / and he will bestow on them
eternal life.

COLLECT

Stir up your power, we pray, O Lord, and come,
that with you to protect us,
we may find rescue
from the pressing dangers of our sins,
and with you to set us free,
we may be found worthy of salvation.
Who live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 29:17-24

On that day, the eyes of the blind shall see.

Thus says the Lord GOD: / But a very little while, / and
Lebanon shall be changed into an orchard, / and the
orchard be regarded as a forest! / On that day the deaf shall
hear / the words of a book; / And out of gloom and darkness,
/ the eyes of the blind shall see. / The lowly will ever find joy
in the LORD, / and the poor rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.
/ For the tyrant will be no more / and the arrogant will have
gone; / All who are alert to do evil will be cut off, / those
whose mere word condemns a man, / Who ensnare his
defender at the gate, / and leave the just man with an empty
claim. / Therefore thus says the LORD, / the God of the house

of Jacob, / who redeemed Abraham: / Now Jacob shall have
nothing to be ashamed of, / nor shall his face grow pale. /
When his children see / the work of my hands in his midst,
/ They shall keep my name holy; / they shall reverence the
Holy One of Jacob, / and be in awe of the God of Israel. /
Those who err in spirit shall acquire understanding, / and
those who find fault shall receive instruction.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

27:1, 4, 13-14

R. (1a) The Lord is my light and my salvation.

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge;
of whom should I be afraid? **R.**

One thing I ask of the LORD;
this I seek:

To dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,

That I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD
and contemplate his temple. **R.**

I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD
in the land of the living.

Wait for the LORD with courage;
be stouthearted, and wait for the LORD. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Behold, our Lord shall come with power;
he will enlighten the eyes of his servants.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

9:27-31

Believing in Jesus, two who were blind are cured.

As Jesus passed by, two blind men followed him, crying out, "Son of David, have pity on us!" When he entered the house, the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they said to him. Then he touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." And their eyes were opened. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." But they went out and spread word of him through all that land.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers and offerings,
and, since we have no merits to plead our cause,
come, we pray, to our rescue
with the protection of your mercy.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Philippians 3:20-21

We await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, / who will change
our mortal bodies, / to conform with his glorified body.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, through our partaking in this mystery,
you may teach us to judge wisely the things of earth
and hold firm to the things of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

The Inbreaking of Light

In her book *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, Annie Dillard writes of a girl, blind from birth, who gains sight after an operation. She is shown a tree for the first time. Astonished, she calls it “the tree with the lights in it.” Dillard writes that she herself spent years searching for the tree with the lights in it, desiring the awe the girl experienced. One day, out of the blue, Dillard sees it. “I had my whole life been a bell, and never knew it until at that moment I was lifted and struck,” she writes. I want that awe, too, but my attention is usually too diffuse to notice opportunities for it.

Both of today’s readings, Isaiah’s poetry and Matthew’s story of the healing Jesus, include blindness giving way to sight. The inbreaking of light into darkness is a big Advent theme in these short days here in the Northern Hemisphere. The birth of Christ, the Light of the World, invites us to see in a new way. And what does it mean to see the world lit by the light of Christ? Perhaps it includes cultivating the sort of wonder Dillard found in the girl born blind.

God, who came to the manger out of unimaginable love for the planet and all of us on it, delights in creation. To share in that delight, to take a grateful breath of the bracing winter air or to see the tree with the lights in it—or even to slow ourselves down because we desperately *want* to see the tree with the lights in it—is one of the most sacred things we can do.

Michael Jordan Laskey

Michael Jordan Laskey is the communications director for the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States and the author of The Ministry of Peace and Justice.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 40:6-11

How many are the wonders and designs
that you have worked for us, O LORD my God;
you have no equal.
Should I wish to proclaim or speak of them,
they would be more than I can tell!

You delight not in sacrifice and offering,
but in an open ear.
You do not ask for holocaust and sin offering.

Then I said, “Behold, I have come.”
In the scroll of the book it stands written of me:
“I delight to do your will, O my God;
your instruction lies deep within me.”

Your righteousness I have proclaimed
in the great assembly.
My lips I have not sealed;
you know it, O LORD.

Your saving help I have not hidden in my heart;
of your faithful salvation I have spoken.
I made no secret of your gracious love
and your truth to the great assembly.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:18-21

May the eyes of [your] hearts be enlightened, that you
may know what is the hope that belongs to his call,

what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might, which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Let it be done for you according to your faith.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Creating God, you work countless wonders for us.
We praise you and pray: *R.* God, implant your law in our hearts.

Increase our understanding of the plight of refugees, immigrants, and migrants. *R.*

Show mercy to those who experience regret, failure, or conversion. *R.*

Give prudence, wisdom, and right judgment to those who work through the night. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the wonders of God lead us to awe, worship, and praise, through Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Saturday, December 7

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 72:1-4, 12-14, 17

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

O God, give your judgment to the king,
to a king's son your righteousness,
that he may judge your people in righteousness,
and your poor in right judgment.

May the mountains bring forth peace for the people,
and the hills bear peace in righteousness.

May he defend the poor of the people,
and save the children of the needy,
and crush the oppressor.

For he shall rescue the needy when they cry,
the poor who have no one to help.
He will have pity on the weak and the needy,
and save the lives of the needy.
From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
to him their blood is dear.

May his name endure forever,
his name continue like the sun.
Every tribe shall be blest in him,
all nations shall call him blessed.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Leviticus 26:3-6

If you live in accordance with my statutes and are careful
to observe my commandments, I will give you your rains

in due season, so that the land will yield its crops, and the trees their fruit; your threshing will last till vintage time, and your vintage till the time for sowing, and you will eat your fill of food, and live securely in your land. I will establish peace in the land, and you will lie down to rest with no one to cause you anxiety. I will rid the country of ravenous beasts, and no sword shall sweep across your land.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The Lord will be most gracious to you when you cry out.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Just God, you blessed St. Ambrose with scholarship, charity, and oratory skill. In company with him we pray:

R. Giver of every gift, hear our prayer.

Give compassion, openness, and courage to bishops. **R.**

Inspire joy in music ministers, liturgical composers, choirs, and choir directors. **R.**

Enkindle wisdom in theologians and Scripture scholars. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May God lead us to act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. Ambrose

Bishop and Doctor of the Church (339–397)

In 374, following the death of the bishop of Milan, the local Church was bitterly divided. With violent tempers threatening to erupt, Ambrose, the provincial governor, went to the basilica and exhorted the assembly to find a peaceful solution. Suddenly a voice rose up: “Ambrose for bishop.” The cry was quickly taken up by the entire assembly. Ambrose, who was not yet baptized, was horrified. Nevertheless, he acquiesced. Within one week he was baptized, confirmed, ordained, and consecrated bishop of Milan. Making up for lost time, he promptly gave away all his property, adopted a strenuous habit of prayer, and immersed himself in the study of Scripture and theology. A zealous protector of the poor, he oversaw the preparation of catechumens and the training of clergy. He was responsible for innumerable conversions, most famously that of St. Augustine, whom he personally instructed and baptized.

Though Ambrose wrote many books, he is best remembered for his deft leadership of the Church in a tumultuous era. The Arian heresy, which denied the full divinity of Christ, had divided the Church into rival factions. When the emperor tried to impose civic harmony by ordering Ambrose to cede one of his churches for use by the Arians, Ambrose refused. “The emperor is in the church,” he said, “not over it.” The emperor backed down. Ambrose died on April 4, 397. His feast day is December 7.

“When we speak about justice, we are speaking about Christ. When we speak about peace, we are speaking about Christ. When we speak about truth and life and redemption, we are speaking about Christ.”

—St. Ambrose

Mass

St. Ambrose, Memorial

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Sirach 15:5

In the midst of the Church he opened his mouth, / and
the Lord filled him with the spirit of wisdom and under-
standing / and clothed him in a robe of glory.

COLLECT

O God, who made the Bishop Saint Ambrose
a teacher of the Catholic faith
and a model of apostolic courage,
raise up in your Church men after your own heart
to govern her with courage and wisdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

30:19-21, 23-26

The Merciful One will show you mercy when you cry out.

Thus says the Lord GOD, / the Holy One of Israel: /
O people of Zion, who dwell in Jerusalem, / no more
will you weep; / He will be gracious to you when you cry
out, / as soon as he hears he will answer you. / The Lord will
give you the bread you need / and the water for which you
thirst. / No longer will your Teacher hide himself, / but with
your own eyes you shall see your Teacher, / While from
behind, a voice shall sound in your ears: / “This is the way;
walk in it,” / when you would turn to the right or to the left.

He will give rain for the seed / that you sow in the ground,
/ And the wheat that the soil produces / will be rich and
abundant. / On that day your flock will be given pasture /
and the lamb will graze in spacious meadows; / The oxen
and the asses that till the ground / will eat silage tossed to

them / with shovel and pitchfork. / Upon every high mountain and lofty hill / there will be streams of running water. / On the day of the great slaughter, / when the towers fall, / The light of the moon will be like that of the sun / and the light of the sun will be seven times greater / like the light of seven days. / On the day the LORD binds up the wounds of his people, / he will heal the bruises left by his blows.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

R. (see Isaiah 30:18d) Blessed are all who wait for the Lord.

Praise the LORD, for he is good;
sing praise to our God, for he is gracious;
it is fitting to praise him.

The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem;
the dispersed of Israel he gathers. *R.*

He heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

He tells the number of the stars;
he calls each by name. *R.*

Great is our LORD and mighty in power:
to his wisdom there is no limit.

The LORD sustains the lowly;
the wicked he casts to the ground. *R.*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Isaiah 33:22

The LORD is our Judge, our Lawgiver, our King;
he it is who will save us.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

9:35–10:1, 5a, 6-8

*At the sight of the crowds,
Jesus' heart was moved with pity for them.*

Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the

Kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest."

Then he summoned his Twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness.

Jesus sent out these Twelve after instructing them thus, "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give." The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we celebrate the divine mysteries, O Lord, we pray,
may the Holy Spirit fill us with that light of faith
by which he constantly enlightened Saint Ambrose
for the spreading of your glory.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Psalm 1:2, 3

He who ponders the law of the Lord day and night / will
yield fruit in due season.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lead us, who have been strengthened
by the power of this Sacrament, O Lord,
so to profit from the teaching of Saint Ambrose
that, hastening fearlessly along your paths,
we may be prepared for the delights of the eternal banquet.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Advent Yearning

The ache of the human heart for God is called hope. It is longing born of religious love. As Christians we believe that we live always in hope. We live always in advent. Of ourselves we have no being. We draw being from the One who is. Christian conviction holds that I do not have any real existence apart from this relationship. Said simply, I live in God or I do not have real enduring life. I am “a dead man, a dead woman, walking.” This conviction puts us in a position of radical poverty before God. I literally have nothing of my own. I draw my very being from this One who gives me life. Others have been instruments of that giving—my parents, my mentors, and all those who have helped me become who I am. But it also puts me in a position of radical wonder. For I am a most amazing being. I have a history and a story. I will be different tomorrow because of what happens today. I love wildly, and hope expectantly, and believe resolutely. I laugh and cry, dance and sing, and argue my convictions. This fact puts me in a most marvelous position to ponder Advent in its deepest significance.

My humanness flourishes because it is in relationship with that Holy, whether I acknowledge it or refuse to acknowledge it. When I acknowledge it, I come into a most amazing truth. *There is Someone in this dark with me.* (Thank you, Jessica Powers!) My Christian life is one of seeing in a glass darkly. But Someone is with me, or I couldn't even be. What would happen if I remembered this quietly each morning?

Sr. Carla Mae Streeter, *Seasons of the Soul*

Carla Mae Streeter, OP, is professor emerita of systematic theology and spirituality at Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis, Missouri.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

PSALM 110

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

The LORD's revelation to my lord:
"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your foes your footstool."

The LORD will send from Zion
your scepter of power:
rule in the midst of your foes.

With you is princely rule
on the day of your power.
In holy splendor, from the womb before the dawn,
I have begotten you.

The LORD has sworn an oath he will not change:
"You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek."

The Lord at your right hand
shatters rulers on the day of God's wrath.

The Lord brings a judgment on the nations,
and heaps the bodies high,
and shatters heads throughout the wide earth.

He shall drink from the stream by the wayside,
and therefore he shall lift up his head.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:6-11

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in propor-

tion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Freely we have received; freely we share with one another.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Gracious God, you created all things out of love. In awe of your intense diversity we pray: *R.* God, fill us with your love.

Fashion your Church into a place of hospitality and welcome for all people. *R.*

Uphold efforts to protect forests, wildlife, and flora. *R.*

Unite people of faith in care for the earth. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God make us fervent in spirit for living the Gospel, through Jesus, the Love of God. Amen.



Sunday, December 8

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 100

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Cry out with joy to the LORD, all the earth.
Serve the LORD with gladness.
Come before God, singing for joy.

Know that the LORD is God,
who made us, to whom we belong.
We are God's people, the sheep of God's flock.

Enter the temple gates with thanksgiving
and its courts with songs of praise.
Give thanks and bless God's name.

Indeed, how good is the LORD,
eternal God's merciful love.
God is faithful from age to age.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Tobit 13:15-16a, 16c-18

My soul, bless the Lord, the great King; / for Jerusalem
will be rebuilt as his house forever.

The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and
emerald, / and all your walls with precious stones. / The
towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, / and their
battlements with purest gold. / The streets of Jerusalem will
be paved / with rubies and stones of Ophir; / The gates of

Jerusalem will sing hymns of gladness, / and all its houses will cry out, Hallelujah! / Blessed be the God of Israel for all ages! / For in you the blessed will bless the holy name forever and ever.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Jerusalem, you will be named by God forever the peace of justice!

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Saving God, you are our constant hope. In trust we pray:

R. God, fill us with your glory.

Advance your Church's commitment to prayer, justice, and peace. **R.**

Instruct Pope Francis, bishops, pastors, and catechists in your ways of wisdom and compassion. **R.**

Energize us to care for those who are homebound or not served by their faith community. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May the Word of God bring wisdom and joy to our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mass

Second Sunday of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 30:19, 30

O people of Sion, behold, / the Lord will come to save the nations, / and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard / in the joy of your heart.

(The Gloria is omitted.)

COLLECT

Almighty and merciful God,
may no earthly undertaking hinder those
who set out in haste to meet your Son,
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom
gain us admittance to his company.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Baruch 5:1-9

Jerusalem, God will show your splendor.

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery;
/ put on the splendor of glory from God forever: /
wrapped in the cloak of justice from God, / bear on your
head the mitre / that displays the glory of the eternal name.
/ For God will show all the earth your splendor: / you will
be named by God forever / the peace of justice, the glory of
God's worship.

Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights; / look to the east
and see your children / gathered from the east and the west
/ at the word of the Holy One, / rejoicing that they are re-
membered by God. / Led away on foot by their enemies they

left you: / but God will bring them back to you / borne aloft
 in glory as on royal thrones. / For God has commanded /
 that every lofty mountain be made low, / and that the age-
 old depths and gorges / be filled to level ground, / that Israel
 may advance secure in the glory of God. / The forests and
 every fragrant kind of tree / have overshadowed Israel at
 God's command; / for God is leading Israel in joy / by the
 light of his glory, / with his mercy and justice for company.
 The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6

R. (3) The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled
 with joy.

When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion,
 we were like men dreaming.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
 and our tongue with rejoicing. **R.**

Then they said among the nations,
 "The LORD has done great things for them."

The LORD has done great things for us;
 we are glad indeed. **R.**

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
 like the torrents in the southern desert.

Those who sow in tears
 shall reap rejoicing. **R.**

Although they go forth weeping,
 carrying the seed to be sown,
 they shall come back rejoicing,
 carrying their sheaves. **R.**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

1:4-6, 8-11

Show yourselves pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

Brothers and sisters: I pray always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Luke 3:4, 6

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:
all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 3:1-6

All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the desert. John went throughout the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: / *A voice of one crying out in the desert: / "Prepare the way of the Lord, / make straight his paths. /*

Every valley shall be filled / and every mountain and hill shall be made low. / The winding roads shall be made straight, / and the rough ways made smooth, / and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers and offerings,
and, since we have no merits to plead our cause,
come, we pray, to our rescue
with the protection of your mercy.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Baruch 5:5; 4:36

Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights, / and behold
the joy which comes to you from God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, through our partaking in this mystery,
you may teach us to judge wisely the things of earth
and hold firm to the things of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

The God of History

For some people, the opening lines in today's Gospel can seem like "too much information." The listing of the imperial and religious leaders, the accounting for what time in their

rule or ministry, and the name-dropping of geographic locations can appear as irrelevant details when it comes to telling the story of Jesus Christ. But another way to look at this admittedly boring set of facts is to recognize the importance of history in Christian faith.

Christianity is not a religion that believes in an abstract, distant, and disconnected God. On the contrary, the central element of Christian faith is that our God is radically personal and present. This same God, who loves us so much, enters into relationship with us as one of us through the Incarnation. And that is a real, historical, and material fact. We are reminded today that John the Baptist was not announcing the incoming of God in some vague sense, but in an imminent way and at a specific moment in history. That is part of what makes his prophetic cry different from Isaiah's in the first reading, even if the Bible recounts their similar use of language.

As we continue our Advent journey, drawing closer to the celebration of Christ's birth, let us remember that the God of history whom we worship still meets us in our specific time and place, calling us to increase our love for one another.

..... Fr. Daniel P. Horan

Daniel P. Horan, OFM, is a Franciscan friar, professor, and director of the Center for the Study of Spirituality at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. He is the author of several books, including Reading, Praying, Living Pope Francis's Rejoice and Be Glad, and Not Because of Sin.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 118:15-23

There are shouts of joy and salvation
in the tents of the righteous.
“The LORD’s right hand has done mighty deeds;
The LORD’s right hand is exalted.
The LORD’s right hand has done mighty deeds.”

I shall not die, I shall live
and recount the deeds of the LORD.
The LORD has punished me severely,
but did not hand me over to death.

Open to me the gates of righteousness:
I will enter and thank the LORD.
This is the gate of the LORD,
where the just may enter.
I will thank you, for you have answered,
and you are my savior.

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone.
By the LORD has this been done,
a marvel in our eyes.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Romans 12:1-2

I urge you therefore . . . by the mercies of God, to offer
your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God,
your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this

age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

May you be found rich in the harvest of justice that Jesus Christ has ripened in you.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Creating God, you are the Alpha and the Omega, ever ancient and ever new. In hope we pray: *R.* Transform us, O God.

Open our minds and hearts to greater understanding of the Scriptures. *R.*

Increase our understanding of how to live in right relationship with one another and the earth. *R.*

Prosper efforts to end the death penalty and all forms of torture. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the God of marvelous deeds gladden our hearts and fill our hearts with rejoicing, through Jesus our salvation. Amen.

December 8–14

Second Week of Advent

Within the Word

Baruch Speaks to a Grieving People

In Alice Walker's now classic novel *The Color Purple*, the arrival of the lively Shug Avery transforms the life of Miss Celie, who lives buried in poverty and violence. When Shug informs Celie that she plans to move on, Celie complains that as soon as she leaves, the violence begins again.

The novel does not depict Shug's departure, but the movie version of *The Color Purple* creates this scene. Celie (played by Whoopi Goldberg) stares speechless at Shug (played by Margaret Avery), who has boarded the departing car. As the car pulls away, Celie collapses to the ground and lies still. The woman who gave her hope is gone, and Celie's entire body expresses her grief. Her loss is beyond anything that words could communicate.

Many of us have known this kind of loss and grief—when we feel like our legs are about to give out or they do indeed give out and down we go to the ground, flattened by a loss, turfed by grief. Such moments in our own lives allow us to feel deeply the joy of Baruch's proclamation this Sunday.

Baruch spoke to a grieving community in Jerusalem that had witnessed the destruction of their city around the year 586 BCE at the hands of the Babylonians. It is difficult for us to comprehend the depth of loss and despair that filled the hearts of the remaining inhabitants. Everything was lost: the temple, the land, and the people. It seemed that God's promises had been annulled. Like Miss Celie at Shug's departure, the Jerusalemites had collapsed to the ground in grief (Lam 2:10):

The elders of daughter Zion
 sit silently on the ground;
 They cast dust on their heads
 and dress in sackcloth.

Jerusalem, personified as a woman, cries out: God has “trampled me into the dust” (Lam 3:16).

Baruch’s joyous proclamation was addressed directly to these mourners: “Up, Jerusalem!” (Bar 5:5), “take off your robe of mourning and misery” (Bar 5:1). Get rid of that sackcloth and climb up onto the heights to look east and west. There they will see the Jewish refugees coming back home. Grief and loss are not God’s final word to them. There is a new beginning, a new hope.

Baruch confronts themes that are universal: the experience of healing after violence, of restoration after destruction, of hope after grief. Jerusalem’s sackcloth is transformed into a mantle of justice (Bar 5:2). The dust that was on their heads now becomes a diadem of God’s glory.

This is our Advent hope: that Baruch’s prophetic words might come to pass, that our moments of despair, personal and communal, might be transformed into hope, that we too might rise to put on a mantle of justice in order to create a more just, peaceful, and merciful world. In *The Color Purple*, Miss Celie eventually rises from the ground and leaves behind her violent world to “enter into the Creation,” or in Baruch’s words, to be led into joy by the light of God’s glory (Bar 5:9). His words fill us with hope just as they did for the people of Jerusalem centuries ago.

—Fr. Craig E. Morrison

Craig E. Morrison, O.Carm., teaches at the Pontifical Biblical Institute and lives at the ancient Roman parish dedicated to St. Martin of Tours. He is a member of the retreat team at Mount Carmel Spiritual Center in Niagara Falls, Canada.



Monday, December 9

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 138:1-3, 6-8

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

I thank you, LORD, with all my heart;
you have heard the words of my mouth.
In the presence of the angels I praise you.
I bow down toward your holy temple.

I give thanks to your name
for you have exalted over all
your name and your promise.
On the day I called, you answered me;
you increased the strength of my soul.

The LORD is high, yet looks on the lowly,
and the haughty God knows from afar.
You give me life though I walk amid affliction;
you stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes.

With your right hand you save me;
the LORD will accomplish this for me.
O LORD, your merciful love is eternal;
discard not the work of your hands.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 61:10-11

will rejoice heartily in the LORD, / my being exults in my
God; / For he has clothed me with garments of salvation,

/ and wrapped me in a robe of justice, / Like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, / as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. / As the earth brings forth its shoots, / and a garden makes its seeds spring up, / So will the Lord GOD make justice spring up, / and praise before all the nations.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

All generations will call me blessed; the Almighty has done great things for me.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Loving God, you accomplish all things and guide us in the way of peace. With Mary we pray: *R.* May your holy will be done, O God.

Heal divisions in your Church, and unite us as one body in Christ. *R.*

Make your justice shine forth in our leadership and in our relationships to one another. *R.*

Give hope and comfort to women who suffer a miscarriage, and heed the prayers of those who long to be pregnant. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God purify our hearts so that we may glory in the presence of God with Mary and all the saints, through Jesus our brother. Amen.

Mass

The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Solemnity

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Isaiah 61:10

I rejoice heartily in the Lord, / in my God is the joy of my soul; / for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation, / and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, / like a bride adorned with her jewels.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son, grant, we pray, that, as you preserved her from every stain by virtue of the Death of your Son, which you foresaw, so, through her intercession, we, too, may be cleansed and admitted to your presence. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of Genesis

3:9-15, 20

I will put enmity between your offspring and hers.

After the man, Adam, had eaten of the tree, the LORD God called to the man and asked him, “Where are you?” He answered, “I heard you in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid myself.” Then he asked, “Who told you that you were naked? You have eaten, then, from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!” The man replied, “The woman whom you put here with me—she gave me fruit from the tree, and so I ate it.” The LORD God then asked

the woman, “Why did you do such a thing?” The woman answered, “The serpent tricked me into it, so I ate it.”

Then the LORD God said to the serpent: / “Because you have done this, you shall be banned / from all the animals / and from all the wild creatures; / on your belly shall you crawl, / and dirt shall you eat / all the days of your life. / I will put enmity between you and the woman, / and between your offspring and hers; / he will strike at your head, / while you strike at his heel.”

The man called his wife Eve, because she became the mother of all the living.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4

R. (1) Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous deeds.

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
His right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm. **R.**

The LORD has made his salvation known:
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness
toward the house of Israel. **R.**

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
break into song; sing praise. **R.**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

1:3-6, 11-12

He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Brothers and sisters: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ

with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved.

In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

See Luke 1:28

Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you;
blessed are you among women.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 1:26-38

Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Graciously accept the saving sacrifice
which we offer you, O Lord,
on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
and grant that, as we profess her,
on account of your prevenient grace,
to be untouched by any stain of sin,
so, through her intercession,
we may be delivered from all our faults.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Glorious things are spoken of you, O Mary, / for from
you arose the sun of justice, / Christ our God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May the Sacrament we have received,
O Lord our God,
heal in us the wounds of that fault
from which in a singular way
you preserved Blessed Mary in her Immaculate Conception.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Blessed Is She

A small woman, from a small town. Barely a woman—in fact, not even married yet, not even mistress of a household. Mary must have looked about as ordinary and insignificant as a person can be. But God knew her heart. He'd been preparing it since before she was born.

“Blessed are the pure in heart,” her Son would later say, “for they shall see God.” Mary would see God in such powerful, yet intimate, ways. “Overshadowed” by the Holy Spirit, carrying the God-man in her womb, holding him to her breast. Watching him captivate crowds, seeing him suffer injustice, humiliation, pain. What kind of heart would it take to be entrusted with all of that? A soul big enough to take in a sword, as Simeon had foretold.

During his ministry, Jesus would associate with all kinds of people whom you couldn't exactly call “pure in heart.” He wasn't fussy. But none of them would have seen him, known him, understood him, as Mary did. What would it take to become pure enough in heart to “see” God? It's a work of grace, out of our reach, given to Mary as to none other. But if we linger with our longing, surrender to it, “hunger and thirst for righteousness,” Jesus promises we will be filled. And then, even if the generations don't call us “blessed,” Jesus will. What else can we desire?

Susan Pitchford

Susan Pitchford is a retired sociologist and a Third Order Franciscan. She is the author of The Sacred Gaze, God in the Dark, and Following Francis. She is also a frequent speaker and retreat leader, and the Guardian for Lifelong Formation of the Third Order Society of St. Francis' Province of the Americas.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 111:1-6, 9-10

Alleluia!

I will thank the LORD with all my heart,
in the meeting of the just and the assembly.
Great are the works of the LORD,
to be pondered by all who delight in them.

Majestic and glorious your work;
your righteousness stands firm forever.
You have made a memorial of your wonders.
You, O LORD, are gracious and merciful.

You give food to those who revere you;
you are mindful of your covenant forever.
You have shown mighty works to your people
by giving them the heritage of nations.

You have sent redemption to your people,
and established your covenant forever.
Holy your name, to be feared.

Fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
understanding marks all who live by it.
Your praise endures forever!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 21:1-3

I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The former heaven
and the former earth had passed away, and the sea was
no more. I also saw the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming

down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with the human race. He will dwell with them and they will be his people and God himself will always be with them [as their God]."

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

God has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Mighty God, you cast down the mighty and raise up the lowly. In hope we pray: *R.* Gracious God, hear us.

Help us to secure protection of life at all stages, from conception to death. *R.*

Guide editors, journalists, and reporters in their efforts to communicate with clarity and truth. *R.*

Support single parents who are struggling, and help us to advocate for their needs. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God favor us with love and mercy, through Jesus, whose coming we eagerly await. Amen.

Tuesday, December 10

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 71:5, 8-9, 13-16

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

It is you, O Lord, who are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.

My mouth is filled with your praise,
with your glory, all the day long.
Do not reject me now that I am old;
when my strength fails do not forsake me.

Let them be put to shame and consumed,
those who seek my life.
Let them be covered with shame and confusion,
those who seek to harm me.

But as for me, I will always hope,
and praise you more and more.
My mouth will tell of your righteousness,
and all the day long of your salvation,
though I can never tell it all.

I will come with praise of your might, O Lord;
I will call to mind your righteousness,
yours, O LORD, alone.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Sirach 18:8-9, 11-14

What are mortals? What are they worth? / What is good
in them, and what is evil? / The number of their days

seems great / if it reaches a hundred years. / That is why the Lord is patient with them / and pours out his mercy on them. / He sees and understands that their death is wretched, / and so he forgives them all the more. / Their compassion is for their neighbor, / but the Lord's compassion reaches all flesh, / Reproving, admonishing, teaching, / and turning them back, as a shepherd his flock. / He has compassion on those who accept his discipline, / who are eager for his precepts.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Like a shepherd God feeds his flock.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Shepherding God, you care for us with mercy and love.
In trust we pray: **R.** God, in your compassion, hear our prayer.

Give enthusiasm to youth ministers and help them nurture faith, leadership, and community among the youth. **R.**

Protect elderly people who live alone from computer fraud, theft, or harm. **R.**

Heal those who suffer shame or confusion. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May God give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so we may know Jesus as our brother and redeemer. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Thomas Merton

Trappist Monk (1915–1968)

In 1948 Thomas Merton became well known with the publication of his bestselling memoir, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, the story of his restless youth, culminating in his conversion and his entry into an austere Trappist monastery in Kentucky. In becoming a monk, he had intended to drown to the world, to become invisible, a nobody. It didn't quite go that way. A stream of books on prayer and the spiritual life followed, but what he had assumed was the end was only the beginning of his spiritual journey.

In 1958, ten years after his arrival at the Abbey of Gethsemani, he had an experience that opened new horizons. On an errand in downtown Louisville, he had a sudden apprehension of his union with all the people of the world. "It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness."

His subsequent writings were marked by a new attitude of compassion and engagement with the world and its problems: racism, nuclear war, Vietnam. At the same time, he engaged in deeper exploration and dialogue with the religions of the East. That journey led him in 1968 into his first great foray out of the monastery—a trip to Asia to attend a conference on monasticism in Bangkok. That is where his journey ended. On December 10, 1968, following his talk at the conference, he died of an apparent accidental electrocution.

"Merton was above all a man of prayer . . . who opened new horizons for souls and for the Church. He was also a man of dialogue, a promoter of peace between peoples and religions."

—Pope Francis, addressing a joint session of Congress in 2015

Mass

Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent

[*Our Lady of Loreto, opt. memorial*]

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Zechariah 14:5, 7

Behold, the Lord will come, and all his holy ones with him; / and on that day there will be a great light.

COLLECT

O God, who have shown forth your salvation
to all the ends of the earth,
grant, we pray,
that we may look forward in joy
to the glorious Nativity of Christ.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 40:1-11

God consoles his people.

Comfort, give comfort to my people, / says your God. /
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her / that
her service is at an end, / her guilt is expiated; / Indeed, she
has received from the hand of the LORD / double for all
her sins.

A voice cries out: / In the desert prepare the way of the
LORD! / Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our
God! / Every valley shall be filled in, / every mountain and
hill shall be made low; / The rugged land shall be made a
plain, / the rough country, a broad valley. / Then the glory
of the LORD shall be revealed, / and all people shall see it
together; / for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

A voice says, "Cry out!" / I answer, "What shall I cry
out?" / "All flesh is grass, / and all their glory like the flower

of the field. / The grass withers, the flower wilts, / when the breath of the LORD blows upon it. / So then, the people is the grass. / Though the grass withers and the flower wilts, / the word of our God stands forever.”

Go up onto a high mountain, / Zion, herald of glad tidings; / Cry out at the top of your voice, / Jerusalem, herald of good news! / Fear not to cry out / and say to the cities of Judah: / Here is your God! / Here comes with power / the Lord GOD, / who rules by his strong arm; / Here is his reward with him, / his recompense before him. / Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; / in his arms he gathers the lambs, / Carrying them in his bosom, / and leading the ewes with care.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

96:1-2, 3 and 10ac, 11-12, 13

R. (see Isaiah 40:10ab) The Lord our God comes with power.

Sing to the LORD a new song;

sing to the LORD, all you lands.

Sing to the LORD; bless his name;

announce his salvation, day after day. *R.*

Tell his glory among the nations;

among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

Say among the nations: The LORD is king;

he governs the peoples with equity. *R.*

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;

let the sea and what fills it resound;

let the plains be joyful and all that is in them!

Then let all the trees of the forest rejoice. *R.*

They shall exult before the LORD, for he comes;

for he comes to rule the earth.

He shall rule the world with justice

and the peoples with his constancy. *R.*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The day of the Lord is near:
Behold, he comes to save us.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

18:12-14

God does not will that the little ones be lost.

Jesus said to his disciples: "What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost."

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble prayers and offerings,
and, since we have no merits to plead our cause,
come, we pray, to our rescue
with the protection of your mercy.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. 2 Timothy 4:8

The Just Judge will bestow a crown of righteousness / on
those who eagerly await his coming.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment,
we humbly beseech you, O Lord,
that, through our partaking in this mystery,
you may teach us to judge wisely the things of earth
and hold firm to the things of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Marvelous Light

Advent is primarily about the coming of God, and only in a secondary way about our asking, seeking, waiting and longing. There is hope, because we are unconditionally loved, whatever may be our failures, our tepidity or our secret despair. The word “Come” is a bearer of mystery. It resounds through Scripture, through the prayer of the Church and . . . through the hidden liturgy of the world’s history. God says “Come,” to us; we say “Come,” to God. In various specific contexts, we say it to Jesus and to the Spirit. It is the word of lovers. In the Song of Songs the bridegroom says it to the bride:

Rise up, my darling;
my fairest, come away . . .
Let me see your face, let me hear your voice;
for your voice is pleasant, your face is lovely.
(2:13, 14, NEB)

The Bride-Church, particularly in the liturgy of Advent, prays, “Come, show us thy face,” recalling Moses’ plea to God, “Show me thy glory” [Exod 33:18]. Faces are relational. The word “Come” is also relational throughout the love poetry of the world and throughout its prayer; it is the singing together of the two loves.

“Come” is God’s creative word to us. He calls us into being at our first creation, into the light of life. All our lives we are creatures of becoming, always incomplete, always growing (or regressing), always pilgrims and discoverers. We are finding our way to our destiny by our choices, our orientations, and our decisions about where to set our love. This is the law of our creation, and still more the law of our new creation,

whereby God calls us out of darkness into his marvelous light. Revelation and salvation are a love affair in which God says, “Come,” to humankind, calling us to come and see him as he is, and share his life.

Sr. Maria Boulding, *The Coming of God*

Maria Boulding (1929–2009) was a Benedictine nun of Stanbrook Abbey in England. She was a theologian, spiritual writer, and translator of the works of St. Augustine. She authored The Coming of God and edited A Touch of God.

[illegible]

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

PSALM 31:20-25

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

How great is the goodness, LORD,
that you keep for those who fear you,
that you show to those who trust you
in the sight of the children of Adam.

You hide them in the shelter of your presence,
secure from human scheming;
you keep them safe within your tent
from disputing tongues.

Blest be the LORD who has wondrously shown me
faithful love in a fortified city!

“I am far removed from your sight,”
I said in my alarm.
Yet you heard the voice of my plea
when I cried to you for help.

Love the LORD, all you his saints.
The LORD guards the faithful.
But the LORD will repay to the full
the one who acts with pride.
Be strong, let your heart take courage,
all who hope in the LORD.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 7:14b-17

These are the ones who have survived the time of great
distress; they have washed their robes and made them
white in the blood of the Lamb.

“For this reason they stand before God’s throne / and worship him day and night in his temple. / The one who sits on the throne will shelter them. / They will not hunger or thirst anymore, / nor will the sun or any heat strike them. / For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them / and lead them to springs of life-giving water, / and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The will of our heavenly Father is that not one little one be lost.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Provident God, you shepherd us in love and lead us to life-giving waters. In hope we pray: *R.* God, in your goodness, hear our prayer.

Inspire fruitful dialogue about constructive and healthy use of technology. *R.*

Instill your wisdom, integrity, and compassion in lawyers, social workers, and judges. *R.*

Support hospice workers, and fill them with love for the people for whom they care. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God strengthen us in faith, give us courage in adversity, and lead us to everlasting joy, through Jesus our peace. Amen.

Wednesday, December 11

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 98:1-6

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

O sing a new song to the LORD,
who has worked such wonders,
whose right hand and holy arm
have brought salvation.

The LORD has made known salvation,
has shown deliverance to the nations.
God has remembered faithful love
and truth for the house of Israel.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.
Shout to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song,
and sing out your praise.

Sing psalms to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and the sound of song.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn,
raise a shout before the King, the LORD.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Micah 7:18-20

Who is a God like you, who removes guilt / and pardons
sin for the remnant of his inheritance; / Who does
not persist in anger forever, / but instead delights in mercy,

/ And will again have compassion on us, / treading underfoot our iniquities? / You will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins; / You will show faithfulness to Jacob, / and loyalty to Abraham, / As you have sworn to our ancestors / from days of old.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The Lord is the eternal God, creator of the ends of the earth.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of salvation, you are slow to anger and full of love.
In trust we pray: *R/*. Compassionate God, hear us.

You pardon sin: direct your Church's work to safeguard all people, and heal those who have been abused. *R/*.

You delight in mercy: shower your care upon those who serve a prison sentence, and strengthen their hearts in goodness and truth. *R/*.

You are forever faithful: inspire us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received. *R/*.

Our Father . . .

May God carry us in times of difficulty and lead us along paths of peace, through Jesus our redeemer. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Martyrs of El Mozote

El Salvador (d. 1981)

On December 11, 1981, scores of Salvadoran troops entered the small hamlet of El Mozote. Their mission, code-named “Rescue,” was to pursue guerrilla troops and eliminate subversives. No one had ever accused the people of El Mozote of being subversives. More than half of them were born-again evangelicals, a fact that may have accounted for their determination to remain neutral in the ongoing civil war. On the day of Operation Rescue the town was swollen with refugees, drawn by their belief that El Mozote would offer a safe haven.

On the first day, the soldiers gathered the townspeople and interrogated them about the guerrillas. At some point the decision was made simply to destroy the town. For the next two days the soldiers systematically gathered the people into small groups and massacred the lot of them. One peasant woman, Rufina Amaya, managed to hide among some bushes. There she remained for days, watching and listening as the soldiers completed their mission, biting her tongue to keep from screaming as she witnessed the death of her own husband and children. One night she overheard some of the soldiers talking in fear and wonder of a young girl who had continued singing hymns even as she was raped, shot, and finally hacked with machetes.

Rufina survived to tell the world what happened at El Mozote, where as many as a thousand people were killed. As a later UN forensic investigation confirmed, it was the largest massacre in modern Latin American history.

“They did not die, they are with us, with you, and with all humanity.”

—Memorial at El Mozote

Mass

Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent

[*St. Damasus I, opt. memorial*]

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Habakkuk 2:3; 1 Corinthians 4:5

The Lord will come and he will not delay. / He will illumine what is hidden in darkness / and reveal himself to all the nations.

COLLECT

Almighty God, who command us
to prepare the way for Christ the Lord,
grant in your kindness, we pray,
that no infirmity may weary us
as we long for the comforting presence
of our heavenly physician.

Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 40:25-31

The LORD God is almighty and gives strength to the fainting.

To whom can you liken me as an equal? / says the Holy One. / Lift up your eyes on high / and see who has created these things: / He leads out their army and numbers them, / calling them all by name. / By his great might and the strength of his power / not one of them is missing! / Why, O Jacob, do you say, / and declare, O Israel, / “My way is hidden from the LORD, / and my right is disregarded by my God”?

Do you not know / or have you not heard? / The LORD is the eternal God, / creator of the ends of the earth. / He does not faint nor grow weary, / and his knowledge is beyond scrutiny. / He gives strength to the fainting; / for the weak

he makes vigor abound. / Though young men faint and grow weary, / and youths stagger and fall, / They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength, / they will soar as with eagles' wings; / They will run and not grow weary, / walk and not grow faint.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10

R. (1) O bless the Lord, my soul!

Bless the LORD, O my soul;
and all my being, bless his holy name.

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits. **R.**

He pardons all your iniquities,
he heals all your ills.

He redeems your life from destruction,
he crowns you with kindness and compassion. **R.**

Merciful and gracious is the LORD,
slow to anger and abounding in kindness.
Not according to our sins does he deal with us,
nor does he requite us according to our crimes. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Behold, the Lord comes to save his people;
blessed are those prepared to meet him.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

11:28-30

Come to me, all you who labor.

Jesus said to the crowds: "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and

humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray,
be offered to you unceasingly,
to complete what was begun in sacred mystery
and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 40:10; 35:5

Behold, our Lord will come with power / and will
enlighten the eyes of his servants.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We implore your mercy, Lord,
that this divine sustenance
may cleanse us of our faults
and prepare us for the coming feasts.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Can We Lift Another's Burden?

Here in Chicago, I regularly visit the Catholic Worker House on the city's north Side. Recently, I've had the privilege to befriend James, a gentleman in his mid-fifties who moved into the house a month ago.

Prior to receiving shelter, as temperatures in Chicago plunged below zero, James' tent caved in. He rode the L train to O'Hare and back for weeks to survive.

Now that he is housed, James has begun pursuing his GED, delayed thirty-six years due to a fear of failure and a terror of math. He also wants to revive his painting and drywall business. Yet he can't even list his name on his flyers; his criminal record is publicly available information.

James' life is filled with burden upon burden. The isolation, the heaviness, the impossibility of it all—it seems almost too much for one person to bear.

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.” What Jesus offers today to one burdened is *his* burden, his “yoke.” Yet instead of hopelessness and heaviness, Jesus carries his burden with meekness and humility of heart.

I don't know if James is able to hear or receive Jesus' invitation. However, I find myself burdened with a desire to become a bridge between Jesus' beautiful words and James' life. We practice for the GED together; over coffee I ask how business is going, whether he has any leads. Until now, there have been none.

I so badly want to make Jesus' promise of rest and relief real to James, but whether that will ever happen is a matter of faith.

Justin Bartkus

Justin Bartkus is a human-centered designer living in Chicago, Illinois.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 80:2-8, 18-20

O shepherd of Israel, hear us,
you who lead Joseph like a flock:
enthroned on the cherubim, shine forth
upon Ephraim, Benjamin, Manasseh.
Rouse up your might and come to save us.

Bring us back, O God;
let your face shine forth, that we might be saved.

How long, O LORD, God of hosts,
will you be angry at the prayer of your people?
You have fed them with tears for their bread,
an abundance of tears for their drink.
You have made us the taunt of our neighbors;
our foes mock us among themselves.

Bring us back, O God;
let your face shine forth, that we might be saved.

May your hand be on the one at your right hand,
the one you have confirmed as your own.
And we shall never forsake you again;
give us life that we may call upon your name.

Bring us back, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine forth, that we might be saved.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 12:1-3

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God. Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Come to me, all who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Shepherd of Israel, you lead us like a flock. In hope we pray: *R.* Let your face shine on us, O God.

Strengthen your Church's structures for a synodal Church. *R.*

Lead women in crisis pregnancies to find support and health care. *R.*

Heal those who have experienced bullying, harassment, or slander. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God grant us a peaceful rest and restorative sleep, through Jesus, Emmanuel. Amen.

Thursday, December 12

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 87

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Founded by God on the holy mountain,
the LORD loves the gates of Zion,
more than all the dwellings of Jacob.
Of you are told glorious things,
you, O city of God!

“Rahab and Babylon I will count
among those who know me;
Of Tyre, Philistia, Ethiopia, it is told,
‘There was this one born.’
But of Zion it shall be said,
‘Each one was born in her.’”

God, the Most High, will establish her.
In the register of peoples the LORD writes,
“Here was this one born.”
The singers cry out in chorus,
“All my wellsprings are in you.”

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Sirach 24:19-22

Come to me, all who desire me, / and be filled with my
fruits. / You will remember me as sweeter than honey,
/ better to have than the honeycomb. / Those who eat of me
will hunger still, / those who drink of me will thirst for
more. / Whoever obeys me will not be put to shame, / and
those who serve me will never go astray.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

I am coming to dwell among you, says the Lord.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Beneficent God, you show love for your people through the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In company with Mary and all the saints we pray: **R.** Compassionate God, hear our prayer.

Give joy to all who gather in worship, prayer, and thanksgiving. **R.**

Shine your maternal gaze upon those in need of comfort and peace. **R.**

Satisfy the longing of those who are seeking refuge or fleeing from danger. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May God lead us to rejoice always in the loving protection of Mary, bearer of the Word made flesh. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Our Lady of Guadalupe

On the morning of December 9, 1531, an Indigenous Christian named Juan Diego passed a hill at Tepeyac, not far from present-day Mexico City. Hearing a voice calling him by name, he looked up to see a young maiden. Speaking in his Nahuatl language, she instructed him to tell the bishop to construct a church on this hill, the site of an ancient shrine to the mother goddess. The bishop paid Juan no attention. In subsequent showings, the maiden identified herself as the Mother of God and told Juan to gather roses that grew, unseasonably, at her feet. When he returned to the bishop and opened his cape, Juan revealed a full-color image of the Lady mysteriously imprinted on the rough fabric.

So was born the cult of Our Lady of Guadalupe (as the Indigenous name of the Lady was rendered in Spanish). But the apparition truly marked the birth of the Mexican people—a fusion of the Spanish and Native races and cultures. With her dark skin and Indigenous features, the Lady offered an image of divine compassion for a demoralized people. Speaking to Juan Diego in his own language, she presented herself in terms of compassion and solidarity, not power and domination. Through him, she called the Church to heed the voice of the poor, to serve as a vehicle for their cultural and spiritual survival. The image, enshrined in a basilica in Mexico City, attracts millions of pilgrims.

“She came to accompany the American people on this hard road of poverty, exploitation, socio-economic and cultural colonialism. . . . The message is simple; it is tender: ‘Am I not here? Am I not your mother?’ ”

—Pope Francis, homily for the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Mass

*Our Lady of Guadalupe, Feast**

*Other options for readings are possible.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Revelation 12:1

A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, / with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

O God, Father of mercies,
who placed your people under the singular protection
of your Son's most holy Mother,
grant that all who invoke the Blessed Virgin of Guadalupe,
may seek with ever more lively faith
the progress of peoples in the ways of justice and of peace.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Zechariah

2:14-17 (alt. Rev 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab)

Rejoice, O daughter Zion! See, I am coming.

Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! See, I am coming to dwell among you, says the LORD. Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD on that day, and they shall be his people, and he will dwell among you, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. The LORD will possess Judah as his portion in the holy land, and he will again choose Jerusalem. Silence, all mankind, in the presence of the LORD! For he stirs forth from his holy dwelling.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Judith 13:18bcde, 19

R. (15:9d) You are the highest honor of our race.

Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God,
above all the women on earth;
and blessed be the LORD God,
the creator of heaven and earth. **R.**

Your deed of hope will never be forgotten
by those who tell of the might of God. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Blessed are you, holy Virgin Mary, deserving of all praise;
from you rose the sun of justice, Christ our God.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

1:26-38 (alt. Luke 1:39-47)

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son.

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end." But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called

holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.” Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, O Lord, the gifts we present to you
on this feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe,
and grant that this sacrifice
may strengthen us to fulfill your commandments
as true children of the Virgin Mary.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Luke 1:52

The Lord has cast down the mighty from their thrones, /
and has lifted up the lowly.

Or:

Cf. Psalm 147 (146):20

God has not acted thus for any other nation; / to no other
people had he shown his love so clearly.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord God, may the Body and Blood of your Son,
which we receive in this sacrament,
reconcile us always in your love;
and may we who rejoice in Our Lady of Guadalupe
live united and at peace in this world
until the day of the Lord dawns in glory.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Unseen Stars

Today, as we ponder the Annunciation and the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, it is hard not to see parallels between the two stories. Both the Virgin Mary and St. Juan Diego are asked by God to do something seemingly impossible. Mary is to bear the Son of God; Juan Diego is to convince a bishop to build a chapel. They both express their sense of unworthiness. Juan Diego says he is a “simple Indian” and begs Mary to send someone more respected to fulfill her request.

But this is not God’s way. In God’s eyes, human categories of worthy/not worthy or possible/not possible are irrelevant. Those often ignored or unseen by the world become the stars in God’s unfolding story.

Something else in common in the two stories is the willingness of both Mary and Juan Diego to say “yes.” Guided by faith, they both consent to follow the will of God despite not knowing what the final outcome will be. One could not comprehend getting pregnant; the other, the miracle of off-season roses and Mary’s image on a cloak. And yet.

How might both this young pregnant girl and indigenous man guide us into deeper faith this Advent? Can we see how God’s love might be trying to break through in unexpected places and people? Perhaps in those whom we often overlook, ignore, or even reject. Perhaps in ourselves, especially in our unworthiness.

God is waiting for our consent. What will it take for us to say yes?

Christina Leño

Christina Leño is a retreat and spiritual director and staff member of the Laudato Si’ Movement. Her interest lies in the intersection of contemplative spirituality and social and ecological justice.
christinaleño.net.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

PSALM 147:1-7, 10-11

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

Alleluia!

How good to sing psalms to our God;
how pleasant to chant fitting praise!

The LORD builds up Jerusalem
and brings back Israel's exiles;
God heals the brokenhearted,
and binds up all their wounds;
God counts out the number of the stars,
and calls each one by its name.

Our Lord is great and almighty;
God's wisdom can never be measured.
The LORD lifts up the lowly,
and casts down the wicked to the ground.
O sing to the LORD, giving thanks;
sing psalms to our God with the lyre.

The Lord's delight is not in the strength of horses,
nor God's pleasure in a warrior's stride.
The LORD delights in those who revere him,
those who wait for God's faithful love.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 4:1-7

| , then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another

through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Almighty God, your wisdom can never be measured.

In confidence we pray: *R/*. Let us find our delight in you, O God.

Transform the baptized into pilgrims of Christian hope. *R/*.

Help us to see your beauty in one another and in all creation. *R/*.

Inspire warring nations to put aside weapons and find peaceful solutions to conflict. *R/*.

Our Father . . .

May God, who through the child born of Mary graciously redeemed the human race, enrich us with every grace and blessing, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

Friday, December 13

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 69:2-4, 6-7

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

Save me, O God, for the waters
have risen to my neck.

I have sunk into the mud of the deep,
where there is no foothold.

I have entered the waters of the deep,
where the flood overwhelms me.

I am wearied with crying aloud;
my throat is parched.

My eyes are wasted away
with waiting for my God.

O God, you know my folly;
from you my sins are not hidden.

May those who hope in you not be shamed
because of me, O Lord of hosts;
may those who seek you not be disgraced
because of me, O God of Israel.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Deuteronomy 32:45-47

When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, he said to them, Take to heart all the words that I am giving in witness against you today, words you should command your children, that they may observe carefully every word of this law. For this is no trivial matter

for you, but rather your very life; by this word you will enjoy a long life on the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

I, the Lord your God, teach you what is for your good.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Saving God, in your light we see light. In company with St. Lucy we pray to you: **R.** God, in your wisdom, hear our prayer.

Illumine the hearts of all people, that we may protect and reverence life from conception to death. **R.**

Restore the light of faith to those who have suffered violation of their trust. **R.**

Give hope and insight to those who are sick, confused, or troubled. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May the Lord accept our sacrifice of a humble heart and lead us to the everlasting light of God's face. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. Herman of Alaska

Orthodox Monk (ca. 1750–1836)

Russian fur hunters first colonized Alaska in the 1740s. In response to a plea for priests, the Orthodox Church sent a mission of monks, including St. Herman, who arrived in 1794. Appalled by the primitive conditions of the colony, the monks set themselves to raising moral standards and restoring order. Herman was particularly aggrieved by the exploitation and harsh treatment of the native peoples. For his prophetic preaching and his intercession with authorities in Russia, he has been compared to Bartolomé de Las Casas, defender of the Indigenous in Latin America. When epidemics struck the natives, Herman cared for their sick and dying. As a result of his efforts, thousands were baptized.

Eventually, wishing to adopt a more solitary life, Herman retired to a hermitage on Spruce Island and devoted himself to ceaseless prayer. Like the early Desert Fathers, he was tormented by demons, which appeared in various guises—sometimes as spirits, at other times as fearsome animals. Nevertheless, when someone asked him whether he minded being alone he replied, “I am not alone. God is here, as God is everywhere.” Eventually disciples moved to be closer to him, and Herman agreed to offer spiritual instruction. In time his hermitage was joined by a chapel, a school, and an orphanage.

He died in November 1836 and was canonized by the Orthodox Church in 1970 with a feast on December 13: the first Orthodox saint of the “Americas.”

“A true Christian is made by faith and love of Christ.”

—St. Herman of Alaska

Mass

St. Lucy, Memorial

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Behold, now she follows the Lamb who was crucified for us, / powerful in virginity, modesty her offering, / a sacrifice on the altar of chastity.

Or: Blessed is the virgin / who by denying herself and taking up her cross / imitated the Lord, the spouse of virgins / and prince of martyrs.

COLLECT

May the glorious intercession
of the Virgin and Martyr Saint Lucy
give us new heart, we pray, O Lord,
so that we may celebrate her heavenly birthday
in this present age
and so behold things eternal.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 48:17-19

If only you would hearken to my commandments.

Thus says the LORD, your redeemer, / the Holy One of Israel: / I, the LORD, your God, / teach you what is for your good, / and lead you on the way you should go. / If you would hearken to my commandments, / your prosperity would be like a river, / and your vindication like the waves of the sea; / Your descendants would be like the sand, / and those born of your stock like its grains, / Their name never cut off / or blotted out from my presence.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6

R. (see John 8:12) **Those who follow you, Lord, will have
the light of life.**

Blessed the man who follows not
the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the company of the insolent,
But delights in the law of the LORD
and meditates on his law day and night. **R.**

He is like a tree
planted near running water,
That yields its fruit in due season,
and whose leaves never fade.
Whatever he does, prospers. **R.**

Not so the wicked, not so;
they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
For the LORD watches over the way of the just,
but the way of the wicked vanishes. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

The Lord will come; go out to meet him!
He is the prince of peace.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

11:16-19

They listened to neither John nor to the Son of Man.

Jesus said to the crowds: “To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, ‘He is possessed by a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, ‘Look, he is a glutton and a

drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is vindicated by her works."

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the offerings we bring in celebration of blessed
Saint Lucy

win your gracious acceptance, O Lord, we pray,
just as the struggle of her suffering and passion
was pleasing to you.

Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Revelation 7:17

The Lamb who is at the center of the throne / will lead
them to the springs of the waters of life.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, who bestowed on blessed Saint Lucy a crown
among the Saints

for her twofold triumph of virginity and martyrdom,
grant, we pray, through the power of this Sacrament,
that, bravely overcoming every evil,
we may attain the glory of heaven.

Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Do You Need New Batteries?

"I teach you what is for your good, and lead you on the way you should go." These words of Isaiah in the first reading offer the consoling promise that God is always with us and unfailingly tutors our hearts. God will nudge us to identify issues,

sort out possibilities, and make wise choices—God will inspire the path we should take. That’s the promise. Why, then, do we so often seem to hesitate, to stumble, to debate options? Why are we so easily derailed by the judgments and prejudices of others rather than embracing the wisdom of God?

Once, after one of my nephews, age four, had done something naughty, he was sent to his room and invited to spend a few minutes paying attention to that “still, small voice within.” It was his introduction to his conscience! After a few minutes, he returned to his mom in tears, proclaiming his batteries were dead. It can happen to all of us.

Learning and living the wisdom of God is a never-ending tutorial. We discover the gift of divine wisdom in the prick of conscience that unsettles us, in the thoughtful choices of others, in the kindness of strangers, in the peace or agitation that accompanies a difficult discernment, and in the still, small voice within. We discover the wisdom of God by learning to pay attention to our choices, to our relationships, and always to what is happening in our hearts, because God communicates with us through all of these experiences. It takes time and practice to pay attention. And every now and then it may require a fresh set of batteries.

Sr. Kathleen Hughes

Kathleen Hughes, a Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (RSCJ), has written extensively on sacraments, liturgy, and spirituality.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 13

How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I bear grief in my soul,
have sorrow in my heart all day long?
How long shall my enemy prevail over me?

Look, answer me, O LORD my God!
Give light to my eyes lest I fall asleep in death;
lest my enemy say, “I have prevailed over you;”
lest my foes rejoice when they see me fall.

As for me, I trust in your faithful love.
Let my heart rejoice in your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD who has been bountiful with me.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Philippians 1:8-11

God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Wisdom is vindicated by her works.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Ever-loving God, you never forsake those who seek you.
In faith we pray: *R.* God, lead us to rejoice in you.

Sustain the hope of those who put their trust in you. *R.*

Give comfort and peace to those who grieve. *R.*

Heal those who are excluded. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God guide our steps by the light of the Holy Spirit
and fill us with the fruit of righteousness that comes
through Jesus, the Holy One of God. Amen.

Saturday, December 14

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 60:3-7, 13-14

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

O God, you have rejected us, and broken us.
You have been angry; come back to us.

You have made the earth quake, torn it open.
Repair what is shattered, for it sways.
You have inflicted hardships on your people,
made us drink a wine that dazed us.

For those who fear you, you gave the signal
to flee from the face of the bow.
With your right hand, grant salvation, and give answer,
that those whom you love may be free.

Give us aid against the foe,
for human help is vain.
With God we shall do bravely,
and God will trample down our foes.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

2 Kings 2:9b-12a

Elijah said to Elisha, “Request whatever I might do for you, before I am taken from you.” Elisha answered, “May I receive a double portion of your spirit.” He replied, “You have asked something that is not easy. Still, if you see me taken up from you, your wish will be granted; otherwise not.” As they walked on still conversing, a fiery chariot and

fiery horses came between the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind, and Elisha saw it happen. He cried out, “My father! my father! Israel’s chariot and steeds!” Then he saw him no longer.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

How awesome was Elijah; how wonderful his deeds!

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of love, you are our souls’ desire. In company with St. John of the Cross we pray: *R.* Teach us love, O God.

Heal divisions among Christians, and help us to dialogue and listen to one another. *R.*

Instill in spiritual companions and writers your gifts of humility, compassion, and wisdom. *R.*

Show us how to offer your gentle presence to those who suffer depression or the dark night of the soul. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God, the glory and delight of all the saints, fill us with every grace and blessing in Christ, the promised Messiah. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. John of the Cross

Mystic and Doctor of the Church (1542–1591)

Juan de Yepes, who was raised in poverty, became a Carmelite friar at the age of twenty-one. The Spanish Carmelites were known for their tradition of interior prayer, but by John's day their practice had become lax. A turning point in John's life came in 1567 when he met Teresa of Avila, leader of a Carmelite reform movement and one of the great figures of her age. Despite the gap of twenty-seven years between them, Teresa recognized in John a kindred spirit. She asked him to be her confessor and to initiate a parallel reform to her female Discalced ("shoeless") Carmelites. Subsequently, he took a new name: Juan de la Cruz.

In this era of the Inquisition spiritual innovation was a dangerous matter, and John's own brothers recoiled from his reforming efforts. After kidnapping him, they imprisoned him for nine months in a Carmelite dungeon and forced him to live on bread and water. Eventually, on a dark night, he made a miraculous escape (an incident that supplied one of his potent metaphors for the spiritual life). And yet he continued to endure ill treatment from his own community until his death on December 14, 1591, at forty-nine.

All the while John composed mystical treatises of great psychological insight and astonishing poetic power. His subject: the path by which the soul is united in love with God—a journey that is marked by stripping and desolation as much as by periods of joy. For these writings, especially his classic reflections on the "Dark Night of the Soul," he was not only canonized but proclaimed a Doctor of the Church.

"Where there is no love, put love, and you will draw love out."

—St. John of the Cross

Mass

St. John of the Cross, Memorial

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Galatians 6:14

May I never boast, / except in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, / through which the world has been crucified to me, / and I to the world.

COLLECT

O God, who gave the Priest Saint John
an outstanding dedication to perfect self-denial
and love of the Cross,
grant that, by imitating him closely at all times,
we may come to contemplate eternally your glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of Sirach

48:1-4, 9-11

Elijah was enveloped in a whirlwind.

In those days, / like a fire there appeared the prophet Elijah
/ whose words were as a flaming furnace. / Their staff of
bread he shattered, / in his zeal he reduced them to straits;
/ By the Lord's word he shut up the heavens / and three times
brought down fire. / How awesome are you, Elijah, in your
wondrous deeds! / Whose glory is equal to yours? / You
were taken aloft in a whirlwind of fire, / in a chariot with
fiery horses. / You were destined, it is written, in time to
come / to put an end to wrath before the day of the LORD, /
To turn back the hearts of fathers toward their sons, / and
to re-establish the tribes of Jacob. / Blessed is he who shall
have seen you / and who falls asleep in your friendship.
The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

80:2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19

R. (4) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
From your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse your power. **R.**

Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
Take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted,
the son of man whom you yourself made strong. **R.**

May your help be with the man of your right hand,
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.
Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Luke 3:4, 6

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:
All flesh shall see the salvation of God.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

17:9a, 10-13

Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him.

As they were coming down from the mountain, the disciples asked Jesus, "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?" He said in reply, "Elijah will indeed come and restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased. So also will the Son of Man suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look upon the sacrificial gifts we offer, almighty God,
in commemoration of Saint John of the Cross
and grant that we, who celebrate
the mysteries of the Lord's Passion,
may imitate what we now enact.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Matthew 16:24

Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, /
take up his cross, and follow me, says the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, who in Saint John
have wonderfully made known the mystery of the Cross,
graciously grant
that, drawing strength from this sacrifice,
we may cling faithfully to Christ
and labor in the Church for the salvation of all.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Turn to God

I never cease to be distressed at the pain and suffering which we humans can inflict on each other. The second commandment of our Lord is to love our neighbor as ourselves. I sometimes think it must sound naïve, and a bit too unworldly, to speak of basing a social and political system on mutual love. Maybe it is naïve to think of basing it on anything else. Surely the opposite of love is hatred, self-assertion, jealousy, rivalry—and these do not make for peace.

Let me be clear: the love about which I am speaking is not something limp, a matter of vaguely liking another, or an emotional involvement, or a feeling. It is, rather, a demanding taskmaster; it will require me to love my enemy.

It effects a change of heart—away from what separates us from God—violence, cruelty, murder—and with a turning to him. The kingdom of God takes root in proportion as the citizens of the city of humanity turn from evil to God. Now, there is no turning to God which is not a search to understanding the meaning of love, as he shows it to us, and which we should have for him. And that cannot be separated from the love which we must have and show towards each other. This twofold commandment is the heart of the Gospel.

Cardinal Basil Hume

George Basil Hume, OSB (1923–1999), was abbot of Ampleforth Abbey before being appointed archbishop of Westminster. He was one of the most beloved religious figures in the United Kingdom.



Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 92:2-7, 13-16

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to make music to your name, O Most High,
to proclaim your faithful love in the morning,
and your truth in the watches of the night,
on the ten-stringed lute and the harp,
with the sound of song on the lyre.

You have gladdened me, O LORD, by your deeds;
for the work of your hands I shout with joy.
O LORD, how great are your works!
How deep are your designs!
The senseless cannot know this,
and the fool cannot understand.

The righteous will flourish like the palm tree,
and grow like a Lebanon cedar.

Planted in the house of the LORD,
they will flourish in the courts of our God,
still bearing fruit when they are old,
still full of sap, still green,
to proclaim that the LORD is upright.
In God, my rock, there is no wrong.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Acts 3:18-21, 24

God has thus brought to fulfillment what he had announced beforehand through the mouth of all the

prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment and send you the Messiah already appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the times of universal restoration of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.

Moreover, all the prophets who spoke, from Samuel and those afterwards, also announced these days.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Elijah has already come, but they did not recognize him.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of the prophets, you announce salvation for all. In faith we pray: **R/**. God, in your goodness, hear our prayer.

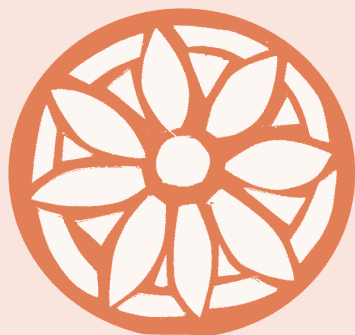
You gladden us by your deeds: help us to cultivate gratefulness. **R/**.

You make the righteous fruitful: prosper the work of peacemakers, ambassadors, and diplomats. **R/**.

You invite us to repentance: help us to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. **R/**.

Our Father . . .

May God bless us and fashion our hearts to be one with the Gospel of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.



Sunday, December 15

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 150

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Alleluia!

Praise God in the holy temple;
praise the Lord in the mighty firmament.
Praise God for powerful deeds;
for boundless grandeur, praise God.

O praise the Lord with sound of trumpet;
give praise with lute and harp.
Praise God with timbrel and dance;
give praise with strings and pipes.

O praise God with resounding cymbals;
give praise with clashing of cymbals.
Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!

Alleluia!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 58:10-12

If you lavish your food on the hungry / and satisfy the
afflicted; / Then your light shall rise in the darkness, / and
your gloom shall become like midday; / Then the LORD will
guide you always / and satisfy your thirst in parched places,
/ will give strength to your bones / And you shall be like a

watered garden, / like a flowing spring whose waters never fail. / Your people shall rebuild the ancient ruins; / the foundations from ages past you shall raise up; / “Repairer of the breach,” they shall call you, / “Restorer of ruined dwellings.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The Lord, your God, will rejoice over you with gladness.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Faithful God, you love us and strengthen us by your spirit. In hope we pray to you: *R.* Give joy to our hearts, O God.

Unite your Church in songs of praise, deeds of justice, and care for the earth. *R.*

Strengthen your Church to find the power of the cross in loving service and care for others. *R.*

Help us to engage with one another in ways that deepen familial and community relationships. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God make us steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and untiring in love all the days of our life. Amen.

Mass

Third Sunday of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Philippians 4:4-5

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. / Indeed, the Lord is near.

(The Gloria is omitted.)

COLLECT

O God, who see how your people
faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,
enable us, we pray,
to attain the joys of so great a salvation
and to celebrate them always
with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Zephaniah

3:14-18a

The Lord will rejoice over you with gladness.

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! / Sing joyfully, O Israel!
/ Be glad and exult with all your heart, / O daughter
Jerusalem! / The LORD has removed the judgment against
you; / he has turned away your enemies; / the King of Israel,
the LORD, is in your midst, / you have no further misfortune
to fear. / On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: / Fear
not, O Zion, be not discouraged! / The LORD, your God, is
in your midst, / a mighty savior; / he will rejoice over you
with gladness, / and renew you in his love, / he will sing
joyfully because of you, / as one sings at festivals.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Isaiah 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

R. (6) Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is
the great and Holy One of Israel.

God indeed is my savior;

I am confident and unafraid.

My strength and my courage is the LORD,

and he has been my savior.

With joy you will draw water

at the fountain of salvation. **R.**

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;

among the nations make known his deeds,

proclaim how exalted is his name. **R.**

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;

let this be known throughout all the earth.

Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,

for great in your midst

is the Holy One of Israel! **R.**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

4:4-7

The Lord is near.

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Isaiah 61:1 (cited in Luke 4:18)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring glad tidings to the poor.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 3:10-18

What should we do?

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages."

Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray,
be offered to you unceasingly,
to complete what was begun in sacred mystery

and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 35:4

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. /
Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We implore your mercy, Lord,
that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults
and prepare us for the coming feasts.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Cry Out with Joy and Gladness

Rejoice! This we must do. It is not just an option. It is a theological demand based on the reality of our faith. It is what we've been waiting for these weeks: the advent of God into our world, growing stronger daily. The incarnation is a reality, and the Word of God is hidden in earth's flesh, history, and our lives. The prophet Zephaniah declares to us: "The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you have no further misfortune to fear." And the response to the psalm text puts it even more clearly: "Cry out with joy and gladness for among us is the great and Holy One of Israel." This is our belief, so we live with this awareness. If not, it is time to wake up to the fact that our God is among us and has been for ages past, seen and unseen. This rejoicing has nothing whatsoever to do with our feelings. It is based on our faith.

At the time of John the Baptist, the great and Holy One had been in the world for thirty years. We believe that the

great and Holy One has been in our world for [about] two thousand years. In our parishes and churches, we worship among believers who stake their lives on the hope that the great and Holy One has been in their corner of the world. . . . So, Paul says it again: “I say to you, Rejoice! The Lord himself is near.” This is definitely cause for rejoicing!

. . . As always in this season, the focus is on the “other,” the one hidden in our midst who walks among us, watching, waiting for us to see, to recognize and respond. So today is the day to sing back to God, confidently and unafraid. Does our God have cause to sing over us? Are we like the remnant, the faithful ones of the time of Zephaniah who stayed true and learned to sing in the midst of affliction and exile? Do we believe that our God will bring us home to “renew us in his love” and that our enemies have been turned back? God is in our midst! As the Venerable Bede wrote, “Christ is the Morning Star, who, when the night of this world is past, gives to his saints the promise of the light of life, and opens everlasting day.”

..... Megan McKenna, *Advent, Christmas, Epiphany*

Megan McKenna is an author, theologian, storyteller, and lecturer. She has taught at a number of schools, including Fordham University and the Washington Theological Union.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 141:1-5, 8-10

I have called to you, LORD; O hasten to help me!
Hear my voice when I cry to you.
Let my prayer be as incense before you,
the raising of my hands like an evening oblation.

Set, O LORD, a guard on my mouth;
keep watch at the door of my lips!
Do not turn my heart to things that are evil,
to wicked deeds with those who are sinners.

Never allow me to share in their feasting.
If someone righteous strikes me it is kindness;
but let the oil of the wicked not anoint my head.
Let my prayer be ever against their malice.

To you my eyes are turned, O LORD, my Lord.
In you I take refuge; spare my soul!
From the trap they have laid for me, keep me safe;
keep me from the snares of those who do evil.

Let the wicked together fall into their traps,
while I pursue my way unharmed.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

2 Corinthians 13:11b-13

Rejoice. Mend your ways, encourage one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the holy ones greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the holy Spirit be with all of you.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say: rejoice!

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of love and peace, you are with us always. In trust we pray: **R.** O God, make haste to help us.

Encourage those who experience grief, sadness, or loneliness. **R.**

Inspire a spirit of hospitality, welcome, and care for refugees at the border. **R.**

Rescue those enslaved by human trafficking, and prosper efforts to eradicate all forms of slavery. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May God bless us and keep us watchful and ready for the coming of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

December 15–21

Third Week of Advent

Within the Word

Waiting in Loving Anticipation

Joy to the world! May this season bring you joy! As we journey through Advent, we have arrived at the third week, and we see a change in liturgical color and tone. The Third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete (“Rejoice”) Sunday. We light the rose candle on Advent wreaths, and vestments worn on Sunday are typically rose colored instead of violet. Turning our attention to joy during Advent reminds us that the expectation that characterizes the Advent season can and should include moments of delight in anticipating the arrival of Christ.

On Saturday, our first reading is from Song of Songs (Song 2:8-14). Song of Songs, also called Canticle of Canticles or Song of Solomon, is a book of poetry that vividly depicts emotions and experiences of love. The poems describe longing, affection, and sexual desire. Voices of women and men permeate the book, and much of the reading from Song 2 is framed as a woman reminiscing about her lover. Song of Songs shares many similarities to ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian, and Greek love poetry.

The lovers in Song of Songs have been interpreted as biblical examples of intimate love. The language and imagery highlight shared sensuality, care, and intensity in relationships. While it offers an image of human love, the book has also been interpreted allegorically, likening human love to God’s love for humanity and creation more broadly. An explicit reference to God is lacking in the book, which may leave us longing to find God in its poetic verses.

Like the change in liturgical color this week, the reading offers a visually vibrant scene. Multiple references to ecological elements help us to imagine the setting of two lovers desiring one another. Winter rain gives way to spring in bloom. Flowers appear; sounds of turtledoves are heard. Fig trees and vines blossom; aromas of sweet fragrances fill the air. During a season in transition, the natural environment heightens the senses with its sights, sounds, and smells. In this context, we encounter two people longing for one another.

From the perspective of the woman, she refers to her lover tenderly as “my beloved,” and she likens him to a leaping gazelle or stag. The woman reminisces about a time when her love arrived wanting her to go away with him. At the end of the reading, the lover speaks fondly of the woman, calling her “my dove” and envisioning her like a bird up in a rock cleft, noting the distance and difficulty in being near to her. Throughout the passage, there is an overwhelming sense of affection, separation, and yearning.

Now, why do we hear such a reading at this point in the Advent season? The poetry of Song of Songs invites us to reflect on the beauty and joy that can come with anticipation and longing. Both lovers are open, imaginative, vulnerable, and expressive in proclaiming their desires. They want to be near and yet are still far away. During Advent, we are called to embrace joyful anticipation. Just as lovers long for one another, so should we long to draw near to Christ.

—Jaime L. Waters

Jaime L. Waters is an associate professor of Old Testament at the Boston College Clough School of Theology and Ministry.

Monday, December 16

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 57:2-4, 8-12

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

Have mercy on me, God, have mercy,
for in you my soul has taken refuge.

In the shadow of your wings I take refuge,
till the storms of destruction pass by.

I call to you, God the Most High,
to God who provides for me.

O send from heaven and save me,
and put to shame those who assail me.

O send your loving mercy and faithfulness.

My heart is ready, O God;
my heart is ready.

I will sing, I will sing your praise.

Awake, my soul!

Awake, O lyre and harp!

I will awake the dawn.

I will praise you, Lord, among the peoples,
among the nations sing psalms to you,
for your mercy reaches to the heavens,
and your truth to the skies.

Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
may your glory shine on all the earth!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Wisdom 6:2-3, 6-8

Give ear, you who have power over multitudes / and lord it over throngs of peoples! / Because authority was given you by the Lord / and sovereignty by the Most High, / who shall probe your works and scrutinize your counsels! / For the lowly may be pardoned out of mercy / but the mighty shall be mightily put to the test. / For the Ruler of all shows no partiality, / nor does he fear greatness, / Because he himself made the great as well as the small, / and provides for all alike; / but for those in power a rigorous scrutiny impends.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The chief priests and the elders challenged Jesus' authority.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Merciful God of our ancestors, your glory shines over the earth. In awe we pray: **R.** Help us to listen, O God.

Strengthen a synodal model among Pope Francis, bishops, pastors, and the faithful. **R.**

Scrutinize the deliberations of courts, lawyers, and lawmakers. **R.**

Inspire the creativity of screenwriters, actors, and documentary film makers. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May God awaken our minds, hearts, and will to all that is infused with the light of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. Virginia Centurione Bracelli

Laywoman (1587–1651)

Virginia Centurione was born to a noble family of Genoa in Italy. Though she was attracted to religious life, her parents arranged for her marriage to Caspar Bracelli when she was fifteen. Bracelli matched her noble lineage, but he differed from his wife in every other way. Virginia tried in vain to curb his dissolute ways, but it was an unhappy marriage. When her husband died after five years, leaving her with two daughters, Virginia refused her family's efforts to arrange a second marriage and took a vow of celibacy.

While raising her daughters, she began to engage in the charitable work that would increasingly occupy her. This began when she rescued an abandoned girl, whom she had found lying in the street, and brought her into her own home. Eventually Virginia founded a school for orphans. When her daughters married, she devoted all her time and resources to the school and founded an order of teachers to maintain it. During an outbreak of plague, she purchased a building to house the sick, which eventually numbered as many as three hundred.

Virginia died on December 15, 1651. She was canonized in 2003.

“St. Virginia Centurione Bracelli leaves the Church the witness of a simple and active saint. Her example of courageous fidelity to the Gospel also continues to exert a powerful influence on people in our time. She used to say: when God is one’s only goal, ‘all disagreements are smoothed out, all difficulties overcome.’”

—Pope John Paul II

Mass

Monday of the Third Week of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Jeremiah 31:10; Isaiah 35:4

Hear the word of the Lord, O nations; / declare it to the distant lands: / Behold, our Savior will come; you need no longer fear.

COLLECT

Incline a merciful ear to our cry, we pray, O Lord,
and, casting light on the darkness of our hearts,
visit us with the grace of your Son.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of Numbers

24:2-7, 15-17a

A star shall advance from Jacob.

When Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel encamped, tribe by tribe, the spirit of God came upon him, and he gave voice to his oracle: / The utterance of Balaam, son of Beor, / the utterance of a man whose eye is true, / The utterance of one who hears what God says, / and knows what the Most High knows, / Of one who sees what the Almighty sees, / enraptured, and with eyes unveiled: / How goodly are your tents, O Jacob; / your encampments, O Israel! / They are like gardens beside a stream, / like the cedars planted by the LORD. / His wells shall yield free-flowing waters, / he shall have the sea within reach; / His king shall rise higher, / and his royalty shall be exalted.

Then Balaam gave voice to his oracle: / The utterance of Balaam, son of Beor, / the utterance of the man whose eye is true, / The utterance of one who hears what God says, /

and knows what the Most High knows, / Of one who sees
what the Almighty sees, / enraptured, and with eyes un-
veiled. / I see him, though not now; / I behold him, though
not near: / A star shall advance from Jacob, / and a staff
shall rise from Israel.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9

R. (4) Teach me your ways, O Lord.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,

Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior. *R.*

Remember that your compassion, O LORD,
and your kindness are from of old.

In your kindness remember me,
because of your goodness, O LORD. *R.*

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
he teaches the humble his way. *R.*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Psalm 85:8

Show us, LORD, your love,
and grant us your salvation.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

21:23-27

John's baptism: where did it come from?

When Jesus had come into the temple area, the chief
priests and the elders of the people approached him
as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you
doing these things? And who gave you this authority?" Jesus

said to them in reply, "I shall ask you one question, and if you answer it for me, then I shall tell you by what authority I do these things. Where was John's baptism from? Was it of heavenly or of human origin?" They discussed this among themselves and said, "If we say 'Of heavenly origin,' he will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we fear the crowd, for they all regard John as a prophet." So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know." He himself said to them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things."

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, we pray, O Lord, these offerings we make,
gathered from among your gifts to us,
and may what you grant us to celebrate devoutly here below
gain for us the prize of eternal redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON Cf. Psalm 106 (105):4-5; Isaiah 38:3

Come, O Lord, visit us in peace, / that we may rejoice
before you with a blameless heart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May these mysteries, O Lord,
in which we have participated,
profit us, we pray,
for even now, as we walk amid passing things,
you teach us by them
to love the things of heaven
and hold fast to what endures.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Teach Me Your Paths

Learning a path is a long, patient process. A friend of ours has hiked the same trail near his home once or twice a week for many years. Other trails thread the nearby hills, and he travels them when invited, but the trail he knows and loves is *his*; he has a claim on it that can be won only by long, patient, appreciative intimacy. He knows every patch of shade, where the sounds of water become audible, which parts get muddy first in the January rain. He knows it in ways that go far beyond navigation. His path has become a way of knowing himself. . . .

When the psalmist prays, “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths,” I imagine he is asking for something more than a map: what he seeks is a lived relationship with the shepherd who knows every cranny of the hills, and will accompany him as he explores—and plays in—the fields of the Lord. This is the same poet who sang with radical confidence, “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. . . .” As Jesus walked the paths of Nazareth and Jerusalem and the hills of Samaria, teaching his disciples how to be at home among the foxes and the birds of the air and the hungry crowds of strangers, so our teacher walks with us. The Spirit will meet us, even on our detours and byways, even in the pits we stumble into, and will teach us, step by step, how to recognize and walk the paths of this world as the many roads to heaven they are.

..... Marilyn McEntyre, *What’s in a Phrase?*

Marilyn McEntyre is author of numerous books on language and faith, including Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies and Make a List: How a Simple Practice Can Change Our Lives and Open Our Hearts.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 70

O God, come to my assistance;
O LORD, make haste to help me!
Let there be shame and confusion
on those who seek my life.

O let them turn back in confusion,
who delight in my harm;
let them turn because of their shame,
who jeer at me and mock.

O let there be rejoicing and gladness
for all who seek you.
Let them say forever, “God is great,”
who love your saving help.

As for me, who am wretched and poor,
hasten to me, O God.
You are my rescuer, my help;
O LORD, do not delay.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

2 Peter 1:16–19

We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that unique declaration came to him from the majestic glory, “This is my Son, my beloved, with whom I am well pleased.” We ourselves heard this voice come from

heaven while we were with him on the holy mountain. Moreover, we possess the prophetic message that is altogether reliable. You will do well to be attentive to it, as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

A star shall advance from Jacob and a scepter shall rise from Israel.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of light, you reveal yourself to us in your beloved Son. In faith we pray: *R/*. God, come to our assistance.

For righteous leaders who meet resistance, we pray: *R/*.

For parents and guardians of toddlers, pre-teens, and adolescents, we pray: *R/*.

For first responders and military troops, we pray: *R/*.

Our Father . . .

May the peace of Christ reign in our hearts, now and forever. Amen.

Tuesday, December 17

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 8:2-7, 10

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic
is your name through all the earth!

Your majesty is set above the heavens.
From the mouths of children and of babes
you fashioned praise to foil your enemy,
to silence the foe and the rebel.

When I see the heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars which you arranged,
what are human beings that you keep them in mind,
mortal creatures that you care for them?

Yet you have made them little lower than the angels;
with glory and honor you crowned them,
gave them power over the works of your hands:
you put all things under their feet.

O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic
is your name through all the earth!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Sirach 24:1-6

Wisdom sings her own praises, / among her own people
she proclaims her glory. / In the assembly of the
Most High she opens her mouth, / in the presence of his
host she tells of her glory:

“From the mouth of the Most High I came forth, / and covered the earth like a mist. / In the heights of heaven I dwelt, / and my throne was in a pillar of cloud. / The vault of heaven I compassed alone, / and walked through the deep abyss. / Over waves of the sea, over all the land, / over every people and nation I held sway.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Whoever obeys Wisdom will not be put to shame.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Most High God, your majesty is praised above the heavens. In awe we pray: *R.* O Wisdom, teach us the way of salvation.

Prepare your Church for the great festival of Christmas. *R.*

Unite elected officials in efforts to reverence all of life and serve the common good. *R.*

Heal those who suffer drug or alcohol addiction. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God fill us with peace and lead us to rejoice in hope for the coming Savior, by the power of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Dorothy Sayers

Writer (1893–1957)

Dorothy Sayers was the daughter of an Anglican clergyman and headmaster. She became best known as a writer of detective novels (many featuring Lord Peter Wimsey), but she also wrote many other novels, plays, and collections of essays. After teaching herself old Italian she prepared a translation of Dante's *Divine Comedy* that remains one of the most popular and accessible editions in print.

A devout Anglican, Sayers served as churchwarden of her London parish, and took to writing essays and delivering lectures on Christian doctrine. In *The Mind of the Maker*, she drew an analogy between the Trinity and any act of human creation that involves the Idea, the Energy (the power of creative production), and the Power (the effect of the work on its audience). "The only Christian work," she wrote, "is good work, well done." So influential were her apologetic works that the archbishop of Canterbury offered her a Lambeth doctorate in theology (which she declined).

Sayers died on December 17, 1957.

"Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this. . . . A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them . . . who never made arch jokes about them; . . . who praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously. . . . There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything 'funny' about woman's nature."

—Dorothy Sayers

Mass

Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 49:13

Rejoice, O heavens, and exult, O earth, / for our Lord will come to show mercy to his poor.

COLLECT

O God, Creator and Redeemer of human nature,
who willed that your Word should take flesh
in an ever-virgin womb,
look with favor on our prayers,
that your Only Begotten Son,
having taken to himself our humanity,
may be pleased to grant us a share in his divinity.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of Genesis

49:2, 8-10

The scepter shall not depart from Judah.

Jacob called his sons and said to them: / “Assemble and listen, sons of Jacob, / listen to Israel, your father.

“You, Judah, shall your brothers praise / —your hand on the neck of your enemies; / the sons of your father shall bow down to you. / Judah, like a lion’s whelp, / you have grown up on prey, my son. / He crouches like a lion recumbent, / the king of beasts—who would dare rouse him? / The scepter shall never depart from Judah, / or the mace from between his legs, / While tribute is brought to him, / and he receives the people’s homage.”

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17

R. (see 7) **Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.**

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
He shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment. **R.**

The mountains shall yield peace for the people,
and the hills justice.
He shall defend the afflicted among the people,
save the children of the poor. **R.**

Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth. **R.**

May his name be blessed forever;
as long as the sun his name shall remain.
In him shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed;
all the nations shall proclaim his happiness. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

O Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!

A reading from the beginning of the holy Gospel
according to Matthew

1:1-17

The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah

became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez became the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab. Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed became the father of Jesse, Jesse the father of David the king.

David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon became the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asaph. Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah. Uzziah became the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos the father of Josiah. Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile.

After the Babylonian exile, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud. Abiud became the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok. Zadok became the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud the father of Eleazar. Eleazar became the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

Thus the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Christ, fourteen generations.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Sanctify these gifts of your Church, O Lord,
and grant that through these venerable mysteries
we may be nourished with the bread of heaven.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON**Cf. Haggai 2:7**

Behold, the Desired of all the nations will come, / and the
house of the Lord will be filled with glory.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished by these divine gifts, almighty God,
we ask you to grant our desire:
that, aflame with your Spirit,
we may shine like bright torches
before your Christ when he comes.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

*Reflection***Matthew's Roll Call***

I love reading aloud Matthew's genealogy with its listing of forty-two names. I didn't always. At first it was intimidating, especially such monikers as Rehoboam, Amminadab, Jehoshaphat, Shealtiel, and Zerubbabel. But these eventually became favorites, sounding so rhythmic, even musical. Here we have the family tree with the series of branches that blossomed into Jesus—three sets of fourteen names, taking us from father in faith Abraham to royal favorite David to the tragic exile in Babylon to Joseph the Just, husband of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Matthew collapses salvation history into a roll call.

Of particular interest are the names of five women. Four were Gentiles, each having her own fascinating story: wily Tamar, who seduced her father-in-law when he refused her right to wed his last son; the prostitute Rahab, whose courage led her to conceal Joshua's spies, winning her a place in Israel's heart; the loyal Ruth, who left her own people to care for mother-in-law Naomi; and Bathsheba, whose name Matthew won't even mention, as if blaming her rather than Israel's darling David, who impregnated her, then sent her husband Uriah to his death. Finally, there is Mary, teenage mother of the Messiah.

Matthew's listing links Jesus with the world of Chosen People Israel and the world of the Gentiles, reminding us he came for all. His family, like most families, was a mess, a mix of saints and sinners, brokenness and fidelity, shame and glory. Into this clan came the Savior, as he continues to come, yesterday, today, and always.

..... Fr. James Wallace

James A. Wallace, CSsR, is a parish priest at Our Lady of Perpetual Help parish in Boston, Massachusetts. He is also the author of Preaching to the Hungers of the Heart and The Ministry of Lectors.

*Previously published in *Give Us This Day*, December 2013.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

PSALM 146:1-2, 5-10

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Alleluia!

My soul, give praise to the LORD;
I will praise the LORD all my life,
sing praise to my God while I live.

Blessed the one who is helped by Jacob's God,
whose hope is in the LORD our God,
who made the heavens and the earth,
the seas and all they contain,

Who preserves fidelity forever,
who does justice to those who are oppressed.
who furnishes bread to the hungry;
the LORD who sets prisoners free,
the LORD who opens the eyes of the blind,
the LORD who raises up those who are bowed down.

It is the LORD who loves the righteous,
the LORD who protects the stranger
and upholds the orphan and the widow,
but thwarts the path of the wicked.
The LORD will reign forever,
your God, O Zion, from age to age.

Alleluia!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

2 Timothy 2:8-10

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David: such is my gospel, for which I am suffering, even to the point of chains, like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore, I bear with everything for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, together with eternal glory.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

O Wisdom, proceeding from the mouth of the Most High, come and save us!

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Provident God, you are forever faithful to your covenant. In hope we pray: *R.* Bring peace to our hearts, O God.

Ensure justice for those who are oppressed, and help us end all wars. *R.*

Prosper efforts to provide food, shelter, and water to those who are in need. *R.*

Comfort and protect children who experience the death of a parent. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God make us firm in faith, constant in hope, and faithful in love, through Jesus our peace. Amen.

Wednesday, December 18

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 119:1-8

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Blessed are those whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD!
Blessed are those who keep his decrees!
With all their hearts they seek him.

They never do anything evil,
but walk in God's ways.
You have laid down your precepts
to be carefully kept.

May my ways be firm
in keeping your statutes.
Then I shall not be put to shame
as I fix my eyes on all your commands.

I will thank you with an upright heart,
as I learn your righteous judgments.
I will keep your statutes;
do not ever forsake me.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 7:11b-14, 16

The LORD will make a house for you: when your days
have been completed and you rest with your ancestors,
I will raise up your offspring after you, sprung from your
loins, and I will establish his kingdom. He it is who shall

build a house for my name, and I will establish his royal throne forever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. If he does wrong, I will reprove him with a human rod and with human punishments. Your house and your kingdom are firm forever before me; your throne shall be firmly established forever.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The young woman will bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Gracious and loving God, you are forever present to us.
In trust we pray: *R.* Hear and answer us, O God.

Help nations to put aside disputes and collaborate for peace. *R.*

Protect young people from the lure of gangs and drugs. *R.*

Prosper the work of charitable organizations. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God lead us from fear to trust and from hate to love, through Jesus, our everlasting hope. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Alicia Domon and Léonie Duquet

Nuns, Martyrs (d. 1977)

During the period of 1976 to 1983, a military dictatorship in Argentina conducted a “dirty war” against “subversives” and dissidents. Thousands of civilians were killed; many more “disappeared”—abducted by the military, never to be seen again. Two French nuns, Sisters Alicia Domon and Léonie Duquet, were among them.

Both members of the Toulouse Institute of the Sisters of Foreign Mission, these women were among the many foreign missionaries who came to work in Latin America in the 1960s. While at first they engaged in traditional ministries, by 1969, like many other religious of the time, they had moved out of their convent and into an urban shantytown to share the life of the poor.

Sr. Alicia became involved with the “Mothers of the Disappeared,” who gathered in the central plaza each day, holding photographs of their missing children, offering a silent rebuke to the military regime. On December 8, 1977, she and eleven other women were seized. Her housemate Sr. Léonie was also picked up. Though neither of them was ever seen again, later reports confirmed that they had been tortured and then tossed from an airplane over the Atlantic Ocean.

Several months before her death, Alicia had written to the archbishop of Toulouse: “I would ask you not to do anything to save me which could endanger others. I have already made the sacrifice of my life.”

“I didn’t come here [to the shantytown] to tell people what they had to do but in order that we could help each other and share life’s joys and sorrows.”

—Sister Alicia Domon

Mass

Wednesday of the Third Week of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Christ our King is coming, / he is the Lamb foretold by John.

COLLECT

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that we, who are weighed down from of old
by slavery beneath the yoke of sin,
may be set free by the newness
of the long-awaited Nativity
of your Only Begotten Son.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah 23:5-8

I will raise up a righteous shoot to David.

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, / when I will raise up a righteous shoot to David; / As king he shall reign and govern wisely, / he shall do what is just and right in the land. / In his days Judah shall be saved, / Israel shall dwell in security. / This is the name they give him: / “The LORD our justice.”

Therefore, the days will come, says the LORD, when they shall no longer say, “As the LORD lives, who brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt”; but rather, “As the LORD lives, who brought the descendants of the house of Israel up from the land of the north”—and from all the lands to which I banished them; they shall again live on their own land.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19

R. (see 7) Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
He shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment. **R.**

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save. **R.**

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous deeds.
And blessed forever be his glorious name;
may the whole earth be filled with his glory. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

O Leader of the House of Israel,
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
come to rescue us with your mighty power!

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

1:18-25

Jesus was born of Mary, the betrothed of Joseph, a son of David.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your

wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: / *Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, / and they shall name him Emmanuel, /* which means “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the sacrifice to be offered to you, O Lord,
make us acceptable to your name,
that we may merit for all eternity
to be the companions of Christ,
by whose Death our own mortality was healed.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Matthew 1:23

His name will be called Emmanuel, / which means
God-with-us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May we receive your mercy
in the midst of your temple, O Lord,
and show fitting honor
to the coming solemnities of our redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Emmanuel

With precisely one week to go before Christmas Day, the Church gives us the Gospel reading of Jesus' birth according to Matthew. Matthew explains to the reader that the child is of the Holy Spirit, which is something that needs to be told to Joseph as well. Unlike the Lucan story of the angel Gabriel appearing to Mary, in Matthew's story, an angel of the Lord comes to Joseph in a dream to allay his fears and console him with the knowledge that the child is from the Holy Spirit. Not only that, the child will be named Jesus (Josh) but will also be known as "Emmanuel," which is Hebrew for "God is with us."

These unique Matthean themes color the rest of the Gospel. No other evangelist or any other New Testament writer refers to Jesus as Emmanuel. And Matthew will not do so explicitly again. But the reader knows from the beginning of the story that in Jesus "God is with us."

Later in this same Gospel, Jesus will say that salvation depends on how we treat those without food, water, clothes, or other means (Matt 24–25). Those who care for the least of these are caring for Jesus. Those who neglect these people are neglecting Jesus, who is "God with us," and has promised to be with us always, "until the end of the age" (Matt 28:20). Those words close the Gospel of Matthew and make a grand literary inclusion with the opening we read today: Jesus, Emmanuel, is "God with us." We need look no further than those who are poor and destitute to find him in our midst. How we treat them determines our very salvation.

Brian Schmisek

Brian Schmisek is provost at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein. His most recent book is Signs, Superstitions, and God's Plan: The Human Quest for Meaning.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 26:1-8

Give judgment for me, O LORD,
for I have walked in my integrity.
I have trusted in the LORD; I have not wavered.

Examine me, LORD, and try me.
O test my heart and my mind.
Your faithful love is before my eyes,
and I walk according to your truth.

I never take my seat with liars,
and with hypocrites I shall not go.
I hate the evildoer's company;
I will not take my seat with the wicked.

I wash my hands in innocence
and take my place around your altar,
singing a song of thanksgiving,
recounting all your wonders.
O LORD, I love the house where you dwell,
the place where your glory abides.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 1:5-9

To which of the angels did God ever say: / “You are my son; this day I have begotten you”? / Or again: / “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me”? / And again, when he leads the first-born into the world, he says: / “Let all the angels of God worship him.” / Of the angels he says:

/ “He makes his angels winds / and his ministers a fiery flame”; / but of the Son: / “Your throne, O God, stands forever and ever; / and a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. / You loved justice and hated wickedness; / therefore God, your God, anointed you / with the oil of gladness above your companions.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

O Leader of the House of Israel, come to rescue us with your mighty power.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Just God, your judgments are sound and your mercy is everlasting. In faith we pray: **R.** God, lead us in the ways of your truth.

Inspire composers, writers, and artists. **R.**

Guide counselors, spiritual companions, and confessors. **R.**

Give wisdom to leaders, mentors, and role models. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May the faithful love of God be our guiding star, and may the Spirit prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.
Amen.

Thursday, December 19

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 41:2-6, 11-13

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

Blessed are they who have concern for the poor.

In time of trouble, the LORD will rescue them.

The LORD will guard them, preserve their life,
and make them blessed in the land,
not give them up to the will of their foes.

The LORD will help them on their bed of pain;
in their sickness, you tend even to their bedding.

As for me, I said, "LORD, have mercy on me;
heal my soul, for I have sinned against you."
My foes speak evil against me and wonder,
how long before I die and my name is forgotten?

But you, O LORD, have mercy on me.
Raise me up and I will repay them.
By this I know your favor:
that my foes do not triumph over me.
In my integrity you have upheld me,
and have set me in your presence forever.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 49:13-16

Sing out, heavens, and rejoice, earth, / break forth into
song, you mountains, / For the LORD comforts his
people / and shows mercy to his afflicted.

But Zion said, “The LORD has forsaken me; / my Lord has forgotten me.” / Can a mother forget her infant, / be without tenderness for the child of her womb? / Even should she forget, / I will never forget you. / See, upon the palms of my hands I have engraved you; / your walls are ever before me.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

This child will be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Merciful God, you never forsake your own. In peace we pray: *R/*. Favor us with your love, O God.

Help us to act with integrity and to reach out for help when we are in need. *R/*.

Uphold the dignity of those who are scorned, ridiculed, or neglected. *R/*.

Broaden our perspective, and help us to be inclusive in our concern and care. *R/*.

Our Father . . .

May God bless us, guard us from evil, and preserve us in peace, through Jesus, the promise of salvation. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Meister Eckhart

Dominican Theologian and Mystic (ca. 1260–ca. 1329)

Meister Eckhart, a Dominican theologian of the early fourteenth century, was the greatest of the Rhineland mystics. Though he twice held the prestigious Dominican chair at the University of Paris, he spent most of his career in positions of service within his order. In 1326, based on a list of twenty-eight propositions supposedly derived from his work, he was accused of heresy by the archbishop of Cologne. Though he disputed the accusation, he died before learning that the pope had confirmed his condemnation.

Modern examination of Eckhart's writings has left little doubt of his sincere faith and loyalty to the Church. At the same time, it is no wonder that his mystical and poetic formulations aroused suspicion. Eckhart tried by means of paradoxical language to describe the ineffable union of the soul with God. He taught the need to let go of our concepts of God, all of the illusions and finite objects onto which we project our longing for the Absolute. "Do not cling to the symbols, but get to the inner truth!" he urged. "The shell must be cracked apart if what is in it is to come out." Unfortunately, it seemed to Church authorities that the "shell" he wished to crack was what they preferred to call Catholic doctrine and authority.

The date of Eckhart's death is unknown. Before dying, he apparently issued a statement in which he "revoked and also deplored" the condemned articles "*insofar* as they could generate in the minds of the faithful a heretical opinion."

"Do not think that saintliness comes from occupation; it depends rather on what one is. The kind of work we do does not make us holy, but we may make it holy."

—Meister Eckhart

Mass

Thursday of the Third Week of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Hebrews 10:37

He who is to come will come and will not delay, / and now
there will be no fear within our land, / for he is our Savior.

COLLECT

O God, who through the child-bearing of the holy Virgin
graciously revealed the radiance of your glory to the world,
grant, we pray,
that we may venerate with integrity of faith
the mystery of so wondrous an Incarnation
and always celebrate it with due reverence.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of Judges

13:2-7, 24-25a

The birth of Samson is announced by an angel.

There was a certain man from Zorah, of the clan of the
Danites, whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren
and had borne no children. An angel of the LORD appeared
to the woman and said to her, "Though you are barren and
have had no children, yet you will conceive and bear a son.
Now, then, be careful to take no wine or strong drink and
to eat nothing unclean. As for the son you will conceive and
bear, no razor shall touch his head, for this boy is to be
consecrated to God from the womb. It is he who will begin
the deliverance of Israel from the power of the Philistines."

The woman went and told her husband, "A man of God
came to me; he had the appearance of an angel of God, ter-
rible indeed. I did not ask him where he came from, nor

did he tell me his name. But he said to me, ‘You will be with child and will bear a son. So take neither wine nor strong drink, and eat nothing unclean. For the boy shall be consecrated to God from the womb, until the day of his death.’”

The woman bore a son and named him Samson. The boy grew up and the LORD blessed him; the Spirit of the LORD stirred him.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17

R. (see 8) My mouth shall be filled with your praise, and
I will sing your glory!

Be my rock of refuge,
a stronghold to give me safety,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
O my God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked. **R.**

For you are my hope, O LORD;
my trust, O God, from my youth.
On you I depend from birth;
from my mother's womb you are my strength. **R.**

I will treat of the mighty works of the LORD;
O God, I will tell of your singular justice.
O God, you have taught me from my youth,
and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

O Root of Jesse's stem,
sign of God's love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 1:5-25

The birth of John the Baptist is announced by Gabriel.

In the days of Herod, King of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah of the priestly division of Abijah; his wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both were righteous in the eyes of God, observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in years.

Once when he was serving as priest in his division's turn before God, according to the practice of the priestly service, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense. Then, when the whole assembly of the people was praying outside at the hour of the incense offering, the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right of the altar of incense. Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord."

Then Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years." And the angel said to him in reply, "I am Gabriel, who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to

you this good news. But now you will be speechless and unable to talk until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled at their proper time.” Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and were amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary. But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He was gesturing to them but remained mute.

Then, when his days of ministry were completed, he went home.

After this time his wife Elizabeth conceived, and she went into seclusion for five months, saying, “So has the Lord done for me at a time when he has seen fit to take away my disgrace before others.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look with favor, we pray, O Lord,
on the offerings we lay upon your altars,
that what we bring despite our weakness
may be sanctified by your power.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Luke 1:78-79

The Dawn from on high will visit us, / guiding our feet in
the way of peace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

As we give thanks, almighty God,
for these gifts you have bestowed,
graciously arouse in us, we pray,
the desire for those yet to come,
that we may welcome the Nativity of our Savior
and honor it with minds made pure.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Heavenly Messengers

When was the last time an “angel of the Lord” visited you? Were you afraid? Perhaps a bit skeptical?

Like Zechariah before Gabriel, or George Bailey before the jovial Clarence Odbody AS2 (Angel Second Class) in the Christmas film *It's a Wonderful Life*, we tend to be caught unawares by these heavenly messengers. They usually arrive when we are feeling utterly fruitless. Zechariah and Elizabeth, despite their righteousness, were childless and felt the shame that accompanied infertility. George, despite his selflessness, was out \$8,000 and felt like a failure, wishing that he had never been born. Both pray while they are “on the edge”—Zechariah in the temple sanctuary as he offers incense at the evening sacrifice, George on the bridge as he looks down into the dark, rushing waters below.

In these moments of desperate faith, the angel comes and announces good news of salvation. In our own Advent waiting, we are invited to examine the wounds that may prevent us from embracing the angel's tidings of gladness and joy. Do you find yourself wordless before the word of the Lord because it has been long years of emptiness and distance since you last felt the consoling touch of our God? Chastened by all your frustrated aspirations, are you hesitant to rejoice because the message of “God with us” seems just too good to be true?

Listen. The angel says to you, “Do not be afraid, because your prayer has been heard.”

Grace Mariette Agolia

Grace Mariette Agolia is a doctoral candidate in systematic theology at Boston College. She is editor of Richard R. Gaillardetz's While I Breathe, I Hope: A Mystagogy of Dying (Liturgical Press, 2024).

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

PSALM 55:2-9

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Give ear, O God, to my prayer;
do not hide from my pleading.
Attend to me and reply;
with my cares, I cannot rest.

I tremble at the shouts of the foe,
at the cries of the wicked,
for they pile up evil upon me;
in anger they malign me.

My heart is stricken within me;
death's terror falls upon me.
Trembling and fear come over me,
and horror overwhelms me.

I say, "O that I had wings like a dove,
to fly away and be at rest!
I would indeed escape far away,
and take refuge in the desert.
I would hasten to find my shelter
from the raging wind and tempest."

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Acts 11:15-18

Peter said:] "As I began to speak, the holy Spirit fell upon them as it had upon us at the beginning, and I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, 'John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the holy Spirit.'

If then God gave them the same gift he gave to us when we came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to be able to hinder God?" When they heard this, they stopped objecting and glorified God, saying, "God has then granted life-giving repentance to the Gentiles too."

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

O Root of Jesse's stem, come to save us without delay!

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Comforting God, you are our refuge from life's disturbances. In trust we pray: *R.* God, attend to our pleas.

Rescue those who are endangered by political chaos or environmental disasters or forces of nature. *R.*

Help us to remain in dialogue with one another and to collaborate for peace. *R.*

Slow our pace, and help us to recognize the light of Christ that radiates from all of creation. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May almighty God show us mercy, forgive our sin, and bring us to everlasting life, through Jesus, the Root of Jesse. Amen.

Friday, December 20

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 16:5-11

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

O LORD, it is you who are my portion and cup;

it is you yourself who secure my destiny.

Pleasant places are marked out for me:

a fair heritage indeed is my lot!

I will bless the LORD who gives me counsel,

who even at night directs my heart.

I keep the LORD before me always;

with God at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;

even my body shall rest in safety.

For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,

nor let your holy one see corruption.

You will show me the path of life,

the fullness of joy in your presence,

at your right hand, bliss forever.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 8:56-58

Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, just as he promised. Not a single word has gone unfulfilled of the entire gracious promise he made through Moses his servant. May the LORD, our God, be with us as he was with our ancestors and may he not forsake us nor

cast us off. May he draw our hearts to himself, that we may walk in his ways and keep the commands, statutes, and ordinances that he enjoined on our ancestors.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

His name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Faithful God, you are forever true to the covenant made to David. In faith we pray: *R.* God of our praise, hear our prayer.

Give counsel and right judgment to those entrusted with leadership and power. *R.*

Direct the hearts of the faithful to seek and love your saving Word. *R.*

Rescue children abandoned and orphaned by war, disaster, or foul play. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God show us the path of life and lead us to live the fullness of joy in God's presence, through Jesus, Emmanuel. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Origen

Theologian (ca. 184–253)

Origen, the greatest theologian of the early Greek Church, was born to Christian parents in Alexandria, Egypt. He had a penchant for extreme asceticism, reflected famously in his literal response to the text of Matthew 19:12 extolling those who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. His self-mutilation was considered grounds to prevent his ordination. With a team of secretaries, he is said to have written 6,000 works, though only a small number survived. Later, his teachings on universal salvation and the preexistence of souls also generated controversy, resulting in the condemnation of "Origenism" in the sixth century.

Nonetheless, Origen left a huge legacy in the area of biblical studies. In one of his works, he compiled the entire Old Testament written in six columns, including variant Hebrew and Greek versions. More importantly, he devised a method of interpreting Scripture that laid the foundation for all medieval exegesis. He believed the text could be read on several levels, corresponding to body, soul, and spirit. Beyond the literal, historical meaning, one could uncover additional symbolic meanings, to which Christ supplied the interpretive key. Thus, virtually any text in the Old Testament could be seen as a foreshadowing of the New Testament and of our heavenly destination. (Thus, for example, Noah's ark could prefigure the Church as well as the heavenly communion of saints.) During a wave of persecution in 250, he survived his torture but lived on for only a few years.

"One who prays ceaselessly is one who combines prayer with work and work with prayer."

—Origen

Mass

Friday of the Third Week of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 11:1; 40:5; Luke 3:6

A branch shall sprout from the root of Jesse, / and the glory of the Lord will fill the whole earth, / and all flesh will see the salvation of God.

COLLECT

O God, eternal majesty, whose ineffable Word the immaculate Virgin received through the message of an Angel and so became the dwelling-place of divinity, filled with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant, we pray, that by her example we may in humility hold fast to your will. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 7:10-14

Behold, the virgin shall be with child.

The LORD spoke to Ahaz: Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God; let it be deep as the nether world, or high as the sky! But Ahaz answered, "I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!" Then Isaiah said: Listen, O house of David! Is it not enough for you to weary men, must you also weary my God? Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6

R. (see 7c and 10b) Let the Lord enter; he is the king of glory.

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.

For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers. *R.*

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?
or who may stand in his holy place?
He whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,
who desires not what is vain. *R.*

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
a reward from God his savior.
Such is the race that seeks for him,
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob. *R.*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

O Key of David,
opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 1:26-38

You will conceive in your womb and bear a son.

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called

Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end.”

But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” And the angel said to her in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.”

Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look, O Lord, we pray,
upon the one sacrifice of your Son,
that, by participating in this mystery,
we may possess at last the gifts we have awaited
and for which our faith bids us hope.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Luke 1:31

The Angel said to Mary: / Behold, you will conceive and
bear a son, / and you shall name him Jesus.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant divine protection, O Lord,
to those you renew with this heavenly gift,
that to those who delight in your mysteries
you may give the joy of true peace.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

That Splendid and Wondrous Star

And the Virgin's name was Mary. Let us now say a few words about this name, which means star of the sea and is so becoming to the Virgin Mother. Surely she is very fittingly likened to a star. She is indeed that noble star risen out of Jacob (Num 24:17) whose beam enlightens this earthly globe. She it is whose brightness both twinkles in the highest heaven and pierces the pit of hell (Prov 5:5), and is shed upon earth, warming our hearts far more than our bodies, fostering virtue and cauterizing vice. She, I tell you, is that splendid and wondrous star suspended as by necessity over this great wide sea, radiant with merit and brilliant in example.

O you, whoever you are, who feel that in the tidal wave of this world you are nearer to being tossed about among the squalls and gales than treading on dry land, if you do not want to founder in the tempest, do not avert your eyes from the brightness of this star. When the wind of temptation blows up within you, when you strike upon the rock of tribulation, gaze up at this star, call out to Mary. Whether you are being tossed about by the waves of pride or ambition or slander or jealousy, gaze up at this star, call out to Mary. When the immensity of your sins weighs you down and you are bewildered by the loathsomeness of your conscience, think of Mary. In dangers, in hardships, in every doubt, think of Mary, call out to Mary. Keep her in your mouth, keep her in your heart. Follow the example of her life and you will obtain the favor of her prayer. Following her, you will never go astray.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux, adapted from a Marian homily

Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153), Cistercian abbot and Doctor of the Church, was a great spiritual master and prolific writer.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 68:5-7, 20-21, 36

O sing to God; make music to God's name.
Extol the One who rides on the clouds,
whose name is the LORD, in whose presence we exult.

Father of orphans, defender of widows:
such is God in the holy place.
God gives the desolate a home to dwell in,
and leads the prisoners forth into prosperity,
while rebels must dwell in a parched land.

Day after day, may the Lord be blest
who bears our burdens; God is our savior.
This God of ours is a God who saves.
The LORD our Lord provides an escape from death.

Awesome are you, O God, in your holy place,
You who are the God of Israel.
You give strength and power to your people.
Blest be God!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 3:20-22

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me. I will give the victor the right to sit with me on my throne, as I myself first won the victory and sit with my Father on his throne.

“Whoever has ears ought to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

O Key of David, open the gates to our heavenly home.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Patient God, you knock at the door of our hearts and wait for our response. In hope we pray: *R.* Saving God, be near to us.

You ride on the clouds: bring to our minds and hearts your power and glory. *R.*

You bear our burdens: ease the troubles of those who struggle financially or emotionally. *R.*

You provide an escape from death: raise to new life all who have died with their hope fixed on Jesus. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the love of God, the peace of Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us forever. Amen.

Saturday, December 21

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 69:17-19, 31-37

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

LORD, answer, for your love is kind;
in your abundant compassion, turn towards me.
Do not hide your face from your servant;
answer me quickly, for I am in distress.
Come close to my soul and redeem me;
ransom me because of my foes.

Then I will praise God's name with a song;
I will glorify the Lord with thanksgiving:
a gift pleasing the LORD more than oxen,
more than a bull with horns and hooves.

The poor when they see it will be glad,
and God-seeking hearts will revive;
for the LORD attends the needy,
and does not spurn those in their chains.
Let the heavens and the earth give praise to God,
the seas and everything that moves in them.

For God will bring salvation to Zion,
and rebuild the cities of Judah,
and they shall dwell there in possession.
The children of God's servants shall inherit it;
those who love the Lord's name shall dwell there.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Micah 4:6-7

On that day—oracle of the LORD— / I will gather the lame, / And I will assemble the outcasts, / and those whom I have afflicted. / I will make of the lame a remnant, / and of the weak a strong nation; / The LORD shall be king over them on Mount Zion, / from now on and forever.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Compassionate God, your power is made perfect in our weakness. Acknowledging the sufficiency of your grace we pray: *R.* God, help us.

You attend the needy: unite national efforts in global humanitarian aid. *R.*

You ransom us from our foes: thwart the plots of terrorists and criminals. *R.*

You revive God-seeking hearts: restore hope and trust in those who suffer spiritual wounds. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the light of faith guide us and the peace of Christ enfold us as we observe the winter solstice. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. Peter Canisius

Doctor of the Church (1521–1597)

Peter Canisius was among the earliest Jesuits to make a solemn profession of vows. Afterward he became an almost ubiquitous figure in the campaign of Catholic renewal in Europe. He served in Sicily, Rome, Bavaria, and Vienna before being named the first Jesuit provincial of South Germany. For his successful service in this post, he was later called “the second apostle of Germany.” In 1580 he was assigned to the Catholic city of Fribourg, where he founded a famous university (one of many he would establish in Europe) and almost single-handedly preserved the Catholic presence in Switzerland.

At a time when vicious defamation was commonly traded between opposing sides of the Reformation, Canisius maintained a tone of charity and generosity toward his opponents. He believed the Church’s best response to the Protestant challenge was to cleanse its own house, present the faith in a clear and attractive form, and offer the living witness of evangelical piety.

The author of a fantastically successful Catechism, Canisius was exceptional among Catholic reformers (in contrast to Luther and other Protestants) in appreciating the power of printed media. In every city where he worked, he was active in promoting Catholic printers and publishers. This contribution was especially emphasized by Pope Pius XI when, in 1925, he canonized Peter Canisius and named him a Doctor of the Church.

“Let my eyes take their sleep, but may my heart always keep watch for you. May your right hand bless your servants who love you.”

—St. Peter Canisius

Mass

Saturday of the Third Week of Advent

[*St. Peter Canisius, opt. memorial*]

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 7:14; 8:10

The Lord and Ruler will be coming soon, / and his name
will be called Emmanuel, / because he will be
God-with-us.

COLLECT

Hear in kindness, O Lord,
the prayers of your people,
that those who rejoice
at the coming of your Only Begotten Son in our flesh
may, when at last he comes in glory,
gain the reward of eternal life.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Song of Songs

2:8-14 (alt. Zephaniah 3:14-18a)

Hark! my lover comes, springing across the mountains.

Hark! my lover—here he comes / springing across the
mountains, / leaping across the hills. / My lover is like
a gazelle / or a young stag. / Here he stands behind our wall,
/ gazing through the windows, / peering through the lat-
tices. / My lover speaks; he says to me, / “Arise, my beloved,
my dove, my beautiful one, / and come! / “For see, the win-
ter is past, / the rains are over and gone. / The flowers appear
on the earth, / the time of pruning the vines has come, / and
the song of the dove is heard in our land. / The fig tree puts
forth its figs, / and the vines, in bloom, give forth fragrance.
/ Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, / and come!

“O my dove in the clefts of the rock, / in the secret recesses of the cliff, / Let me see you, / let me hear your voice, / For your voice is sweet, / and you are lovely.”

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21

R. (1a; 3a) Exult, you just, in the Lord! Sing to him a new song.

Give thanks to the LORD on the harp;
with the ten-stringed lyre chant his praises.
Sing to him a new song;
pluck the strings skillfully, with shouts of gladness. **R.**

But the plan of the LORD stands forever;
the design of his heart, through all generations.
Blessed the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people he has chosen for his own inheritance. **R.**

Our soul waits for the LORD,
who is our help and our shield,
For in him our hearts rejoice;
in his holy name we trust. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 1:39-45

*And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*

Mary set out in those days and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and

Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Be pleased, O Lord, to accept the offerings of your Church, for in your mercy you have given them to be offered and by your power you transform them into the mystery of our salvation.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Luke 1:45

Blessed are you who have believed, / that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Lord, may participation in this divine mystery provide enduring protection for your people, so that, being subject to your glorious majesty in dedicated service, they may know abundant health in mind and body.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Cup of Blessing

It's a ceramic mug, sturdy and practical, but not plain. Embedded in its exterior glaze are words that Elizabeth joyfully cried to the Christ-pregnant Mary: "Blessed are you among women." I keep the mug at the church where I work. When I drink coffee from it, I stand a chance of remembering that Elizabeth's benediction applies not only to Mary but also to any other woman, including me, who takes it to heart.

A woman of wisdom and compassion with a ringing laugh and a love for writing poetry gave me the mug. She meant for me to see myself as blessed and a blessing to others. Why would I doubt such a gift?

Yet some days I wonder what good I'm doing, what difference I make. I grew up being repeatedly told, in various ways, that I was anything but a blessed blessing. Belittlement became baked into my being like a curse kiln-fired into the glaze on a stoneware mug. Although I've spent my adulthood imbibing God's goodness and unlearning self-hatred and doubt, on stressful, dispiriting days, those negative, diehard beliefs sometimes resurface. They tempt me to love myself less than God loves me.

That's when I know it's time for coffee—creamy, sweetened, and sipped from a mug that does not lie. "Blessed are you," Elizabeth cries, first to Mary, but also to me—and to you. Like Mary, we are believers cherished by God, Christ-bearers who confer blessings on others simply by showing up as we are.

Rachel M. Srubas

Rachel M. Srubas is a Presbyterian clergywoman and Benedictine oblate. She is the author of numerous books, including The Girl Got Up and The Desert of Compassion: Devotions for the Lenten Journey.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 22:2-11

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you far from saving me,
so far from my words of anguish?
O my God, I call by day and you do not answer;
I call by night and I find no relief.

Yet you, O God, are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you set them free.
When they cried to you, they escaped;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

But I am a worm, not even human,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.
All who see me deride me;
they curl their lips, they shake their heads:
“You trusted in the LORD, may you now be saved,
yes, released, for in you God delights.”

Yes, it was you who took me from the womb,
kept me safe on my mother’s breast.
To you I was committed from birth;
from my mother’s womb, you have been my God.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 22:12-14, 16

Behold, I am coming soon. I bring with me the recompense I will give to each according to his deeds. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Blessed are they who wash their robes so as to have the right to the tree of life and enter the city through its gates.

"I, Jesus, sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star."

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

O Dayspring from on high, come shine on those in the shadow of death.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

O Radiant Light, in the changing of the seasons your creative genius shines forth. In hope we pray:

R. Be with us, O God.

For those who work through the night, we pray: **R.**

For those who are separated from loved ones, we pray: **R.**

For those who are dying and those who wait with them, we pray: **R.**

Our Father . . .

May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Sunday, December 22

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 118:5-9, 13-14

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

I called to the LORD in my distress;
the LORD has answered and freed me.
The LORD is at my side; I do not fear.
What can anyone do against me?
The LORD is at my side as my helper;
I shall look in triumph on my foes.

It is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in human beings;
it is better to take refuge in the LORD
than to trust in rulers.

They pushed me, pushed me hard to knock me down,
but the LORD was my helper.
The LORD is my strength and my song,
and has been my savior.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Ezekiel 43:4-7a

The glory of the LORD entered the temple by way of the gate facing east. Then the spirit lifted me up and brought me to the inner court. And there the glory of the LORD filled the temple! I heard someone speaking to me from the temple, but the man was standing beside me. The

voice said to me: Son of man, do you see the place for my throne, and the place for the soles of my feet? Here I will dwell among the Israelites forever.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The Lord comes to dwell among his people forever.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God our Savior, you are faithful from age to age. With expectant hope we pray: *R.* Come, Lord, we await you.

Increase the faith, love, and hope of your Church and all who call upon your holy name. *R.*

Renew your Church by the proclamation of your Word and the celebration of the sacraments. *R.*

Reveal to us the presence of Christ in all of creation and in every human being. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God strengthen us to walk in love as we prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose day draws near. Amen.

Mass

Fourth Sunday of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 45:8

Drop down dew from above, you heavens, / and let the clouds rain down the Just One; / let the earth be opened and bring forth a Savior.

(The Gloria is omitted.)

COLLECT

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of an Angel,
may by his Passion and Cross
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Micah 5:1-4a

From you shall come forth the ruler of Israel.

Thus says the LORD: / You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah, / too small to be among the clans of Judah, / from you shall come forth for me / one who is to be ruler in Israel; / whose origin is from of old, / from ancient times. / Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time / when she who is to give birth has borne, / and the rest of his kindred shall return / to the children of Israel. / He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock / by the strength of the LORD, / in the majestic name of the LORD, his God; / and they shall remain, for now his greatness / shall reach to the ends of the earth; / he shall be peace.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

R. (4) Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and
we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse your power,
and come to save us. **R.**

Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted,
the son of man whom you yourself made strong. **R.**

May your help be with the man of your right hand,
with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.
Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name. **R.**

A reading from the Letter to the Hebrews

10:5-10

Behold, I come to do your will.

Brothers and sisters: When Christ came into the world, he said: / “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, / but a body you prepared for me; / in holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight. / Then I said, ‘As is written of me in the scroll, / behold, I come to do your will, O God.’”

First he says, “Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in.” These are offered according to the law. Then he says, “Behold, I come to do your will.” He takes away the first to establish the second. By this “will,” we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Luke 1:38

Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 1:39-45

*And how does this happen to me,
that the mother of my Lord should come to me?*

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the Holy Spirit, O Lord,
sanctify these gifts laid upon your altar,
just as he filled with his power
the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Isaiah 7:14

Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son; / and his
name will be called Emmanuel.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received this pledge of eternal redemption,
 we pray, almighty God,
 that, as the feast day of our salvation draws ever nearer,
 so we may press forward all the more eagerly
 to the worthy celebration of the mystery of your Son's
 Nativity.
 Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection

Called into the Unknown

As I prepare for an upcoming trip, I'm torn between catching a flight or hopping in the car for a five-hour drive. They'll take about the same time once you factor in airport time, so I've got two good choices. Mary did not have that luxury.

In today's Gospel, we hear that Mary "set out in haste" to visit and support her cousin Elizabeth, who is herself far into an unlikely pregnancy. That word "haste" almost makes it seem as though this was a quick jaunt, maybe just a few hours by donkey.

Alas, there was nothing quick or easy about what Mary chose to do. It was a dangerous trip, across one hundred miles of rough terrain. She went anyway, trusting that all would be well, and that this visitation was necessary, not just for the physical support it would provide but for the spiritual strength it would foster between the two women and the unborn sons who would go on to change the world.

When Mary arrives, Elizabeth says: "Blessed are you who believe that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." How often does God speak to us, but we are too afraid to follow the call? It is easier for us to stay firmly rooted

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

PSALM 23

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

The LORD is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where you give me repose.
Near restful waters you lead me;
to revive my soul.

You guide me along the right path,
for the sake of your name.
Though I should walk in the valley of the shadow of death,
no evil would I fear, for you are with me.
Your crook and your staff will give me comfort.

You have prepared a table before me
in the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the LORD's own house shall I dwell
for length of days unending.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 12:1-2, 5-6

A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. She gave birth to

a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne. The woman herself fled into the desert where she had a place prepared by God, that there she might be taken care of for twelve hundred and sixty days.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Come, Emmanuel, come to save us.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Eternal God, you are all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever present. We humbly pray to you: **R.** Gracious God, lead us to your truth.

Awaken your Church and society to the financial, emotional, and health-care needs of pregnant women. **R.**

Inspire us to show appreciation to those who serve us in humble ways. **R.**

Help us to consider the welfare of the earth and future generations in our decisions. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May the glory of God fill our hearts with joy and peace for the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

December 22–28

Fourth Week of Advent–Octave of Christmas

Within the Word

Hope's a Risk Worth Taking

Caesar takes a census. It sounds innocent, but we're added to his rolls for his profit. God numbers us among a higher assembly. Which census will more perfectly claim us?

A tired stranger and his family stand at the door. Will we welcome them? Or will we prefer to safeguard property and tribe?

Meanwhile the hosts of heaven announce the arrival of a vulnerable God-child wrapped in rags. Do we prudently remain at our posts attending our concerns? Or do we race to do homage and risk the consequences?

As with any season, this one's loaded with choices. Each has concealed costs and hidden richness. What the Incarnation fundamentally offers the world at Christmas is hope. And while St. Paul insisted that hope does not disappoint, that's not been our experience. Hopes are frequently dashed, love fades, people betray, fortunes unravel. Cynicism seems safer. So maybe hedge your bets with Caesar, keep the door shut, ignore the angel-song.

Or else, rush into the holiest of nights like a holy fool and see what becomes of you.

Even in a comfortable year, we may long for Christmas like the awed children we once were. This has not been that kind of year. There's been too much violence, too many slammed doors, too little mercy. Some lifelong believers now refuse to vote or go to church: rejecting the census of both God and Caesar. Disappointment runs deep, so they opt out

of supporting the apparently lost cause of the whole social order. I appreciate the urge to cocoon away from pain.

At the end of such a year as this, the longing for hopeful news stretches like a slingshot straining for release. And then comes Nativity! Hope sings out in celestial annunciation to poor shepherds with no reason to anticipate more from life than more-of-the-same. Angels supply a litany of reasons as long as your arm for hope: good news, great joy, divine rescue, peace on earth, God among us! Glory to God in the highest! Even biblical prophets, with all their splendid intuition, didn't predict angels intersecting with mangy shepherds at history's fulcrum. Clearly, heaven doesn't mind getting smudged by contact with *people*. In fact, this is what God does profoundly. Divinity elects to slip into shoes, sit at our tables, share our bread—and our fate.

This night shines its radiance into the poorest corners of every heart, dim places with no room for hope and unfit for majesty. We store disappointment in such dark nooks: About our besieged environment. Or how easily nations squander the precious gift of peace. How reflexively hearts close to those who are different. How anemically the just stand up against racist structures. How fragile our bodies are. How tattered our intimate relationships can be. In the attic of despair, we see no space for the birth of a fresh perspective. Our mangers have been empty too long.

Christmas arrives as the blockbuster season of hope. So go ahead. Take the risk. Rush into the holiest of nights like a holy fool and see what becomes of you.

—Alice Camille

Alice Camille is the author of A Little Book of Light, Isaiah and the Kingdom of Peace, and other titles available at alicecamille.com.

Monday, December 23

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 135:1-6, 13-14

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

Alleluia!

Praise the name of the LORD;
give praise, O servants of the LORD,
who stand in the house of the LORD,
in the courts of the house of our God.

Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good.
Sing a psalm to God's name, who is gracious.
For the LORD has chosen Jacob,
and Israel as a treasured possession.

For I know that the LORD is great,
that our Lord is high above all gods.
Whatever the LORD wills is accomplished,
in heaven, and on earth,
in the seas, and in all the depths.

LORD, your name stands forever,
your renown, LORD, from age to age.
For the LORD will vindicate this people
and take pity on God's servants.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 33:20-22

Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with day and my covenant with night so that day and night

no longer appear in their proper time, only then can my covenant with my servant David be broken, so that he will not have a descendant to act as king upon his throne, and my covenant with the priests of Levi who minister to me. Just as the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be counted, so I will multiply the descendants of David my servant and the Levites who minister to me.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

God has raised up for us a mighty Savior, born of the house of his servant David.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Gracious God, you promise us the voice of gladness and the restoration of life. In hope we pray: *R.* Come to us, O Emmanuel.

Inspire dreams, trust, and dialogue among the faithful, and strengthen our hands for the work of unity and peace. *R.*

Bring health and healing to cities, towns, and landscapes ruined by war and destruction. *R.*

Defend those who are starving, diseased, or homeless because of political conflicts. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God awaken hope in our hearts and minds as we await Emmanuel's coming, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Holy Shepherds

Witnesses to the Nativity (First Century)

In many religious traditions, the birth of a Divine King is attended by wondrous signs from heaven. The same is true of the nativity stories of Jesus. But in the Gospel of Luke, the announcement of Christ's birth is not delivered first to kings, priests, or anyone of importance, but to nameless shepherds in the countryside outside Bethlehem.

While the image of the shepherd in Hebrew Scripture carries a dignified status, actual shepherds in the time of Jesus were among the poor and marginal class of people—what one scholar has called “the expendables.” Nevertheless, these shepherds are greeted by an angel who proclaims, “I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” As a sign, they are told to look for an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger—a feed trough for animals. Following these instructions, the shepherds find Jesus and his parents, just as they had been told. And then they “spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.”

In future years this child would be called many things—Good Shepherd, as well as Lamb of God. His identity would be announced to important people, who would torture and kill him. But in the beginning, it was to certain poor shepherds, tired from keeping watch, rank with the smell of their sheep, that the Gospel of great joy was first revealed.

“The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.”

—Luke 2:20

Mass

Monday of the Fourth Week of Advent

[St. John of Kanty, opt. memorial]

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 9:5; Psalm 72 (71):17

A child shall be born for us, / and he will be called God,
the Almighty; / every tribe of the earth shall be blest
in him.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
as we see how the Nativity of your Son
according to the flesh draws near,
we pray that to us, your unworthy servants,
mercy may flow from your Word,
who chose to become flesh of the Virgin Mary
and establish among us his dwelling,
Jesus Christ our Lord.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Malachi

3:1-4, 23-24

*I will send you Elijah, the prophet,
before the day of the LORD comes.*

Thus says the Lord GOD: / Lo, I am sending my messenger / to prepare the way before me; / And suddenly there will come to the temple / the LORD whom you seek, / And the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. / Yes, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. / But who will endure the day of his coming? / And who can stand when he appears? / For he is like the refiner's fire, / or like the fuller's

lye. / He will sit refining and purifying silver, / and he will purify the sons of Levi, / Refining them like gold or like silver / that they may offer due sacrifice to the LORD. / Then the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem / will please the LORD, / as in the days of old, as in years gone by.

Lo, I will send you / Elijah, the prophet, / Before the day of the LORD comes, / the great and terrible day, / To turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, / and the hearts of the children to their fathers, / Lest I come and strike / the land with doom.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

25:4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14

R. (see Luke 21:28) Lift up your heads and see; your redemption is near at hand.

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me;
teach me your paths,
Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my savior. **R.**

Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
he teaches the humble his way. **R.**

All the paths of the LORD are kindness and constancy
toward those who keep his covenant and his decrees.
The friendship of the LORD is with those who fear him,
and his covenant, for their instruction. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:
come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 1:57-66

The birth of John the Baptist.

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this oblation,
 by which divine worship in its fullness
 has been inaugurated for us,
 be our perfect reconciliation with you, O Lord,
 that we may celebrate with minds made pure
 the Nativity of our Redeemer.
 Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Revelation 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: / if anyone hears
 my voice and opens the door to me, / I will enter his
 house and dine with him, and he with me.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant your peace, O Lord,
 to those you have nourished with these heavenly gifts,
 that we may be ready, with lighted lamps,
 to meet your dearly beloved Son at his coming.
 Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection

Called by Name

When my wife and I were expecting, we were given the advice to keep the name secret until *after* the baby was born. If you share the name before the baby comes, wise friends told us, then everyone who doesn't like the name will let you know it! But if you wait until family and friends meet the new baby, then they will be far less likely to criticize the little one's name.

Poor Elizabeth. Even after her miracle baby was born, nobody seemed to like his name. It took Zechariah's dramatic revelation to show everyone that it was none other than God who had called the child *John*.

God gave John his name. But God also gave John his mission. The angel Gabriel told Zechariah that his son would be great in the sight of the Lord, that he would be filled with the Spirit, that he would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God (Luke 1:14-16).

Each of us received our name from parents or caregivers. But we received our mission from God. Before we were even born, God loved each of us into existence with purpose. God gave each of us a mission—a single life unfolding through many pursuits, many relationships, and many seasons.

Am I brave enough to believe that I, too, am called to be great in the sight of the Lord, filled with the Spirit, and able to turn others toward God?

Edward P. Hahnenberg

Edward P. Hahnenberg, Ph.D., is the author of several books, including Theodore Hesburgh: Bridge Builder and Theology for Ministry: An Introduction for Lay Ministers. He is the Breen Chair in Catholic Theology at John Carroll University.



Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 97:1-6, 10-12

The LORD reigns, let earth rejoice;
let the many islands be glad.
Cloud and darkness surround the Lord,
whose throne is founded on justice and right.

A fire prepares the pathway of God;
it burns up the Lord's foes on every side.
God's lightnings light up the world;
while the earth looks on and trembles.

The mountains melt like wax
before the face of the LORD,
before the face of the Lord of all the earth.
The skies proclaim divine righteousness;
all peoples see the glory of God.

The LORD loves those who hate evil,
guards the souls of the faithful,
and sets them free from the wicked.

Light shines forth for the righteous,
and joy for the upright of heart.
Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous;
in memory of God's holiness give thanks.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Revelation 22:17, 20

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let the hearer say, “Come.” Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water.

The one who gives this testimony says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Come, Emmanuel, come to save us.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Glorious God, your divine and transformative energy lights up the world. In awe we pray: *R/*. Lead us to your light, O God.

Free those who have been taken captive. *R/*.

Protect those who work or live in care facilities, and keep them in peace. *R/*.

Transform the minds and hearts of those tempted to harm themselves or others. *R/*.

Our Father . . .

May God bless us and keep us watchful and ready for the coming of the Lord, whose day draws near. Amen.

Tuesday, December 24

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 2:1-2, 4-9, 12c

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

Why do the nations conspire,
and the peoples plot in vain?

They arise, the rulers of the earth;
nobles plot against the LORD and his Anointed.

The One who sits in the heavens laughs;
the LORD derides and mocks them.

Then the Lord will speak in his anger,
and strike them with terror and rage.

“It is I who have appointed my king
on Zion, my holy mountain.”

I will announce the decree of the LORD:
The LORD said to me, “You are my Son.
It is I who have begotten you this day.”

“Ask of me and I will make nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth as your possession.

With a rod of iron you will rule them;
like a potter’s jar you will shatter them.”

Blessed are all who trust in God!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40:9-10

Go up onto a high mountain, / Zion, herald of good
news! / Cry out at the top of your voice, / Jerusalem,

herald of good news! / Cry out, do not fear! / Say to the cities of Judah: / Here is your God! / Here comes with power / the Lord GOD, / who rules by his strong arm; / Here is his reward with him, / his recompense before him.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

In the tender mercy of our God, the daybreak from on high will shine upon us.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Mighty God, you come to us to guide our feet into the way of peace. In faith we pray: *R.* All-powerful God, hear our prayer.

Disarm powers that seek to destroy creation, innocence, and good will. *R.*

Energize charitable gestures to offer relief and provisions for those who are in need or struggling. *R.*

Protect and uphold all who work for the safety of others this Christmastide. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God bless us and open our hearts to receive the mighty Savior, born of the house of David. Amen.

Mass

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Advent

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Galatians 4:4

Behold, when the fullness of time had come, / God sent his Son into the world.

COLLECT

Come quickly, we pray, Lord Jesus,
and do not delay,
that those who trust in your compassion
may find solace and relief in your coming.
Who live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the second Book of Samuel

7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

*The Kingdom of David shall endure forever
in the sight of the LORD.*

When King David was settled in his palace, and the LORD had given him rest from his enemies on every side, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God dwells in a tent!" Nathan answered the king, "Go, do whatever you have in mind, for the LORD is with you." But that night the LORD spoke to Nathan and said: "Go, tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Should you build me a house to dwell in?

"'It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my

people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his Kingdom firm. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your Kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.”

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29

R. (2) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

The favors of the LORD I will sing forever;
through all generations my mouth shall proclaim your
faithfulness.

For you have said, “My kindness is established forever”;
in heaven you have confirmed your faithfulness. **R.**

“I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant:
Forever will I confirm your posterity
and establish your throne for all generations.” **R.**

“He shall say of me, ‘You are my father,
my God, the rock, my savior.’
Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him,
and my covenant with him stands firm.” **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

O Radiant Dawn,
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:

come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in
the shadow of death.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 1:67-79

The daybreak from on high has visited us.

Zechariah his father, filled with the Holy Spirit, prophesied, saying: / “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; / for he has come to his people and set them free. / He has raised up for us a mighty Savior, / born of the house of his servant David. / Through his prophets he promised of old / that he would save us from our enemies, / from the hands of all who hate us. / He promised to show mercy to our fathers / and to remember his holy covenant. / This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham: / to set us free from the hand of our enemies, / free to worship him without fear, / holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life. / You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, / for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, / to give his people knowledge of salvation / by the forgiveness of their sins. / In the tender compassion of our God / the dawn from on high shall break upon us, / to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, / and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Graciously make your own, O Lord,
the offerings which we bring,
that, partaking of them, we be cleansed of our sins
and merit to stand ready with pure hearts
for the coming in glory of your Son.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Luke 1:68

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel! / He has visited his people and redeemed them.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant to us who find new vigor, O Lord,
in these your wondrous gifts,
that, as we prepare to celebrate in adoration
the festivities of your Son's Nativity,
so we may possess in gladness
his everlasting rewards.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection

The Tender Compassion of God

Listen with your heart. It takes listening, a special kind of listening, to hear the tenderness of God; and that is what you are going to hear this Christmas. If you let yourself enter into the immense sea of his tenderness, you will understand even better why we are a family of God—why we have been gathered together by him.

His tenderness will beget in us a tenderness for our brothers and sisters; and the circle of love which he has come to bring this day, this strange mysterious day of his birth, will slowly embrace the whole earth as he desires it to do.

We might not see that we are embraced so tenderly. On the contrary, before us will be catastrophes, tragedies, a blaspheming of the light of Christ, and what-have-you. But listen, listen with your heart . . . listen with your mind . . . listen with all of your being, and you will hear the tenderness of

God! True, tenderness is usually not heard but felt. However, you will experience it in both ways.

But in order to do so, my dearly beloved, we must place into his cupped infant hands our own dispossession, our own poverty. We will give it joyfully, tied up with Christmas ribbon and fancy paper, this total surrender of ourselves, give it into the hands of the great King, into the hands of the Son born to redeem us, so that he, in turn, can carry it to the Father, the Father who loves us so much!

..... Catherine de Hueck Doherty, *Grace in Every Season*

Catherine de Hueck Doherty (1896–1985), a laywoman of Russian heritage, was foundress of the Madonna House Apostolate in Combermere, Canada. Details at madonnahouse.org.



Evening

(May be prayed before or after the Vigil Mass.)

God, come to my assistance.

Lord, make haste to help me.

PSALM 128

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Blessed are all who fear the LORD,

and walk in God's ways!

By the labor of your hands you shall eat.

You will be blessed and prosper.

Your wife is like a fruitful vine

in the heart of your house;

your children like shoots of the olive

around your table.

Indeed thus shall be blessed

the husband who fears the LORD.

May the LORD bless you from Zion.

May you see Jerusalem prosper

all the days of your life!

May you see your children's children.

On Israel, peace!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

1 John 4:7-11

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love. In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him. In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for

our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

When the sun rises in the morning sky, you will see the Savior, coming from the Father.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of all blessing, tomorrow the wickedness of the world will be destroyed with the birth of your Son. In hope we pray: *R.* God, show us your goodness.

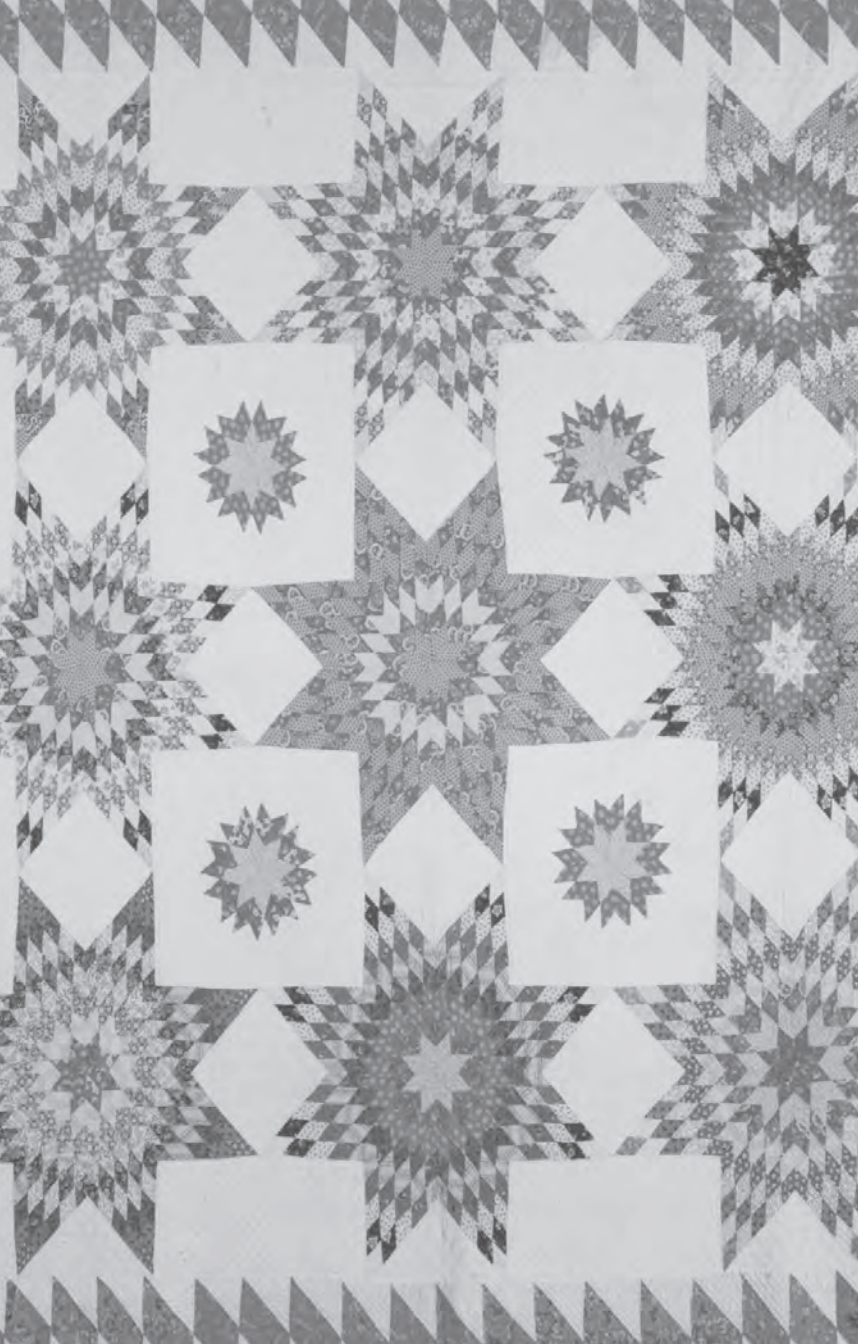
Help us to ensure just wages for holiday workers. *R.*

Give safety to travelers, and console those who are separated from loved ones. *R.*

Inspire artists and all who enrich our lives and our world with their talents. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God bring to our minds the glory, might, and marvels shown to us through Jesus, born of Mary. Amen.





The Nativity of the Lord

Christmas Vigil Mass

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Exodus 16:6-7

Today you will know that the Lord will come, and he will save us, / and in the morning you will see his glory.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

O God, who gladden us year by year
as we wait in hope for our redemption,
grant that, just as we joyfully welcome
your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer,
we may also merit to face him confidently
when he comes again as our Judge.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

These readings are used at Mass celebrated on the evening of December 24, either before or after Evening Prayer. The texts that follow may also be used for Masses on Christmas Day.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

62:1-5

The Lord delights in you.

For Zion's sake I will not be silent, / for Jerusalem's sake
I will not be quiet, / until her vindication shines forth
like the dawn / and her victory like a burning torch.

Nations shall behold your vindication, / and all the kings
your glory; / you shall be called by a new name / pronounced
by the mouth of the LORD. / You shall be a glorious crown

in the hand of the LORD, / a royal diadem held by your God.
 / No more shall people call you “Forsaken,” / or your land
 “Desolate,” / but you shall be called “My Delight,” / and your
 land “Espoused.” / For the LORD delights in you / and makes
 your land his spouse. / As a young man marries a virgin, /
 your Builder shall marry you; / and as a bridegroom rejoices
 in his bride / so shall your God rejoice in you.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29

R. (2a) For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
 I have sworn to David my servant:
 forever will I confirm your posterity
 and establish your throne for all generations. **R.**

Blessed the people who know the joyful shout;
 in the light of your countenance, O LORD, they walk.
 At your name they rejoice all the day,
 and through your justice they are exalted. **R.**

He shall say of me, “You are my father,
 my God, the rock, my savior.”
 Forever I will maintain my kindness toward him,
 and my covenant with him stands firm. **R.**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 13:16-17, 22-25

Paul bears witness to Christ, the Son of David.

When Paul reached Antioch in Pisidia and entered the
 synagogue, he stood up, motioned with his hand,
 and said, “Fellow Israelites and you others who are God-
 fearing, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our
 ancestors and exalted the people during their sojourn in
 the land of Egypt. With uplifted arm he led them out of it.

Then he removed Saul and raised up David as king; of him he testified, 'I have found David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will carry out my every wish.' From this man's descendants God, according to his promise, has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus. John heralded his coming by proclaiming a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel; and as John was completing his course, he would say, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. Behold, one is coming after me; I am not worthy to unfasten the sandals of his feet.'"

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Tomorrow the wickedness of the earth will be destroyed:
the Savior of the world will reign over us.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

1:1-25 (Shorter Form [], 1:18-25)

The genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David.

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez became the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab. Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed became the father of Jesse, Jesse the father of David the king.

David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah. Solomon became the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the

father of Asaph. Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah. Uzziah became the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos the father of Josiah. Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile.

After the Babylonian exile, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud. Abiud became the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok. Zadok became the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud the father of Eleazar. Eleazar became the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ.

Thus the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Christ, fourteen generations.

Now [this is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: / *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, / and they shall name him Emmanuel,*

/ which means “God is with us.” When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus.]

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we look forward, O Lord,
to the coming festivities,
may we serve you all the more eagerly
for knowing that in them
you make manifest the beginnings of our redemption.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 40:5

The glory of the Lord will be revealed, / and all flesh will
see the salvation of our God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that we may draw new vigor
from celebrating the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son,
by whose heavenly mystery we receive both food and
drink.

Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

(See Christmas *Reflections*, pp. 263 and 275.)



The Nativity of the Lord

Christmas Mass During the Night

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Psalm 2:7

The Lord said to me: You are my Son. / It is I who have begotten you this day.

Or: Let us all rejoice in the Lord, for our Savior has been born in the world. / Today true peace has come down to us from heaven.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

O God, who have made this most sacred night
radiant with the splendor of the true light,
grant, we pray, that we, who have known the mysteries of
his light on earth,
may also delight in his gladness in heaven.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

9:1-6

A son is given us.

The people who walked in darkness / have seen a great light; / upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom / a light has shone. / You have brought them abundant joy / and great rejoicing, / as they rejoice before you as at the harvest, / as people make merry when dividing spoils. / For the yoke that burdened them, / the pole on their shoulder, / and the rod of their taskmaster / you have smashed, as on

the day of Midian. / For every boot that tramped in battle,
 / every cloak rolled in blood, / will be burned as fuel for
 flames. / For a child is born to us, a son is given us; / upon
 his shoulder dominion rests. / They name him Wonder-
 Counselor, God-Hero, / Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. /
 His dominion is vast / and forever peaceful, / from David's
 throne, and over his kingdom, / which he confirms and
 sustains / by judgment and justice, / both now and forever.
 / The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13

R. (Luke 2:11) Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Sing to the LORD a new song;
 sing to the LORD, all you lands.
 Sing to the LORD; bless his name. *R.*

Announce his salvation, day after day.
 Tell his glory among the nations;
 among all peoples, his wondrous deeds. *R.*

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;
 let the sea and what fills it resound;
 let the plains be joyful and all that is in them!
 Then shall all the trees of the forest exult. *R.*

They shall exult before the LORD, for he comes;
 for he comes to rule the earth.
 He shall rule the world with justice
 and the peoples with his constancy. *R.*

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to Titus 2:11-14

The grace of God has appeared to all.

Beloved: The grace of God has appeared, saving all and
 training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires

and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of our great God and savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for himself a people as his own, eager to do what is good.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Luke 2:10-11

I proclaim to you good news of great joy:
today a Savior is born for us,
Christ the Lord.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 2:1-14

Today a Savior has been born for you.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been

born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: / “Glory to God in the highest / and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the oblation of this day's feast
be pleasing to you, O Lord, we pray,
that through this most holy exchange
we may be found in the likeness of Christ,
in whom our nature is united to you.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

John 1:14

The Word became flesh, and we have seen his glory.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God,
that we, who are gladdened by participation
in the feast of our Redeemer's Nativity,
may through an honorable way of life become worthy of
union with him.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection

Do Not Be Afraid

My great aunt, Joan Jackson, passed away at age 93. She was a force of a woman and a fierce Catholic. At her funeral, relatives described her as having a “PhD in worry.” They also shared that upon departing from a visit with Joan, the ritual was always the same: if you said, “I love you,” Joan would respond, “I love you more!”

I thought of Aunt Joan as I reread the familiar Gospel for tonight’s Mass. Imagine the fear, imagine the worry! We’ve heard this passage so many times that it can be easy to overlook the mental and physical strain that traveling to Bethlehem would have taken on both Joseph and Mary. (Not to mention the physical strain of giving birth in a stable.) The worry must’ve been palpable. Indeed, when the angel tells the nearby shepherds of the miraculous birth, the first words spoken are, “Do not be afraid.”

These tidings of good news and great joy are a balm for our weary world. A savior has been born, heralding a new way of life and love and justice. As we celebrate the miracle of Christmas, let us take a collective deep breath and find solace in the exaltation, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,”—for tonight, God is standing in the doorway, shouting, “I love you more!”

Heidi Busse

Heidi Busse is the editor of Give Us This Day.

Wednesday, December 25

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 33:1-9, 11

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Ring out your joy to the LORD, O you righteous;
for praise is fitting from the upright.

Give thanks to the LORD upon the harp;
with a ten-stringed lute sing songs to God.

O sing a song that is new;
play skillfully, with shouts of joy.

For the word of the LORD is upright,
and all God's works to be trusted.

The LORD loves justice and right;
God's faithful love fills the earth.

By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
by the breath of God's mouth, all their host.
As in a flask, God collects the waves of the ocean,
and stores up the depths of the sea.

Let all the earth fear the LORD,
all who live in the world show reverence.
God spoke, and it came to be;
commanded and it stood in place.

The designs of the LORD stand forever,
the plans of God's heart from age to age.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Micah 5:1, 3-4a

You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah / least among the clans of Judah, / From you shall come forth for me / one who is to be ruler in Israel; / Whose origin is from of old, / from ancient times. / He shall take his place as shepherd / by the strength of the LORD, / by the majestic name of the LORD, his God; / And they shall dwell securely, for now his greatness / shall reach to the ends of the earth: / he shall be peace.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Gracious God, in Jesus you bring grace and salvation to all the world. With joy we pray: *R.* God, in your great love, hear our prayer.

Diffuse the joy of this day in peace and glad songs throughout the earth. *R.*

Give gladness to those who share a meal and companionship in food kitchens and community centers. *R.*

Pour your tenderness and compassion upon those who grieve, suffer pain, or live with mental illness. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God fill us with the joy of the shepherds and make us heralds of the Gospel, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



The Nativity of the Lord

Christmas Mass at Dawn

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 9:1, 5; Luke 1:33

Today a light will shine upon us, for the Lord is born for us; / and he will be called Wondrous God, / Prince of peace, Father of future ages: / and his reign will be without end.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of your
incarnate Word,
the light of faith, which illumines our minds,
may also shine through in our deeds.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 62:11-12

Behold, your Savior comes!

See, the LORD proclaims / to the ends of the earth: / say
to daughter Zion, / your savior comes! / Here is his
reward with him, / his recompense before him. / They shall
be called the holy people, / the redeemed of the LORD, / and
you shall be called "Frequented," / a city that is not
forsaken.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

97:1, 6, 11-12

R. A light will shine on us this day: the Lord is born
for us.

The LORD is king; let the earth rejoice;
let the many isles be glad.

The heavens proclaim his justice,
and all peoples see his glory. **R.**

Light dawns for the just;
and gladness, for the upright of heart.
Be glad in the LORD, you just,
and give thanks to his holy name. **R.**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to Titus 3:4-7

Because of his mercy, he saved us.

Beloved: / When the kindness and generous love / of
God our savior appeared, / not because of any righ-
teous deeds we had done / but because of his mercy, / he
saved us through the bath of rebirth / and renewal by the
Holy Spirit, / whom he richly poured out on us / through
Jesus Christ our savior, / so that we might be justified by
his grace / and become heirs in hope of eternal life.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Luke 2:14

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to those
on whom his favor rests.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 2:15-20

The shepherds found Mary and Joseph and the infant.

When the angels went away from them to heaven, the
shepherds said to one another, "Let us go, then, to
Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the

Lord has made known to us.” So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them.

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May our offerings be worthy, we pray, O Lord,
of the mysteries of the Nativity this day,
that, just as Christ was born a man and also shone forth
as God,
so these earthly gifts may confer on us what is divine.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Zechariah 9:9

Rejoice, O Daughter Sion; lift up praise, Daughter
Jerusalem: / Behold, your King will come, the Holy One
and Savior of the world.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant us, Lord, as we honor with joyful devotion
the Nativity of your Son,
that we may come to know with fullness of faith
the hidden depths of this mystery
and to love them ever more and more.
Through Christ our Lord.

(See Christmas *Reflections*, pp. 263 and 275.)



The Nativity of the Lord

Christmas Mass During the Day

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Cf. Isaiah 9:5

A child is born for us, and a son is given to us; / his
scepter of power rests upon his shoulder, / and his name
will be called Messenger of great counsel.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

O God, who wonderfully created the dignity of human
nature
and still more wonderfully restored it,
grant, we pray,
that we may share in the divinity of Christ,
who humbled himself to share in our humanity.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah 52:7-10

All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.

How beautiful upon the mountains / are the feet of him
who brings glad tidings, / announcing peace, bearing
good news, / announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, /
“Your God is King!”

Hark! Your sentinels raise a cry, / together they shout for
joy, / for they see directly, before their eyes, / the LORD
restoring Zion. / Break out together in song, / O ruins of
Jerusalem! / For the LORD comforts his people, / he redeems
Jerusalem. / The LORD has bared his holy arm / in the sight

of all the nations; / all the ends of the earth will behold / the salvation of our God.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6

R. (3c) All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
his right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm. **R.**

The LORD has made his salvation known:
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness
toward the house of Israel. **R.**

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
break into song; sing praise. **R.**

Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD. **R.**

A reading from the beginning of the Letter
to the Hebrews

1:1-6

God has spoken to us through the Son.

Brothers and sisters: In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, / who is the refulgence of his glory, /

the very imprint of his being, / and who sustains all things by his mighty word. / When he had accomplished purification from sins, / he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, / as far superior to the angels / as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say: / *You are my son; this day I have begotten you?* / Or again: / *I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me?* / And again, when he leads the firstborn into the world, he says: / *Let all the angels of God worship him.*

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

A holy day has dawned upon us.

Come, you nations, and adore the Lord.

For today a great light has come upon the earth.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

1:1-18 (Shorter Form [], 1:1-5, 9-14)

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

[In the beginning was the Word, / and the Word was with God, / and the Word was God. / He was in the beginning with God. / All things came to be through him, / and without him nothing came to be. / What came to be through him was life, / and this life was the light of the human race; / the light shines in the darkness, / and the darkness has not overcome it.] / A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. [The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. / He was in the world, / and the world came to be through him, / but the world did not know him. / He came to what was his own, / but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. / And the Word became flesh / and made his dwelling among us, / and we saw his glory, / the glory as of the Father's only Son, / full of grace and truth.] / John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Make acceptable, O Lord, our oblation on this solemn day,
when you manifested the reconciliation
that makes us wholly pleasing in your sight
and inaugurated for us the fullness of divine worship.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Psalm 98 (97):3

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, O merciful God,
that, just as the Savior of the world, born this day,
is the author of divine generation for us,
so he may be the giver even of immortality.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection

The Audacity of Christmas

I was recently asked to be a reader at my university's annual lessons and carols concert. I was assigned John 1:1-18 (today's Gospel reading). I read each of the first four phrases as questions: "In the beginning was the word?" "And the word was with God?" People looked confused. I haven't been asked back.

My goal was not confusion, but to try to capture the audacity of the claim in John's prologue. Claiming that God became human would have been, and should always be, seen as completely irrational!

We are so familiar with this reading—and all the other Christmas readings—that it has become hard to envision how radical they are. Moreover, we turn uncomfortable details of the stories into saccharine pastel scenes familiar in middle-school pageants and creche scenes. God becoming flesh is something that was so unexpected that even "his own people did not accept him." Only the outsiders (magi), the untrustworthy (shepherds), and the poor (Mary) seem to have recognized his true significance.

St. Oscar Romero captures the audacity of Christmas when he says that the Incarnation is not universal. Jesus was incarnate specifically among the poor, which sets a task for us. We are supposed to become incarnate in the world of the poor and share their fate, just as Jesus did.

Christmas is not here to make us feel good, but to give the divine model of a Christlike life. This year, turn Christmas into a question: Am I willing to share the fate of the poor?

Micah D. Kiel

Micah D. Kiel is associate professor at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. He is the author of the recently released Be Transformed: A Biblical Journey toward a More Just World.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 48:9-15

As we have heard, so we have seen
in the city of our God,
in the city of the LORD of hosts,
which God establishes forever.

Your faithful love, O God,
we ponder in your temple.
Your praise, O God, like your name,
reaches the ends of the earth.

Your right hand is filled with saving justice.
Mount Zion rejoices.
The daughters of Judah rejoice
at the sight of your judgments.

Walk through Zion, walk all around her;
count the number of her towers.
Consider all her ramparts;
examine her castles,

That you may tell the next generation
that such is our God,
Our God forever and always,
who will guide us forever.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

1 John 3:1-3

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may
be called the children of God. Yet so we are. The reason

the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The Word was made flesh and dwells among us.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

On this holy night, O God, we ponder your faithful love and pray: *R/*. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Move our hearts to delight in the birth of your Son, and help us to respond to your gift with a generous heart. *R/*.

Shield all children and vulnerable people from harm of body, mind, or spirit. *R/*.

Show the fullness of Christ's glory to our beloved ones who have died. *R/*.

Our Father . . .

May God be forever praised in the voice of the Church and the joy of Christians, through Jesus, the Word made flesh. Amen.

Thursday, December 26

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 130

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD;
Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ears be attentive
to the sound of my pleadings.

If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
But with you is found forgiveness,
that you may be revered.

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits.
I hope in God's word.
My soul is waiting for the Lord,
more than sentinels for daybreak.

More than sentinels for daybreak,
let Israel wait for the LORD.
For with the LORD there is loving mercy,
in God is plentiful redemption.
It is the Lord who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 1:4-8

The word of the LORD came to me: / Before I formed you
in the womb I knew you, / before you were born I dedi-

cated you, / a prophet to the nations I appointed you. / “Ah, Lord GOD!” I said, / “I do not know how to speak. I am too young!” / But the LORD answered me, / Do not say, “I am too young.” / To whomever I send you, you shall go; / whatever I command you, you shall speak. / Do not be afraid of them, / for I am with you to deliver you—oracle of the LORD.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Whoever endures to the end will be saved.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Redeeming God, you gave the glorious crown of salvation to St. Stephen. In company with him we pray:

R. God, in your justice, hear our prayer.

Shine your light on those whose lives are surrounded by darkness and death. **R.**

Give gladness and endurance to those who suffer for the glory of your name. **R.**

Relieve the burdens of those whose lives are surrounded by poverty, disease, or drought. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May God bless us, teach us, and give us boundless joy in company with Jesus, the Word made flesh. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. Stephen

Martyr (ca. 34)

St. Stephen, whose story is recounted in the Acts of the Apostles (chapters 6 and 7), is remembered as the Proto-Martyr of the Church, the first disciple to shed his blood in witness to Christ. As such, his example became a model for subsequent accounts of Christian martyrdom.

A Hellenistic Jew, described as “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit,” Stephen was one of the first seven men selected by the Church in Jerusalem to distribute food to the poor (an office that later inspired the order of deacons). Nothing is told of his early life or conversion, but evidently, he liked to engage his fellow Jews in public disputations about the teachings of Christ. For this he was denounced before the Jewish Sanhedrin. Charged with blasphemy, he delivered a long sermon chronicling the history of God’s covenant with his servants Abraham and Moses before rising to a shocking climax in which he turned the accusation of blasphemy against his accusers. His audience responded with predictable outrage. Stephen was driven from the city and stoned to death.

His death marked a new turn for the early Church; Jesus’ proclamation of the reign of God had given way to the proclamation of Jesus himself. But the continuity was underlined in the fact that the disciple met the same fate as his Master.

“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ Then he fell on his knees and cried out, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he fell asleep.”

—Acts 7:59-60

Mass

St. Stephen, Feast

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The gates of heaven were opened for blessed Stephen, /
who was found to be first among the number of the
Martyrs / and therefore is crowned triumphant in heaven.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

Grant, Lord, we pray,
that we may imitate what we worship,
and so learn to love even our enemies,
for we celebrate the heavenly birthday
of a man who knew how to pray even for his persecutors.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 6:8-10; 7:54-59

I see the heavens opened.

Stephen, filled with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people. Certain members of the so-called Synagogue of Freedmen, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and people from Cilicia and Asia, came forward and debated with Stephen, but they could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.

When they heard this, they were infuriated, and they ground their teeth at him. But he, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked up intently to heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing

at the right hand of God.” But they cried out in a loud voice, covered their ears, and rushed upon him together. They threw him out of the city, and began to stone him. The witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 31:3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17

R. (6) Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Be my rock of refuge,
a stronghold to give me safety.
You are my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake you will lead and guide me. *R.*

Into your hands I commend my spirit;
you will redeem me, O LORD, O faithful God.
I will rejoice and be glad because of your mercy. *R.*

Rescue me from the clutches of my enemies and my
persecutors,
Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your kindness. *R.*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Psalm 118:26a, 27a

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD:
the LORD is God and has given us light.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

10:17-22

For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father.

Jesus said to his disciples: “Beware of men, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for

my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May these offerings of our devotion today,
be acceptable to you, we pray, O Lord,
for they are prompted
by the glorious commemoration of Saint Stephen the
Martyr.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Acts 7:58

As they were stoning Stephen, he called out: / Lord Jesus,
receive my spirit.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

For the many mercies which surround us
we give thanks to you, O Lord,
who save us through the Nativity of your Son
and gladden us with the celebration of the blessed Martyr
Stephen.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Bittersweet Joy

None of us, filled with the spirit, good food, and music of Christmas, would ever have thought to place the feast of St. Stephen on the day after Christmas. To celebrate a man who was stoned to death for his belief in Christ on this day is about as unsentimental as one can get. . . .

The brutal realism of celebrating St. Stephen today is a real plus for the Church's liturgy. It reminds us in the midst of the good fellowship, song, fun, and family reunions that all this can be a bit unreal. There is certainly nothing wrong with enjoying the delights which accompany our celebration of Christmas. God has made us for ultimate delight and joy, not for suffering and sadness. But even in our Christmas celebration, as in the picture given us of St. Stephen, there can be suffering: someone is missing from our family celebration or some who are there don't get along; someone else may not have come because so-and-so was going to be there. It could even come to "Brother will hand over brother to death . . . children will rise up against parents" (Matt 10:21). Our joy and celebration as Christians and as human beings is always bittersweet. Aunt Jenny is not here because she's getting chemo; Larry and Jill split up a month ago; Marilyn's husband is not here because he's overseas with the military; Bill was afraid to come to the big dinner because of his alcoholism. The feast of Stephen tells us that following Christ brings with it the Cross, as does simply living human life. The Eucharist tells us this same reality every day, and points ahead to resurrection.

Fr. Don Talafous, *Homilies for Weekdays*

Don Talafous, OSB, is a member of Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, and alumni chaplain for Saint John's University. His Daily Reflection can be found at saintjohnsabbey.org/reflection.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 17:1-7

O LORD, hear a cause that is just,
pay heed to my cry.
Turn your ear to my prayer:
no deceit is on my lips.
From you may my justice come forth.
Your eyes discern what is upright.

Search my heart and visit me by night.
Test me by fire, and you will find no wrong in me.

My mouth does not transgress as others do;
on account of the words of your lips,
I have avoided the paths of the violent.

I kept my steps firmly in your paths.
My feet have never faltered.

To you I call; for you will surely heed me, O God.
Turn your ear to me; hear my words.
Display your faithful love,
you who deliver from their foes
those who trust in your right hand.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 10:32-36

Remember the days past when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a great contest of suffering. At times you were publicly exposed to abuse and affliction; at other times you associated yourselves with those so treated.

You even joined in the sufferings of those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, knowing that you had a better and lasting possession. Therefore, do not throw away your confidence; it will have great recompense. You need endurance to do the will of God and receive what he has promised.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Loving God, in Jesus you have prepared our salvation in the sight of every people. With gladness we pray:

R. God, open our eyes to the beauty of your face.

Inspire us to live the festival of Christmas with joy and generous self-giving. **R.**

Shower your gifts of the Spirit upon all who celebrate Kwanzaa. **R.**

Fulfill the longing of those who have gone before us in faith. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May the light of Christ dispel all sadness and diffuse the peace of God throughout the cosmos. Amen.

Friday, December 27

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 63:2-9

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

O God, you are my God; at dawn I seek you;
for you my soul is thirsting.
For you my flesh is pining,
like a dry, weary land without water.
I have come before you in the holy place,
to behold your strength and your glory.

Your faithful love is better than life;
my lips will speak your praise.
I will bless you all my life;
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet;
with joyful lips, my mouth shall praise you.

When I remember you upon my bed,
I muse on you through the watches of the night.
For you have been my strength;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice.
My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand upholds me.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Song of Songs 2:8-11

The sound of my lover! here he comes / springing across
the mountains, / leaping across the hills. / My lover is
like a gazelle / or a young stag. / See! He is standing behind

our wall, / gazing through the windows, / peering through the lattices. / My lover speaks and says to me, / “Arise, my friend, my beautiful one, / and come! / For see, the winter is past, / the rains are over and gone.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

If God so loved us, we also must love one another.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of love, all who abide in love abide in you. In company with St. John, beloved disciple of Jesus, we pray:

R. God of our longing, hear our prayer.

Place a word of praise and a song of thanksgiving in the hearts of all Christians. **R.**

Give wisdom, knowledge, and love to those called to spiritual leadership. **R.**

Help us to fashion lasting peace to all places ravaged by war. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May God strengthen us for discipleship and lead us to share in the company of St. John and all who gave witness to the Word of God. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. Fabiola

Widow (d. 399)

St. Fabiola was one of a number of patrician women in Rome, including St. Paula and St. Marcella, who were inspired by St. Jerome to dedicate themselves to God. In Fabiola's case, her course was more roundabout. Her first husband was a vicious man, from whom, with Jerome's approval, she obtained a civil divorce. She accepted excommunication, however, when she subsequently violated Church law by remarrying. Nevertheless, upon the death of this second husband she presented herself for public penance and was readmitted to communion by Pope Siricius.

At this point Fabiola's life greatly changed. She devoted her great wealth to works of charity, endowing churches and establishing the first Christian public hospital in the West. There, as Jerome observed, "She often carried on her own shoulders persons infected with jaundice or covered with filth. She also often cleansed the revolting discharge of wounds which others could not bear to look at." In 395 she traveled to the Holy Land to visit Jerome and Paula, who were living in Bethlehem. She might have remained there, but the austerity of consecrated life was not for her. Instead, she returned to Rome and there continued her charitable work until her death in 399. All of Rome mourned her passing.

"Today I take as my theme Fabiola. . . . Whatever point in her character I choose to treat of first, pales into insignificance compared with those that follow after. Shall I praise her fasts? Her alms are greater still. Shall I commend her lowliness? The glow of her faith is yet brighter."

—St. Jerome

Mass

St. John, Feast

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

This is John, who reclined on the Lord's breast at supper, /
the blessed Apostle, to whom celestial secrets were
revealed / and who spread the words of life through all
the world.

Or:

Cf. Sirach 15:5

In the midst of the Church he opened his mouth, / and
the Lord filled him / with the spirit of wisdom and
understanding / and clothed him in a robe of glory.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

O God, who through the blessed Apostle John
have unlocked for us the secrets of your Word,
grant, we pray,
that we may grasp with proper understanding
what he has so marvelously brought to our ears.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the beginning of the first Letter
of Saint John

1:1-4

What we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you.

Beloved: / What was from the beginning, / what we have
heard, / what we have seen with our eyes, / what we
looked upon / and touched with our hands / concerns the
Word of life— / for the life was made visible; / we have seen
it and testify to it / and proclaim to you the eternal life /
that was with the Father and was made visible to us— / what

we have seen and heard / we proclaim now to you, / so that you too may have fellowship with us; / for our fellowship is with the Father / and with his Son, Jesus Christ. / We are writing this so that our joy may be complete.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12

R. (12) Rejoice in the Lord, you just!

The LORD is king; let the earth rejoice;
let the many isles be glad.

Clouds and darkness are around him,
justice and judgment are the foundation of his throne. **R.**

The mountains melt like wax before the LORD,
before the LORD of all the earth.

The heavens proclaim his justice,
and all peoples see his glory. **R.**

Light dawns for the just;
and gladness, for the upright of heart.

Be glad in the LORD, you just,
and give thanks to his holy name. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

See *Te Deum*

We praise you, O God,
we acclaim you as Lord;
the glorious company of Apostles praise you.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

20:1a, 2-8

*The other disciple ran faster than Peter
and arrived at the tomb first.*

On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from

the tomb, and we do not know where they put him.” So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Sanctify the offerings we have made, O Lord, we pray,
and grant that from the banquet of this supper
we may draw the hidden wisdom of the eternal Word,
just as, from this same source,
you revealed it to your Apostle John.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

John 1:14, 16

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us,
/ and from his fullness we have all received.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that the Word made flesh,
proclaimed by the blessed Apostle John,
may, through this mystery which we have celebrated,
ever dwell among us.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Is It You? Is It I?

Today's story from the Gospel of John takes place at the empty tomb on the day of Jesus' resurrection. At the outset of this reflection, I must ask the age-old question again—just who was that “other disciple whom Jesus loved” running with Peter toward the tomb and mentioned anonymously three more times within eight verses? Was it John the Apostle, son of Zebedee? John the Presbyter? John of Ephesus? John of Patmos? John the Evangelist? *Is it you? Is it I?*

For centuries, biblical scholars have debated the identity of “the one whom Jesus loved.” Since the end of the first century, the Beloved Disciple has been commonly identified with John the Apostle and Evangelist. However, the noted twentieth-century New Testament scholar Raymond E. Brown, having thoroughly studied the main theories of the Beloved Disciple's identity, believed that, rather than the apostle and evangelist, he was a relatively minor figure during Jesus' ministry and later became a very important person in the Johannine community.

Let us imagine that the Holy Spirit, guiding the hand of the Gospel writer, meant to leave a challenge for John's audience. His anonymity allows us to project *ourselves* into the experience of the Beloved Disciple, to learn more deeply how to love and be loved by Jesus Christ, thus becoming his faithful witnesses. Today, let us claim the only identity that ever matters—“I am the disciple whom Jesus loves, for I truly see and believe.”

Sr. Ephrem Hollermann

Ephrem Hollermann, OSB, is a former prioress of Saint Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph, Minnesota, and professor emerita of theology at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 89:21-22, 25-30

“I have found my servant David,
and with my holy oil anointed him.
My hand shall always be with him,
and my arm shall make him strong.

“My love and my faithfulness shall be with him;
by my name his might shall be exalted.
I will stretch out his hand to the Sea,
and his right hand upon the Rivers.

“He will call out to me, ‘You are my father,
my God, the rock of my salvation.’
I for my part will make him my firstborn,
the highest of the kings of the earth.

“I will keep my faithful love for him always;
with him my covenant shall last.
I will establish his descendants forever,
and his throne as lasting as the days of heaven.”

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

1 John 4:16-19

We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.

God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him. In this is love brought to perfection among us, that we have confidence on the day of judgment because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but

perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The disciple whom Jesus loved saw the empty tomb and believed.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Faithful God, your Word was made flesh and lived among us. Rejoicing, we pray: *R/*. Let us see your glory, O God.

Give us an undivided heart in our pursuit of the Gospel. *R/*.

Establish the work of communication and media professionals in ethics and truth. *R/*.

Advance fruitful dialogue and collaboration between science and theology. *R/*.

Our Father . . .

May God show us loving-kindness and fill our hearts with peace, through Jesus, the Love of God. Amen.

Saturday, December 28

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 123

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

To you have I lifted up my eyes,
you who dwell in the heavens.

Behold, like the eyes of slaves
on the hand of their lords,
like the eyes of a servant
on the hand of her mistress,
so our eyes are on the LORD our God,
till mercy be shown us.

Have mercy on us, LORD, have mercy.
We are filled with contempt.
Indeed, all too full is our soul
with the scorn of the arrogant,
the disdain of the proud.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 31:15-17

Thus says the LORD: / In Ramah is heard the sound of
sobbing, / bitter weeping! / Rachel mourns for her chil-
dren, / she refuses to be consoled / for her children—they
are no more! / Thus says the LORD: / Cease your cries of
weeping, / hold back your tears! / There is compensation
for your labor— / oracle of the LORD— / they shall return
from the enemy's land. / There is hope for your future—

oracle of the LORD— / your children shall return to their own territory.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

A cry was heard in Ramah: Rachel mourning for her children.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of heaven and earth, today we remember the violence inflicted on innocent children under the decree of Herod. In faith we pray: **R/**. God, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Advance efforts to protect the unborn and to ensure healthy living conditions for infants. **R/**.

Attend to the weeping and sorrow of those who experience the horrors of genocide. **R/**.

Rescue children who are abused, trafficked, or exploited for labor. **R/**.

Our Father . . .

May God be with us in our sorrows and restore in us the joy of salvation, through Jesus, our Savior and brother.
Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Holy Innocents

Martyrs (First Century)

The Gospel of Matthew relates the story of wise men from the East who, in following a star, were led to Jerusalem. There they inquired—unwisely—of King Herod, where they might find the newborn king of the Jews. Herod responded with the fear familiar to any tyrant that somewhere, perhaps in an obscure village, a child is living who will one day signal the end of his power. Rather than wait for the day of reckoning, he ordered his troops to Bethlehem to kill every male child under the age of two. But the massacre was fruitless. Joseph, forewarned in a dream, had already taken his family into exile in Egypt.

This terrible story, omitted from the typical Christmas pageant, is a vivid reminder of the violent world into which Jesus was born. From the early centuries, the Church has commemorated the feast of these Holy Innocents. Unlike traditional martyrs who would later die bearing witness to Christ, these little ones died unwittingly in the place of Christ. They were killed by the same interests that would later conspire in his death, and for the same reasons—to stifle from birth any hope that the world might be changed. They represent all those who die in the dream of a different future, hoping but never knowing that their redeemer lives. In remembering these victims of Herod's rage, the Church also celebrates his failure. His power is doomed. The child lives.

“A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentations: Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more.”

—Matthew 2:18

Mass

The Holy Innocents, Feast

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

The innocents were slaughtered as infants for Christ; /
spotless, they follow the Lamb / and sing for ever: Glory
to you, O Lord.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

O God, whom the Holy Innocents confessed
and proclaimed on this day,
not by speaking but by dying,
grant, we pray,
that the faith in you which we confess with our lips
may also speak through our manner of life.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John 1:5–2:2

The Blood of his Son Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

Beloved: This is the message that we have heard from
Jesus Christ and proclaim to you: God is light, and in
him there is no darkness at all. If we say, “We have fellow-
ship with him,” while we continue to walk in darkness, we
lie and do not act in truth. But if we walk in the light as he
is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another,
and the Blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If
we say, “We are without sin,” we deceive ourselves, and the
truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful
and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every

wrongdoing. If we say, “We have not sinned,” we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8

R. (7) Our soul has been rescued like a bird from the fowler’s snare.

Had not the LORD been with us—

When men rose up against us,

then would they have swallowed us alive,

When their fury was inflamed against us. **R.**

Then would the waters have overwhelmed us;

The torrent would have swept over us;

over us then would have swept the raging waters. **R.**

Broken was the snare,

and we were freed.

Our help is in the name of the LORD,

who made heaven and earth. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

See Te Deum

We praise you, O God,

we acclaim you as Lord;

the white-robed army of martyrs praise you.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

2:13-18

He ordered the massacre of all boys in Bethlehem.

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, *Out of Egypt I called my son.*

When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: / *A voice was heard in Ramah, / sobbing and loud lamentation; / Rachel weeping for her children, / and she would not be consoled, / since they were no more.*

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive, O Lord, we pray,
the offerings of your devoted servants
and purify us as we faithfully serve these, your mysteries,
by which you grant justification
even to those who lack understanding.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Cf. Revelation 14:4

Behold those redeemed as the first fruits / of the human
race for God and the Lamb, / and who follow the Lamb
wherever he goes.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant, O Lord, abundant salvation to your faithful
as they receive your holy gifts
on the feast day of these, your Saints,
who, though still unable to profess your Son in speech,
were crowned with heavenly grace
on account of his birth.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection

Witnesses of Grace

Why are you afraid, Herod, when you hear of the birth of a king? He does not come to drive you out, but to conquer the devil. But because you do not understand this you are disturbed and in a rage, and to destroy one child whom you seek, you show your cruelty in the death of so many children.

. . . You destroy those who are tiny in body because fear is destroying your heart. You imagine that if you accomplish your desire you can prolong your own life, though you are seeking to kill Life himself.

Yet your throne is threatened by the source of grace—so small, yet so great—who is lying in the manger. . . .

The children die for Christ, though they do not know it. The parents mourn for the death of martyrs. The child makes of those as yet unable to speak fit witnesses to himself. See the kind of kingdom that is his, coming as he did in order to be this kind of king. See how the deliverer is already working deliverance, the savior already working salvation.

But you, Herod, do not know this and are disturbed and furious. While you vent your fury against the child, you are already paying him homage, and do not know it.

How great a gift of grace is here! To what merits of their own do the children owe this kind of victory? They cannot speak, yet they bear witness to Christ. They cannot use their limbs to engage in battle, yet already they bear off the palm of victory.

St. Quodvultdeus, Sermon in *The Liturgy of the Hours*

Quodvultdeus (d. ca. 450), an early Church Father, was a student and friend of St. Augustine. He became bishop of Carthage in the years after the death of St. Augustine.

[illegible]

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

PSALM 119:89-96

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Forever is your word, O LORD,
standing firm in the heavens.
From age to age is your truth;
like the earth, it stands firm.

Your judgments endure to this day,
for all things are your servants.
Had your law not been my delight,
I would have died in my affliction.

I will never forget your precepts,
for with them you give me life.
Save me, I am yours,
for I seek your precepts.

Though the wicked lie in wait to destroy me,
yet I ponder your decrees.
I have seen that all perfection has an end,
but your command is boundless.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 5:8b-14

Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for every-

thing that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says: / “Awake, O sleeper, / and arise from the dead, / and Christ will give you light.”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Our advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Eternal God, your truth stands firm forever. In hope we pray: *R.* Shine your light on us, O God.

Expose corrupt practices, and clothe our leaders in justice and mercy. *R.*

Shed light on the opioid crisis, and strengthen those who seek help for drug addiction. *R.*

Safeguard travelers and all who work in transportation. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God comfort us with peace in times of affliction and turn our sorrow into joy, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Sunday, December 29

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 148:1-6, 14

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

Alleluia!

Praise the LORD from the heavens;
praise the Lord in the heights.
Praise the Lord, all his angels;
praise the Lord, all his hosts.

Praise the Lord, sun and moon;
praise the Lord, all shining stars.
Praise the Lord, highest heavens,
and the waters above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the LORD,
who commanded, and they were created.
God established them forever and ever,
gave a law which shall not pass away.

The Lord exalts the strength of the people,
and is the praise of all the faithful,
the praise of the children of Israel,
of the people to whom our God is close.

Alleluia!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Proverbs 23:22-25

Listen to your father who begot you, / do not despise your mother when she is old. / Buy truth and do not sell: / wisdom, instruction, understanding! / The father of a just person will exult greatly; / whoever begets a wise son will rejoice in him. / Let your father and mother rejoice; / let her who bore you exult.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Jesus was obedient to Mary and Joseph and his mother kept all these things in her heart.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of wisdom, you are above all and through all and in all. In trust, we pray: *R.* God, in your love, hear our prayer.

Help your Church to ponder your Word, spread the Gospel, and live harmoniously with all of creation. *R.*

Encourage those charged with protecting society to revere, protect, and promote family life in all of their decisions. *R.*

Keep refugee and immigrant families together, and safeguard their dignity. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God enrich our lives with every gift of the Spirit that we may listen deeply and live the Good News with joyful trust. Amen.

Mass

*The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, Feast**

*Other options for readings are possible.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Luke 2:16

The shepherds went in haste, / and found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in a manger.

GLORIA (p. 339)

COLLECT

O God, who were pleased to give us
the shining example of the Holy Family,
graciously grant that we may imitate them
in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds
of charity,
and so, in the joy of your house,
delight one day in eternal rewards.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the Book of Sirach

3:2-6, 12-14

Those who fear the Lord honor their parents.

God sets a father in honor over his children; / a mother's authority he confirms over her sons. / Whoever honors his father atones for sins, / and preserves himself from them. / When he prays, he is heard; / he stores up riches who reveres his mother. / Whoever honors his father is gladdened by children, / and, when he prays, is heard. / Whoever reveres his father will live a long life; / he who obeys his father brings comfort to his mother.

My son, take care of your father when he is old; / grieve him not as long as he lives. / Even if his mind fail, be considerate of him; / revile him not all the days of his life; / kindness to a father will not be forgotten, / firmly planted against the debt of your sins / —a house raised in justice to you.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

128:1-2, 3, 4-5

R. (cf. 1) Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways.

Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,
who walks in his ways!
For you shall eat the fruit of your handiwork;
blessed shall you be, and favored. **R.**

Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine
in the recesses of your home;
your children like olive plants
around your table. **R.**

Behold, thus is the man blessed
who fears the LORD.
The LORD bless you from Zion:
may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem
all the days of your life. **R.**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Colossians

3:12-21 (Shorter Form [], 3:12-17)

Family life in the Lord.

[B]rothers and sisters: Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you

also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace into which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.]

Wives, be subordinate to your husbands, as is proper in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and avoid any bitterness toward them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, so they may not become discouraged.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Colossians 3:15a, 16a

Let the peace of Christ control your hearts;
let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 2:41-52

His parents found Jesus sitting in the midst of the teachers.

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his

parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.
The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED (p. 340)

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

We offer you, Lord, the sacrifice of conciliation,
humbly asking that,
through the intercession of the Virgin Mother of God and
Saint Joseph,
you may establish our families firmly in your grace and
your peace.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Baruch 3:38

Our God has appeared on the earth, and lived among us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Bring those you refresh with this heavenly Sacrament,
most merciful Father,
to imitate constantly the example of the Holy Family,
so that, after the trials of this world,
we may share their company for ever.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

Protecting the Mystery

As I write, my family is coming together to care for my youngest brother, who is dying of cancer. We have journeyed with him through treatment attempts, and now we keep vigil with him at his bedside. Vulnerability calls forth love and a desire to protect. If there were any way we could spare him this, we would. We cannot protect him from what the cancer is doing to his body, but we try to surround him with love. We try to walk with him. We try to let him know that he is not alone.

One can only imagine the terror of Mary and Joseph as they search for their lost child. Of course, they search first among their relatives and acquaintances, where he could be expected to be reasonably safe. But not finding him there, they return and search Jerusalem, looking for their boy. He has been entrusted to them, and at this moment they have not been able to protect him. Quite beyond any parent's worry at losing a child, they have the added pressure of knowing he is the Son of God.

But he is safe, astonishingly safe in God's house. The adolescent Jesus is astounding the teachers with his wisdom, already beginning to show us that more is going on than meets the eye. A day will come when neither his family nor his friends will be able to protect him from danger. In the arms of a loving God, though, all will be transformed.

Sr. Jeana Visel

Jeana Visel, OSB, is a Benedictine sister of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand, Indiana. She works at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology and is author of Icons in the Western Church.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 139:2-10

You yourself know my resting and my rising;
you discern my thoughts from afar.
You mark when I walk or lie down;
you know all my ways through and through.

Before ever a word is on my tongue,
you know it, O LORD, through and through.
Behind and before, you besiege me,
your hand ever laid upon me.
Too wonderful for me, this knowledge;
too high, beyond my reach.

O where can I go from your spirit,
or where can I flee from your face?
If I climb the heavens, you are there.
If I lie in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the dawn
or dwell at the sea's furthest end,
even there your hand would lead me;
your right hand would hold me fast.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 3:14-19

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner

self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God!

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Gracious and compassionate God, you love all that you have created. In hope we pray: *R.* Fix our hearts on you, O God.

Help us extend love and care to those who live alone. *R.*

Broaden your Church's efforts to encourage and support young people in their work for justice and peace. *R.*

Inspire effective intervention to stop abuse and violence in families, communities, and society. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the Lord bless us with wisdom to comprehend the breadth, length, height, and depth of God's love shown to us in Jesus, the incarnate Word. Amen.

December 29–31

The Octave of Christmas

Within the Word

Family: A Place to Learn

Family is a mixed bag. You can't live with them, and you can't live without them. That is the unvarnished truth. If we were asked to name the people who love us the most, our answer would most often be those in our family. If we were asked who has hurt us most deeply, family could also be the answer. The people in our family are the people we care for and give us joy. They are often the ones who stand by us when no one else will. But family members can also be those who worry and disappoint us. They can speak to us in anger and wound us in ways that may take years to heal. The dynamics of family life change. Sometimes there is unity and peace. Other times stress and misunderstanding take the upper hand. As anyone in a family knows, some days are better than others.

The Gospel this year on the Feast of the Holy Family relates the story of the Holy Family's visit to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old. It catches Jesus, Mary, and Joseph on a difficult day. Even though we tend to idealize the Holy Family—picturing them radiant and posed as they appear on holy cards—this Gospel makes clear that they had their challenging moments too. This is the only Gospel story in which Jesus appears as an adolescent, and the way that particular age challenges family life is on full display. There is a failure of communication. Jesus remains in Jerusalem without informing Mary or Joseph. When they realize he is missing, they frantically search for three days to find him, as stress, anxiety, and anger build. The Gospels do not give us the vol-

ume at which its quotations are spoken. But it is unlikely that Mary's words to Jesus when they finally located him in the temple were delivered in a calm or gentle tone: "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." We are in the midst of a family argument. Jesus does not take responsibility for his actions: "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" This is the equivalent of saying, "It's not my problem. You should have known." We can only imagine what Mary's response to that would have been! The text does not tell us.

What the text does tell is more important: Jesus returned to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph, was obedient to them, and advanced in wisdom and age. After the argument, Jesus learns from that difficult day of family life. As one fully human like us, Jesus matured, developing into a wise and responsible adult. This Gospel reminds us that family is the place where we learn to grow and develop. We learn from what is easy and joyful, but also from what is difficult and painful. It is in family that we, like Jesus, not only come to know love and service. We also learn to bite our lip and forgive.

—Fr. George M. Smiga

George M. Smiga, STD, teaches at St. Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology and speaks frequently on the topics of Scripture and homiletics. He is author of Angels in the Bible, Faith, Hope, and Love in the Bible, and The Holy Spirit in the Bible. His website is Building on the Word: A Resource for Scripture, Culture, and Faith.

Monday, December 30

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.

And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 19:8-11

(opt. hymn, pp. 368-75)

The law of the LORD is perfect;

it revives the soul.

The decrees of the LORD are steadfast;

they give wisdom to the simple.

The precepts of the LORD are right;

they gladden the heart.

The command of the LORD is clear;

it gives light to the eyes.

The fear of the LORD is pure,

abiding forever.

The judgments of the LORD are true;

they are, all of them, righteous.

They are more to be desired than gold,

than quantities of gold.

And sweeter are they than honey,

than honey flowing from the comb.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 2:7-8, 10b

Hannah prayed:] The LORD makes poor and makes rich,
/ humbles, and also exalts. / He raises the needy from
the dust; / from the ash heap lifts up the poor, / To seat them
with nobles / and make a glorious throne their heritage.

“For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’s, / and he has set the world upon them. / May he give strength to his king, / and exalt the horn of his anointed!”

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today’s Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

Anna gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting redemption.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Splendid God, you strengthen us in our weakness and fill us with hope. In confidence we pray: *R.* God, hear our prayer.

Your law is perfect: inspire just policies that provide adequate health care for all people. *R.*

Your command is clear: help us confront racist structures and discriminatory practices. *R.*

Your judgments are true: instill an untiring search for truth in journalists, editors, and reporters. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God show us love and compassion and strengthen us to receive the fullness of redemption, through Jesus our peace. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

Holy Family

The feast of the Holy Family, most often celebrated on the Sunday after Christmas, encourages us to imagine the setting in which Jesus spent his childhood years learning a trade from his father, Joseph, learning the sacred history of his people, learning how to pray and how to worship God. The Gospels record only one episode from those early years—when Jesus, at the age of twelve, accompanied his parents to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. There he caused a panic by lingering behind in the temple: “Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” he told his anguished parents. It was a foreshadowing of his eventual departure from the bosom of this holy family to embark on his Father’s business. But all that lay ahead. For now, he returned with his parents to Nazareth “and was obedient to them” (Luke 2:51).

Children inevitably ask about their origins. When did Mary and Joseph feel Jesus was ready to learn the mysterious circumstances of his birth, of the shepherds and wise men, of the children of Bethlehem who were slaughtered in his place, and their flight into Egypt? Jesus did not speak of these things with his disciples. But he would speak of a new family, constituted not by bloodlines but by shared discipleship: “Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.” So this original holy family anticipated a greater Holy Family to come.

“The human family, in a certain sense, is an icon of the Trinity because of its interpersonal love and the fruitfulness of this love.”

—Pope Benedict XVI on the feast of the Holy Family

Mass

The Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Wisdom 18:14-15

When a profound silence covered all things / and night
was in the middle of its course, / your all-powerful Word,
O Lord, / bounded from heaven's royal throne.

COLLECT

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that the newness of the Nativity in the flesh
of your Only Begotten Son may set us free,
for ancient servitude holds us bound
beneath the yoke of sin.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

2:12-17

Those who do the will of God remain forever.

I am writing to you, children, because your sins have been
forgiven for his name's sake.

I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who
is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men, because you have con-
quered the Evil One.

I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is
from the beginning.

I write to you, young men, because you are strong and
the word of God remains in you, and you have conquered
the Evil One.

Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world. Yet the world and its enticement are passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10

R. (11a) Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice!

Give to the LORD, you families of nations,
give to the LORD glory and praise;
give to the LORD the glory due his name! **R.**

Bring gifts, and enter his courts;
worship the LORD in holy attire.
Tremble before him, all the earth. **R.**

Say among the nations: The LORD is king.
He has made the world firm, not to be moved;
he governs the peoples with equity. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

A holy day has dawned upon us.
Come, you nations, and adore the Lord.
Today a great light has come upon the earth.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 2:36-40

*She spoke about the child to all who
were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.*

There was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the

temple, but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Receive with favor, O Lord, we pray,
the offerings of your people,
that what they profess with devotion and faith
may be theirs through these heavenly mysteries.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

John 1:16

From his fullness we have all received, / grace upon grace.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, who touch us through our partaking of your
Sacrament,
work, we pray, the effects of its power in our hearts,
that we may be made fit to receive your gift
through this very gift itself.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

God Became Real

Many moons ago, during graduate school, I began final exams week with a breakup. That badly timed heartbreak, combined with thirty-five pages of papers to write and the darkness of South Bend, Indiana, in December, set me up for a week of true misery.

Two sweet friends came to the rescue. They studied with me the whole week. We began eating breakfast together every Thursday. And we finished off finals with a victory lap at a Christmas pop-up bar. Their kindness flooded that dark week with light.

One night, I dropped off one of these friends at his home. As he left the car, he quoted a line from John's first letter. It was not an extraordinary moment—far from it—but it's burned into my memory. A friend's love made John's words take root in my heart, not just my mind. It was like a key change: God became real, in a newer, deeper register.

During the Octave of Christmas, the prayers of the liturgy, the collect, and the antiphons are the same as those from Christmas Day. We continue to celebrate love's arrival in the dark and cold—*A holy day has dawned upon us.*

Don't despair that the sunset is at 4:00 p.m.—a great light has come. Evil has an expiration date; it is passing away. But God remains. Dazzling love walks within our ordinary flesh and bones. You wouldn't know it, unless you look for him in the faces of the ordinary men and women sitting next to you. He doesn't draw attention to himself. He slams the car door. Blink and you'll miss it—but God came into the temple.

Renée Darline Roden

Renée Roden is a journalist and Catholic Worker. You can read her musings on her Substack newsletter, Sweet Unrest.

Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 119:41-48

LORD, let your love come upon me,
the salvation you have promised.
I shall answer those who taunt me,
for I trust in your word.

Never take the word of truth from my mouth,
for I hope in your decrees.
I shall always keep your law,
forever and ever.

I shall walk on a spacious plain,
for I seek your precepts.
I will speak of your decrees before rulers,
and not be abashed.

In your commands I have found my delight;
these I have loved.
I reach out to your commands, which I love,
and ponder your statutes.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents [in the Lord], for this is right. “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first commandment with a promise, “that it may go well with you and that you may have a long life on earth.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up with the training and instruction of the Lord.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

I write to you, parents, because you know the One who is from the beginning.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

Marvelous God, your Word is our delight. In faith we pray: **R.** God of salvation, hear our prayer.

Provide for the needs of families who are separated by war or imprisonment. **R.**

Heal those who are in treatment for cancer or other disease. **R.**

Fulfill the needs of those who have asked for our prayer. **R.**

Our Father . . .

May the light, knowledge, and glory of Christ shine in our hearts, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Tuesday, December 31

Morning

O Lord, open my lips.
And my mouth will proclaim your praise.

PSALM 84:2-5, 12-13

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

How lovely is your dwelling place,

O LORD of hosts.

My soul is longing and yearning
for the courts of the LORD.

My heart and my flesh cry out
to the living God.

Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself
in which she sets her young, at your altars,
O LORD of hosts, my king and my God.

Blessed are they who dwell in your house,
forever singing your praise.

For the LORD God is a sun, a shield;
the LORD will give us favor and glory,
And will not withhold any good
from those who walk without blame.
O LORD of hosts, how blessed
is the one who trusts in you!

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

Wisdom 7:24-28

Wisdom is mobile beyond all motion, / and she penetrates and pervades all things by reason of her purity.

/ For she is a breath of the might of God / and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty; / therefore nothing defiled can enter into her. / For she is the reflection of eternal light, / the spotless mirror of the power of God, / the image of his goodness. / Although she is one, she can do all things, / and she renews everything while herself perduring; / Passing into holy souls from age to age, / she produces friends of God and prophets. / For God loves nothing so much as the one who dwells with Wisdom.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH (*inside front cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

God of hosts, your breath emanates wisdom and love.

In gladness we pray: *R.* God, in your goodness, hear our prayer.

Your wisdom reflects eternal light: lead us to greater wonder and awe. *R.*

Your dwelling place inspires joy: strengthen us to bring the peace of Christ to those with whom we live and all whom we encounter. *R.*

Your altars provide a home: help us to care for those who are without long-term or adequate shelter. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May the love of God, the peace of Christ, and the joy of the Holy Spirit be with us now and for all time. Amen.

Blessed Among Us

St. John Francis Regis

Jesuit (1597–1640)

John Francis Regis, who was born in the Languedoc region of France, entered the Jesuits at the age of eighteen and was ordained in 1631. Though his greatest desire was to join the mission to New France and there to offer his life, his superiors assigned him instead to labor in Huguenot country in the south of France, where the Church was scorned and priests were few. In 1633 he went to the diocese of Viviers, spending some years trudging through mountains, across winter snowdrifts and raging rivers, to conduct his mission retreats. He was tireless in visiting those who were sick, poor, and in prison. Though he often encountered hostile crowds, he disarmed them with his humility and compassion. His preaching skills and his dedication as a confessor won him a devoted following and a growing reputation for holiness.

In Montpellier he established a group to help women escape from prostitution. When told that certain aristocrats didn't care for his spending so much attention on those at the margins, he replied, "So much the better: we are doubly blest if we relieve a poor brother at the expense of our dignity."

In the winter of 1640, he fell ill and died on December 31 at the age of forty-three. His last words were, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit." He was canonized in 1737.

"If I can keep a person from committing one sin that except for my efforts they would have committed, it's worth all my effort."

—St. John Francis Regis

Mass

The Seventh Day in the Octave of Christmas

[St. Sylvester, opt. memorial]

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Isaiah 9:5

A child is born for us, and a son is given to us; / his
scepter of power rests upon his shoulder, / and his name
will be called Messenger of great counsel.

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
who in the Nativity of your Son
established the beginning and fulfillment of all religion,
grant, we pray, that we may be numbered
among those who belong to him,
in whom is the fullness of human salvation.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint John

2:18-21

*You have the anointing that comes from the Holy One,
and you have all knowledge.*

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that
the antichrist was coming, so now many antichrists
have appeared. Thus we know this is the last hour. They
went out from us, but they were not really of our number;
if they had been, they would have remained with us. Their
desertion shows that none of them was of our number. But
you have the anointing that comes from the Holy One, and
you all have knowledge. I write to you not because you do
not know the truth but because you do, and because every
lie is alien to the truth.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

96:1-2, 11-12, 13

R. (11a) Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice!

Sing to the LORD a new song;

sing to the LORD, all you lands.

Sing to the LORD; bless his name;

announce his salvation, day after day. **R.**

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;

let the sea and what fills it resound;

let the plains be joyful and all that is in them!

Then shall all the trees of the forest exult before the

LORD. **R.**

The LORD comes,

he comes to rule the earth.

He shall rule the world with justice

and the peoples with his constancy. **R.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 1:14a, 12a

The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us.

To those who accepted him

he gave power to become the children of God.

A reading from the beginning of the holy Gospel
according to John

1:1-18

The Word became flesh.

In the beginning was the Word, / and the Word was with
God, / and the Word was God. / He was in the beginning
with God. / All things came to be through him, / and with-
out him nothing came to be. / What came to be through
him was life, / and this life was the light of the human race;
/ the light shines in the darkness, / and the darkness has not
overcome it.

A man named John was sent from God. He came for
testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe

through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, / and the world came to be through him, / but the world did not know him. / He came to what was his own, / but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God.

And the Word became flesh / and made his dwelling among us, / and we saw his glory, / the glory as of the Father's only-begotten Son, / full of grace and truth.

John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only-begotten Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who give us the gift of true prayer and of peace,
graciously grant that, through this offering,
we may do fitting homage to your divine majesty
and, by partaking of the sacred mystery,
we may be faithfully united in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

1 John 4:9

God sent his Only Begotten Son into the world, / so that
we might have life through him.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May your people, O Lord,
 whom you guide and sustain in many ways,
 experience, both now and in the future,
 the remedies which you bestow,
 that, with the needed solace of things that pass away,
 they may strive with ever deepened trust for things eternal.
 Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection

God's Love Walking

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. . . .

John succinctly distills the Christmas message. What Luke and Matthew portray with endearing stories of shepherds, wise men, and a newborn child in swaddling clothes, John presents in a few words that get to the heart of the matter. In Jesus, God makes his home with us. There is no saving from afar. God gets his hands dirty, like in the second creation story, forming Adam out of the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7). In the Word-made-flesh, God continues to create.

Our Creator gets close because that's what love does. The Salvadoran saint Oscar Romero put it best: "Jesus is God's love walking on the earth." Walking, talking, eating, healing, teaching, praying, weeping—basically, all the stuff that comes with dwelling among human beings. By showing us what it truly means to be human and living a fully human life, Jesus reveals unbelievably good news. To be holy, we just need to be more human, that is, more loving of God, others, ourselves, and the earth, our common home. Jesus shows us that

the path to salvation lies not above or around our humanity but right through it, with all of its light and darkness and many shades of gray.

Making his home among us, God does not just visit us for a while—he stays. The Word-made-flesh continues to make his home among us and in us, for we are children of God who receive grace upon grace to realize the promise of our humanity, which God delights in sharing. When we accept our noble commission to become bearers of light today and co-creators with God, Christmas extends well beyond an octave.

Fr. Kevin O'Brien

Kevin O'Brien, a Jesuit priest and educator, is author of Seeing with the Heart: A Guide to Navigating Life's Adventures.

As vice-provost at Fairfield University, he directs a new Jesuit community college program in Bridgeport, Connecticut.



Evening

God, come to my assistance.
Lord, make haste to help me.

(opt. hymn, pp. 368–75)

PSALM 29:1-4, 7-11

Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly powers,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory of God's name;
bow down before the LORD, majestic in holiness.

The voice of the LORD upon the waters,
the God of glory thunders;
the LORD on the immensity of waters;
the voice of the LORD full of power;
the voice of the LORD full of splendor.

The voice of the LORD flashes flames of fire.
The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness,
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh;
the voice of the LORD rends the oak tree
and strips the forest bare.
In God's temple they all cry, "Glory!"

The LORD sits enthroned above the flood;
the LORD sits as king forever.
Give strength to your people, O LORD.
O LORD, bless your people with peace.

Glory to the Father . . .

SCRIPTURE

1 Peter 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who in his great mercy gave us a new birth to a living
hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the

dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by the power of God are safeguarded through faith, to a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the final time.

READ, PONDER, PRAY on a word or phrase from these readings or another of today's Scriptures (*Lectio Divina*, p. 367)

ANTIPHON

To those who accepted him, Christ gave power to become children of God.

CANTICLE OF MARY (*inside back cover*)

INTERCESSIONS

All-powerful God, your glory inspires awe. In faith we pray: *R.* God, bless us with peace.

Heal those who suffer long-term physical, emotional, or financial effects from the pandemic. *R.*

Accept our gratitude for the graces and blessings of this past year, and renew us in gladness and hope for the coming year. *R.*

Give unending joy to all who have died this past year. *R.*

Our Father . . .

May God keep us in peace and lead us to an inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled, through Jesus, the glory of God. Amen.

The Order of Mass

■ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

■ Amen.

GREETING

A The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
and the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.
And with your spirit.

B Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.
And with your spirit.

C The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins,
and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

(Pause)

A I confess to almighty God
and to you, my brothers and sisters,
that I have greatly sinned,
in my thoughts and in my words,
in what I have done and in what I have failed to do,

And, striking their breast, they say:

**through my fault, through my fault,
through my most grievous fault;**

Then they continue:

therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin,
all the Angels and Saints,
and you, my brothers and sisters,
to pray for me to the Lord our God.

B Have mercy on us, O Lord.
For we have sinned against you.
Show us, O Lord, your mercy.
And grant us your salvation.

These or other invocations may be used.

C You were sent to heal the contrite of heart:
Lord, have mercy. *Or: Kyrie, eleison.*
Lord, have mercy. *Or: Kyrie, eleison.*
You came to call sinners:
Christ, have mercy. *Or: Christe, eleison.*
Christ, have mercy. *Or: Christe, eleison.*
You are seated at the right hand of the Father to
intercede for us:
Lord, have mercy. *Or: Kyrie, eleison.*
Lord, have mercy. *Or: Kyrie, eleison.*

■ May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

■ Amen.

KYRIE

The Kyrie, eleison (Lord, have mercy) invocations follow, unless they have just occurred in a formula of the Penitential Act.

■ Lord, have mercy. ■ Kyrie, eleison.

■ Lord, have mercy. ■ Kyrie, eleison.

■ Christ, have mercy. ■ Christe, eleison.

■ Christ, have mercy. ■ Christe, eleison.

■ Lord, have mercy. ■ Kyrie, eleison.

■ Lord, have mercy. ■ Kyrie, eleison.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
 have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
 receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
 have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT (OPENING PRAYER)

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

SECOND READING

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

GOSPEL

Cleanse my heart and my lips, almighty God,
that I may worthily proclaim your holy Gospel.

■ The Lord be with you.

■ And with your spirit.

■ A reading from the holy Gospel according to **N**.

■ Glory to you, O Lord.

At the end:

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

■ Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Through the words of the Gospel
may our sins be wiped away.

HOMILY

PROFESSION OF FAITH

[The Apostles' Creed can be found on p. 365]

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

At the words that follow, up to and including and became man,
all bow.

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL (BIDDING PRAYERS)

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

PRESENTATION AND PREPARATION OF THE GIFTS

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have received
the bread we offer you:
fruit of the earth and work of human hands,
it will become for us the bread of life.

Blessed be God for ever.

By the mystery of this water and wine
may we come to share in the divinity of Christ
who humbled himself to share in our humanity.

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,
for through your goodness we have received
the wine we offer you:
fruit of the vine and work of human hands,
it will become our spiritual drink.

Blessed be God for ever.

With humble spirit and contrite heart
may we be accepted by you, O Lord,
and may our sacrifice in your sight this day
be pleasing to you, Lord God.

Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.

INVITATION TO PRAYER

Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters),
that my sacrifice and yours
may be acceptable to God,
the almighty Father.

**May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands
for the praise and glory of his name,
for our good
and the good of all his holy Church.**

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

- The Lord be with you. ■ And with your spirit.
- Lift up your hearts. ■ We lift them up to the Lord.
- Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
- It is right and just.

PREFACE I OF ADVENT (Dec. 1–Dec. 16)

The two comings of Christ

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Christ our Lord.

For he assumed at his first coming
the lowliness of human flesh,
and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago,
and opened for us the way to eternal salvation,
that, when he comes again in glory and majesty
and all is at last made manifest,
we who watch for that day
may inherit the great promise
in which now we dare to hope.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts . . .

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

The mystery of Mary and the Church

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For you preserved the most Blessed Virgin Mary
from all stain of original sin,
so that in her, endowed with the rich fullness of your grace,
you might prepare a worthy Mother for your Son
and signify the beginning of the Church,
his beautiful Bride without spot or wrinkle.

She, the most pure Virgin, was to bring forth a Son,
the innocent Lamb who would wipe away our offenses;
you placed her above all others
to be for your people an advocate of grace
and a model of holiness.

And so, in company with the choirs of Angels,
we praise you, and with joy we proclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts . . .

PREFACE II OF ADVENT (Dec. 17–Dec. 24)

The twofold expectation of Christ

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Christ our Lord.

For all the oracles of the prophets foretold him,
the Virgin Mother longed for him
with love beyond all telling,
John the Baptist sang of his coming
and proclaimed his presence when he came.

It is by his gift that already we rejoice
at the mystery of his Nativity,
so that he may find us watchful in prayer
and exultant in his praise.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts . . .

PREFACE I OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD

Christ the Light

(Christmas and Octave)

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.

For in the mystery of the Word made flesh
a new light of your glory has shone upon the eyes of our
mind,
so that, as we recognize in him God made visible,
we may be caught up through him in love of things invisible.

And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Thrones and Dominions,
and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts . . .

SANCTUS

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dóminus Deus Sábaoth.
Pleni sunt caeli et terra glória tua.
Hosánna in excélsis.
Benedíctus qui venit in nómine Dómini.
Hosánna in excélsis.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER I (Roman Canon)

To you, therefore, most merciful Father,
we make humble prayer and petition
through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord:

that you accept
and bless † these gifts, these offerings,
these holy and unblemished sacrifices,
which we offer you firstly
for your holy catholic Church.
Be pleased to grant her peace,
to guard, unite and govern her
throughout the whole world,
together with your servant N. our Pope
and N. our Bishop,
and all those who, holding to the truth,
hand on the catholic and apostolic faith.

Remember, Lord, your servants N. and N.
and all gathered here,
whose faith and devotion are known to you.
For them, we offer you this sacrifice of praise
or they offer it for themselves
and all who are dear to them:
for the redemption of their souls,
in hope of health and well-being,
and paying their homage to you,
the eternal God, living and true.

In communion with those whose memory we venerate,
especially the glorious ever-Virgin Mary,
Mother of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ,
† and blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
your blessed Apostles and Martyrs,
Peter and Paul, Andrew,
(James, John,
Thomas, James, Philip,
Bartholomew, Matthew,
Simon and Jude;
Linus, Cletus, Clement, Sixtus,
Cornelius, Cyprian,

Lawrence, Chrysogonus,
John and Paul,
Cosmas and Damian)
and all your Saints;
we ask that through their merits and prayers,
in all things we may be defended
by your protecting help.
(Through Christ our Lord. Amen.)

On the Nativity of the Lord and throughout the Octave
Celebrating the most sacred night (day)
on which blessed Mary the immaculate Virgin
brought forth the Savior for this world,
and in communion with those whose memory we venerate,
especially the glorious ever-Virgin Mary,
Mother of our God and Lord, Jesus Christ, †

Therefore, Lord, we pray:
graciously accept this oblation of our service,
that of your whole family;
order our days in your peace,
and command that we be delivered from eternal damnation
and counted among the flock of those you have chosen.
(Through Christ our Lord. Amen.)

Be pleased, O God, we pray,
to bless, acknowledge,
and approve this offering in every respect;
make it spiritual and acceptable,
so that it may become for us
the Body and Blood of your most beloved Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the day before he was to suffer,
he took bread in his holy and venerable hands,
and with eyes raised to heaven

to you, O God, his almighty Father,
giving you thanks, he said the blessing,
broke the bread
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
he took this precious chalice
in his holy and venerable hands,
and once more giving you thanks, he said the blessing
and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

The mystery of faith.

A We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.

B When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.

C Save us, Savior of the world,
for by your Cross and Resurrection
you have set us free.

Therefore, O Lord,
as we celebrate the memorial of the blessed Passion,
the Resurrection from the dead,

and the glorious Ascension into heaven
of Christ, your Son, our Lord,
we, your servants and your holy people,
offer to your glorious majesty
from the gifts that you have given us,
this pure victim,
this holy victim,
this spotless victim,
the holy Bread of eternal life
and the Chalice of everlasting salvation.

Be pleased to look upon these offerings
with a serene and kindly countenance,
and to accept them,
as once you were pleased to accept
the gifts of your servant Abel the just,
the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith,
and the offering of your high priest Melchizedek,
a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim.

In humble prayer we ask you, almighty God:
command that these gifts be borne
by the hands of your holy Angel
to your altar on high
in the sight of your divine majesty,
so that all of us, who through this participation at the altar
receive the most holy Body and Blood of your Son,
may be filled with every grace and heavenly blessing.
(Through Christ our Lord. Amen.)

Remember also, Lord, your servants **N.** and **N.**,
who have gone before us with the sign of faith
and rest in the sleep of peace.

Grant them, O Lord, we pray,
and all who sleep in Christ,

a place of refreshment, light and peace.

(Through Christ our Lord. Amen.)

To us, also, your servants, who, though sinners,
hope in your abundant mercies,
graciously grant some share
and fellowship with your holy Apostles and Martyrs:
with John the Baptist, Stephen,
Matthias, Barnabas,
(Ignatius, Alexander,
Marcellinus, Peter,
Felicity, Perpetua,
Agatha, Lucy,
Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia)
and all your Saints;
admit us, we beseech you,
into their company,
not weighing our merits,
but granting us your pardon,
through Christ our Lord.

Through whom
you continue to make all these good things, O Lord;
you sanctify them, fill them with life,
bless them, and bestow them upon us.

Through him, and with him, and in him,
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer, p. 361.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER II

Preface

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks, Father most holy,
through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ,
your Word through whom you made all things,
whom you sent as our Savior and Redeemer,
incarnate by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin.

Fulfilling your will and gaining for you a holy people,
he stretched out his hands as he endured his Passion,
so as to break the bonds of death and manifest the resurrection.

And so, with the Angels and all the Saints
we declare your glory,
as with one voice we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts . . .

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,
the fount of all holiness.

Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray,
by sending down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall,
so that they may become for us
the Body and ✠ Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the time he was betrayed
and entered willingly into his Passion,
he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.**

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
he took the chalice
and, once more giving thanks,
he gave it to his disciples, saying:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

The mystery of faith.

A We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.

B When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.

C Save us, Savior of the world,
for by your Cross and Resurrection
you have set us free.

Therefore, as we celebrate
the memorial of his Death and Resurrection,
we offer you, Lord,
the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation,
giving thanks that you have held us worthy
to be in your presence and minister to you.

Humbly we pray
that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ,
we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.

Remember, Lord, your Church,
spread throughout the world,
and bring her to the fullness of charity,
together with **N.** our Pope and **N.** our Bishop
and all the clergy.

Remember also our brothers and sisters
who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection,
and all who have died in your mercy:
welcome them into the light of your face.
Have mercy on us all, we pray,
that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with the blessed Apostles,
and all the Saints who have pleased you throughout the ages,
we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life,
and may praise and glorify you
through your Son, Jesus Christ.

Through him, and with him, and in him,
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer, p. 361.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER III

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,
and all you have created
rightly gives you praise,
for through your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
by the power and working of the Holy Spirit,
you give life to all things and make them holy,
and you never cease to gather a people to yourself,
so that from the rising of the sun to its setting
a pure sacrifice may be offered to your name.

Therefore, O Lord, we humbly implore you:
by the same Spirit graciously make holy
these gifts we have brought to you for consecration,

that they may become the Body and ✠ Blood
of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,
at whose command we celebrate these mysteries.

For on the night he was betrayed
he himself took bread,
and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing,
broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
he took the chalice,
and, giving you thanks, he said the blessing,
and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

The mystery of faith.

A We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.

B When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.

C Save us, Savior of the world,
for by your Cross and Resurrection
you have set us free.

Therefore, O Lord, as we celebrate the memorial
of the saving Passion of your Son,
his wondrous Resurrection
and Ascension into heaven,
and as we look forward to his second coming,
we offer you in thanksgiving
this holy and living sacrifice.

Look, we pray, upon the oblation of your Church
and, recognizing the sacrificial Victim by whose death
you willed to reconcile us to yourself,
grant that we, who are nourished
by the Body and Blood of your Son
and filled with his Holy Spirit,
may become one body, one spirit in Christ.

May he make of us
an eternal offering to you,
so that we may obtain an inheritance with your elect,
especially with the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with your blessed Apostles and glorious Martyrs
(with Saint N.: the Saint of the day or Patron Saint)
and with all the Saints,
on whose constant intercession in your presence
we rely for unfailing help.

May this Sacrifice of our reconciliation,
we pray, O Lord,
advance the peace and salvation of all the world.
Be pleased to confirm in faith and charity
your pilgrim Church on earth,
with your servant N. our Pope and N. our Bishop,
the Order of Bishops, all the clergy,
and the entire people you have gained for your own.

Listen graciously to the prayers of this family,
whom you have summoned before you:
in your compassion, O merciful Father,
gather to yourself all your children
scattered throughout the world.

† To our departed brothers and sisters
and to all who were pleasing to you
at their passing from this life,
give kind admittance to your kingdom.
There we hope to enjoy for ever the fullness of your glory
through Christ our Lord,
through whom you bestow on the world all that is good. †
Through him, and with him, and in him,
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer, p. 361.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER IV

Preface

It is truly right to give you thanks,
truly just to give you glory, Father most holy,
for you are the one God living and true,
existing before all ages and abiding for all eternity,
dwelling in unapproachable light;
yet you, who alone are good, the source of life,
have made all that is,
so that you might fill your creatures with blessings
and bring joy to many of them by the glory of your light.
And so, in your presence are countless hosts of Angels,
who serve you day and night

and, gazing upon the glory of your face,
glorify you without ceasing.

With them we, too, confess your name in exultation,
giving voice to every creature under heaven,
as we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts . . .

We give you praise, Father most holy,
for you are great
and you have fashioned all your works
in wisdom and in love.

You formed man in your own image
and entrusted the whole world to his care,
so that in serving you alone, the Creator,
he might have dominion over all creatures.

And when through disobedience he had lost your friendship,
you did not abandon him to the domain of death.

For you came in mercy to the aid of all,
so that those who seek might find you.
Time and again you offered them covenants
and through the prophets
taught them to look forward to salvation.

And you so loved the world, Father most holy,
that in the fullness of time
you sent your Only Begotten Son to be our Savior.
Made incarnate by the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary,
he shared our human nature
in all things but sin.

To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation,
to prisoners, freedom,
and to the sorrowful of heart, joy.
To accomplish your plan,
he gave himself up to death,

and, rising from the dead,
he destroyed death and restored life.

And that we might live no longer for ourselves
but for him who died and rose again for us,
he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father,
as the first fruits for those who believe,
so that, bringing to perfection his work in the world,
he might sanctify creation to the full.

Therefore, O Lord, we pray:
may this same Holy Spirit
graciously sanctify these offerings,
that they may become
the Body and ✠ Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ
for the celebration of this great mystery,
which he himself left us
as an eternal covenant.

For when the hour had come
for him to be glorified by you, Father most holy,
having loved his own who were in the world,
he loved them to the end:
and while they were at supper,
he took bread, blessed and broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.

In a similar way,
taking the chalice filled with the fruit of the vine,
he gave thanks,
and gave the chalice to his disciples, saying:

TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,

THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR MANY
FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

The mystery of faith.

A We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
and profess your Resurrection
until you come again.

B When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.

C Save us, Savior of the world,
for by your Cross and Resurrection
you have set us free.

Therefore, O Lord,
as we now celebrate the memorial of our redemption,
we remember Christ's Death
and his descent to the realm of the dead,
we proclaim his Resurrection
and his Ascension to your right hand,
and, as we await his coming in glory,
we offer you his Body and Blood,
the sacrifice acceptable to you
which brings salvation to the whole world.

Look, O Lord, upon the Sacrifice
which you yourself have provided for your Church,
and grant in your loving kindness
to all who partake of this one Bread and one Chalice
that, gathered into one body by the Holy Spirit,
they may truly become a living sacrifice in Christ
to the praise of your glory.

Therefore, Lord, remember now
all for whom we offer this sacrifice:
especially your servant **N.** our Pope,
N. our Bishop, and the whole Order of Bishops,
all the clergy,
those who take part in this offering,
those gathered here before you,
your entire people,
and all who seek you with a sincere heart.

Remember also
those who have died in the peace of your Christ
and all the dead,
whose faith you alone have known.

To all of us, your children,
grant, O merciful Father,
that we may enter into a heavenly inheritance
with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
and with your Apostles and Saints in your kingdom.
There, with the whole of creation,
freed from the corruption of sin and death,
may we glorify you through Christ our Lord,
through whom you bestow on the world all that is good.

Through him, and with him, and in him,
O God, almighty Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honor is yours,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

COMMUNION RITE

LORD'S PRAYER

At the Savior's command
and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
graciously grant peace in our days,
that, by the help of your mercy,
we may be always free from sin
and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

SIGN OF PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,
who said to your Apostles:
Peace I leave you, my peace I give you,
look not on our sins,
but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity

in accordance with your will.
Who live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And with your spirit.

Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

May this mingling of the Body and Blood
of our Lord Jesus Christ
bring eternal life to us who receive it.

**Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world,
grant us peace.**

**Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis.**

**Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
miserere nobis.**

**Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi:
dona nobis pacem.**

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God,
who, by the will of the Father
and the work of the Holy Spirit,
through your Death gave life to the world,
free me by this, your most holy Body and Blood,
from all my sins and from every evil;
keep me always faithful to your commandments,
and never let me be parted from you.

Or:

May the receiving of your Body and Blood,
Lord Jesus Christ,
not bring me to judgment and condemnation,
but through your loving mercy
be for me protection in mind and body
and a healing remedy.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

**Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.**

If there is no singing, the communion antiphon is recited.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

CONCLUDING RITES

FINAL BLESSING

■ The Lord be with you.

■ And with your spirit.

■ May almighty God bless you,
the Father, and the Son, ✠ and the Holy Spirit.

■ Amen.

DISMISSAL

A Go forth, the Mass is ended.

B Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

C Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

D Go in peace.

Thanks be to God.

Celebration of the Liturgy of the Word

[With Holy Communion]

INTRODUCTORY RITES

INTRODUCTION

Deacon or lay leader:

We gather here to celebrate the Lord's Day.

Sunday has been called the Lord's Day because

it was on this day

that Jesus conquered sin and death and rose to new life.

Unfortunately, we are not able to celebrate the Mass today

because we do not have a priest.

Let us be united in the spirit of Christ with

the Church around the world

and celebrate our redemption in Christ's suffering,

death, and resurrection.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

Deacon or lay leader:

■ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

■ Amen.

GREETING

Deacon or lay leader:

■ Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God for ever.

■ Blessed be God for ever.

COLLECT

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

SECOND READING

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

GOSPEL

HOMILY OR REFLECTION ON THE READINGS

PERIOD OF SILENCE

PROFESSION OF FAITH

[The Nicene Creed can be found on p. 340]

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin Mary,
all bow.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

COMMUNION RITE

LORD'S PRAYER

Deacon or lay leader:

The Father provides us with food for eternal life.
At the Savior's command
and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Deacon or lay leader:

Behold the Lamb of God,
behold him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

Lord, I am not worthy
that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word
and my soul shall be healed.

COMMUNION

ACT OF THANKSGIVING

CONCLUDING RITE

INVITATION TO PRAY FOR VOCATIONS TO THE PRIESTHOOD

Deacon or lay leader:

Mindful of our Lord's word, "Ask the Master of the harvest to send out laborers for the harvest," let us pray for an increase of vocations to the priesthood. May our prayer hasten the day when we will be able to take part in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist every Sunday.

BLESSING

SIGN OF PEACE

Guide to *Lectio Divina*

Choose a word or phrase of the Scriptures you wish to pray. It makes no difference which text is chosen, as long as you have no set goal of “covering” a certain amount of text. The amount of text covered is in God’s hands, not yours.

Read. Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently. Savor each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.” Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In *lectio divina*, God is teaching us to listen, to seek him in silence. God does not reach out and grab us but gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence.

Ponder. Take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorize it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Do not be afraid of distractions. Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during *lectio divina*, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God.

Pray. Whether you use words, ideas, or images—or all three—is not important. Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. Give to God what you have discovered during your experience of meditation. Give to God what you have found within your heart.

It is not necessary to assess the quality of your *lectio divina*, as if you were “performing” or seeking some goal. *Lectio divina* has no goal other than that of being in the presence of God by praying the Scriptures.

—Fr. Luke Dysinger

Luke Dysinger, OSB, is a Benedictine monk of Saint Andrew’s Abbey, Valyermo, California.

Creator of the Stars of Night

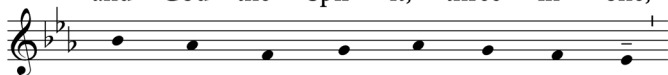
Advent—AM/PM



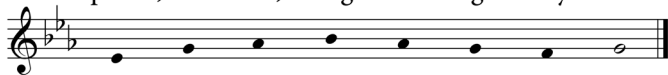
1. Cre - a - tor of the stars of night,
2. Our Fa - ther heard the help - less cry
3. When earth was near its ev - 'ning hour,
4. At your great name, ex - alt - ed now,
5. To you, O Ho - ly One, we pray,
6. To God the Fa - ther, God the Son,



your peo - ple's ev - er - last - ing light,
 of all cre - a - tion doomed to die,
 you did, in love's re - deem - ing pow'r,
 all knees should bend, all heads should bow,
 our judge in that tre - men - dous day,
 and God the Spir - it, three in one,



Lord Je - sus, Sav - ior of us all,
 and saved our lost and guil - ty race
 like bride-groom from his cham - ber, come
 all things in heav'n and earth a - dore,
 ward off, while yet we dwell be - low,
 praise, hon - or, might and glo - ry be



now hear your ser - vants when they call.
 by heal - ing gifts of heav'n - ly grace.
 forth from a maid - en moth - er's womb.
 and praise you, King for - ev - er - more.
 the wea - pons of our craft - y foe.
 from age to age e - ter - nal - ly.

Text: Latin, 9th cent.; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt.

Music: CONDITOR ALME SIDERUM, 88 88, Plainchant, Mode IV.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Advent—AM/PM

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
- Refrain:** Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.
2. O come, thou Wisdom from on high,
and order all things far and nigh;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go. *Refrain*
3. O come, thou holy Lord of might,
who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times did give the law,
in cloud and majesty and awe. *Refrain*
4. O come, thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
from ev'ry foe deliver them.
From death and sin thy people save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain*
5. O come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heav'nly home,
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery. *Refrain*
6. O come, desire of nations, bind
in one the hearts of humankind;
bid ev'ry sad division cease
and be thyself our Prince of peace. *Refrain*
7. O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadow put to flight. *Refrain*

Text: O Antiphons, 12th cent.; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866. Music: VENI, VENI,
EMMANUEL, 88 88 with refrain, Thomas Helmore, 1811–1890, 15th cent. Plainchant, adapt.

Light-bearing Christ, Come Down to Us

Advent—AM/PM

Familiar Tune: The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns



1. Light - bear - ing Christ, come down to
 2. Pre - pare us for your light and
 3. Al - might - y Fa - ther, speak the

us, and light in dark - ness sow;
 truth, who watch and wait for you;
 word your chil - dren long to hear,

come down and save our fall - en
 re - store our once lost dig - ni -
 and with your Spir - it dwell with

world whose sin - ful ways you know.
 ty; come down and make us new.
 us: Lord God of love, draw near.

Text: Stanbrook Abbey, © 1974, 1995. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

Music: MORNING SONG, 86 86, *Kentucky Harmony*.

On Jordan's Bank

Advent—AM/PM

1. On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry / announces that the
 Lord is nigh; / awake and hearken for he brings / glad
 tidings of the King of kings.
2. Then cleansed be ev'ry heart from sin; / make straight
 the way of God within. / And let each heart prepare a
 home / where such a mighty guest may come.
3. For you are our salvation, Lord, / our refuge and our
 great reward; / without your grace we waste away / like
 flow'rs that wither and decay.

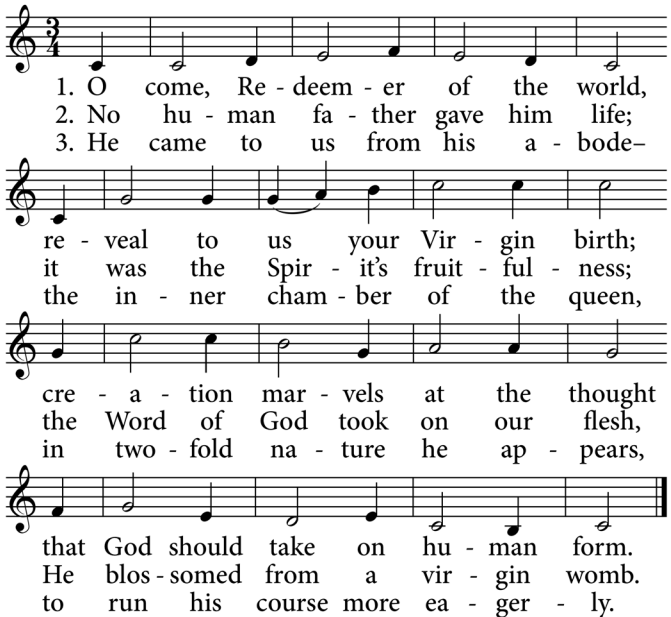
4. To heal the sick stretch out your hand, / and bid the fallen sinner stand: / shine forth, and let your light restore / earth's own true loveliness once more.
5. All praise the Son eternally, / whose advent sets his people free, / whom with the Father we adore / and Spirit blest for evermore.

Text: *Jordanis oras praevia*; Charles Coffin, 1676–1749; tr. John Chandler, 1806–1876.
 Music: WINCHESTER NEW, LM; adapt. from *Musikalisches Handbuch*, Hamburg, 1690.

O Come, Redeemer of the World

Advent—AM/PM

Familiar Tune: That Easter Day with Joy Was Bright



1. O come, Re - deem - er of the world,
 2. No hu - man fa - ther gave him life;
 3. He came to us from his a - bode -
 re - veal to us your Vir - gin birth;
 it was the Spir - it's fruit - ful - ness;
 the in - ner cham - ber of the queen,
 cre - a - tion mar - vels at the thought
 the Word of God took on our flesh,
 in two - fold na - ture he ap - pears,
 that God should take on hu - man form.
 He blos - somed from a vir - gin womb.
 to run his course more ea - ger - ly.

Text: *Veni, redemptor gentium*, Ambrose of Milan, c. 337–397;
 tr. by Cecile Gertken, OSB, 1902–2001, and Bartholomew Sayles, OSB, 1918–2006;
 © 1979 Order of Saint Benedict, admin. by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. All rights reserved.
 Music: PUER NOBIS, 88 88; Michael Praetorius, 1571–1621.

Angels We Have Heard on High

Christmas—AM/PM

1. Angels we have heard on high
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply
echo back their joyous strains.

Refrain: Gloria in excelsis Deo, Gloria in excelsis Deo.

2. Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
Say what may the tidings be,
which inspire your heav'nly song. *Refrain*
3. Come to Bethlehem and see
Him whose birth the angels sing;
come adore, on bended knee,
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King. *Refrain*
4. See him in a manger laid,
whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
while our hearts in love we raise. *Refrain*

Text: Traditional French carol, tr. by James Chadwick, 1813–1882, in *Crown of Jesus*, 1862, alt.

Music: GLORIA, 77 77 with refrain, traditional French carol.

What Child Is This?

Christmas—AM/PM

1. What Child is this who, laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom Angels greet with anthems sweet,
while shepherds watch are keeping?

Refrain: This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste, to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary.

2. Why lies he in such mean estate
 where ox and ass are feeding?
 Good Christians, fear, for sinners here
 the silent Word is pleading. *Refrain*
3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh,
 come peasant king to own him;
 The King of kings salvation brings.
 Let loving hearts enthrone Him. *Refrain*

Text: William Chatterton Dix, 1837–1898.

Music: GREENSLEEVES, 87 87 with refrain, English melody, 1580.

O Come, All Ye Faithful / *Adeste, Fideles*

Christmas—AM/PM

1. O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant;
 O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.
 Come and behold him, born the King of angels.
- Refrain:** O come, let us adore him,
 O come, let us adore him,
 O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!
2. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation;
 Sing, all ye citizens of heav'n above!
 Glory to God, all glory in the highest. *Refrain*
3. Yes, Lord we greet thee, born this happy morning;
 Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n.
 Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing. *Refrain*
1. *Adéste, fidèles, laéti, triump'hantes;*
Veníte, veníte in Béthlehem.
Natum vidéte Regem angelórum.
- Refrain:** *Veníte, adorémus,*
Veníte, adorémus,
Veníte, adorémus Dóminum.

Text: attr. to John F. Wade, 1711–1786. Tr. by Frederick Oakeley, 1802–1880, alt.

Music: ADESTE FIDELES Irregular with Refrain

Magnificat

Marian—AM/PM

Familiar Tune: Amazing Grace

1. My spirit magnifies the Lord / and gladness fills my
soul, / for you, my Lord, have glorified / a lowly
maiden's role.
2. Hereafter all shall call me blest / for you have honored
me; / Your mercy is from age to age / to those of piety.
3. The proud you scatter like the wind, / they know your
mighty arm; / though great ones tumble from their
thrones, / the humble fear no harm.
4. The hungry poor who seek you, Lord, / are filled
abundantly; / the rich who have no need of you / are left
in poverty.
5. And Israel, your holy one, / you nurture tenderly; /
Your promised mercy you fulfill / through all eternity!
6. Almighty Father, hear our praise / through Christ your
only Son, / Whom in the Spirit we adore / while endless
ages run.

Text: Bernard Mischke, OSC, 1926–2012, © 1965, Crosier Fathers and Brothers, Phoenix, AZ.
All rights reserved. Used with permission.

O Mary of Graces

Marian—AM/PM

Familiar Tune: Away in a Manger

1. O Mary of graces and mother of Christ,
O may you direct me and guide me aright.
O may you protect me from Satan's control,
and may you protect me in body and soul.
2. O may you protect me by land and by sea,
and may you protect me from sorrows to be;
a strong guard of angels above me provide;
may God walk before me and God at my side.

3. O Mary of graces, blest Mother of all,
 be my guide and guardian that I may not fall;
 then lead me to my home in heaven above,
 with angels and saints there to share in God's love.

Text: Traditional Irish, alt.

Music: AWAY IN A MANGER, 11 11 11 11; James R. Murray, 1841–1905.

All Who Keep the Faith of Jesus

Marian—AM/PM

Familiar Tune: Praise, My Soul, the King of Heaven

1. All who keep the faith of Je - sus, sing
 2. Bless - ed were the cho - sen peo - ple out
 3. There - fore let all faith - ful peo - ple tell
 the won - ders that were done, when the love
 of whom the Lord did come, bless - ed was
 the hon - or of her name, let the Church
 of God the Fa - ther o'er our sin the
 the land of prom - ise fash - ioned for this
 in her fore - shad - owed part in her thanks -
 vic - t'ry won, when he made the Vir - gin
 earth - ly home; but more bless - ed far the
 giv - ing claim; what Christ's Moth - er sang in
 Mar - y Moth - er of his on - ly Son.
 Moth - er, she who bore him in her womb.
 glad - ness let Christ's peo - ple sing the same.

Text: Vincent Coles, S.S., 1845–1929.

Music: LAUDA ANIMA, 87 87 87, John Goss, 1800–1880.

Acknowledgments

Excerpts from the English translation of *The Roman Missal* © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL); excerpts from the English translation of *Lectionary for Mass* © 1969, 1981, 1997, ICEL; excerpts from the English translation of *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* © 1988, ICEL; excerpts from the English translation of the non-biblical readings from *The Liturgy of the Hours* © 1973, 1974, 1975, ICEL; the English translation of the Invitatories for Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer from *The Liturgy of the Hours* © 1974, ICEL. All rights reserved.

The English translation of the *Magnificat*, *Benedictus*, and *Nunc Dimittis* (Canticle of Simeon) by the International Consultation on English Texts.

Excerpts from the *Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition*. Copyright © 1970, 1986, 1997, 1998, 2001, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Excerpts from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Psalms texts for morning, evening, and night prayers from *The Ecumenical Grail Psalter*. Copyright © 2015, Conception Abbey/The Grail, admin. by GIA Publications, Inc., giamusic.com. All rights reserved.

Texts contained in this work derived whole or in part from liturgical texts copyrighted by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) have been published here with the confirmation of the Committee on Divine Worship, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. No other texts in this work have been formally reviewed or approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Bernard of Clairvaux, adapted from *Homily 2 in Praise of the Virgin Mother*, in *A Light to Enlighten the Darkness* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2008), 24–25. Used with permission.

Maria Boulding, *The Coming of God* (Conception, MO: The Printery House, Conception Abbey, Inc., 2000), 143–44. Used with permission of Stanbrook Abbey, Wass.

Deacon Jay Cormier, “Advent Prayer of Welcome,” in *The Advent Wreath: Blessings and Prayers for Families and Households* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2020), 5. Used with permission.

Catherine de Hueck Doherty, in *Grace in Every Season* (Combermere, Ontario: Madonna House Publications, 2001), 332. © 2001 Madonna House Publications. madonnahouse.org/publications. Used with permission.

Luke Dysinger, “Guide to *Lectio Divina*,” adapted from “Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of *Lectio Divina*.” Used with permission.

Pope Francis, *Angelus*, November 28, 2021, vatican.va. © 2021 Libreria Editrice Vaticana. Used with permission.

“Honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe,” from *Benedictine Daily Prayer: A Short Breviary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 1704. Used with permission.

Cardinal Basil Hume, *A Turning to God* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 28–29. Used with permission.

Michael Kwatera, OSB, and Dietrich Reinhart, OSB, “Meal Prayers for Advent and Christmas,” in *To Thank and Bless: Prayers at Meals*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 13, 21. Used with permission.

Chiara Lubich, in *Christmas Joy: Spiritual Insights* by Chiara Lubich (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1998), 58. Used with permission.

Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, *What’s in a Phrase? Pausing Where Scripture Gives You Pause* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 15–16. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Megan McKenna, *Advent, Christmas and Epiphany: Stories and Reflections on the Sunday Readings* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2008). Kindle edition. Used with permission of the author.

“O Antiphons” are from *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*. Copyright © 2007, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D.C. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

“On the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception,” in *Proclaiming All Your Wonders: Prayers for a Pilgrim People* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 160–61. Used with permission.

378 Acknowledgments

Pope's Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer), "Monthly Prayer Intention of Pope Francis: December 2024." For more information, visit popesprayerusa.net.

Carla Mae Streeter, OP, excerpt from *Seasons of the Soul: An Intimate God in Liturgical Time*. Copyright © 2012 New City Press. Kindle edition. Reprinted by permission of New City Press.

Don Talafous, *Homilies for Weekdays, Year I* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 17. Used with permission.

Art Credits

Front cover: *Annunciation* by Natalya Rusetska. © 2024 Natalya Rusetska. iconart-gallery.com/en/artists/natalya-rusetska. Used with permission.

Carpet pages: Tabernacle door, Cathedral of the Assumption, Cuernavaca, Mexico. Photo by Br. Ælred Senna, OSB. Used with permission.

Calendar art and page 251: Star of Bethlehem quilt, ca. 1840–50, American. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York; Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Hosmer, 1948. Photo courtesy of MetMuseum.org. Public domain.

Pages 16, 84, 152, 220, 239: Illustrations by Br. Martin Erspamer, OSB, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, Indiana. Used with permission.

Pages 45, 334: Illustrations by Fr. Emanuel Franco, O.Carm., a friar of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Priory, Tucson, Arizona. © Emanuel Franco, O.Carm. e-manu-el.com. Used with permission.

Page 96: *St. Anna and St. Joachim*, ca. 1430–50, German. Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York; Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917. Photo courtesy of MetMuseum.org. Public domain.

Pages 149, 248: Illustrations by Frank Kacmarcik, OblSB, Saint John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minnesota. Used with permission.

Christmas art series: page 252, *St. Joseph's Dream*; page 258, *Shepherds at Night*; page 266, *The Holy Family at the Nativity*; page 270, *Love (Madonna and Child)*, all by Laura James. © Laura James. laurajamesart.com. Used with permission.

Page 306: *Holy Family* by Jen Norton. © Jen Norton. jennortonartstudio.com. Used with permission.

Back cover: *Holy Family* by James B. Janknegt. © 2006 James B. Janknegt. bcartfarm.com. Used with permission.

About the Cover

The image that adorns our cover this month is a detail from Natalya Rusetka's *Annunciation* icon (iconart-gallery.com/en/artists/natalya-rusetska). The full icon was made on a round wooden board and is relatively small, just under twelve inches in diameter. The Annunciation event is depicted at the center of the image, with the town of Nazareth visible just off to the right. The Archangel Gabriel meets the Blessed Virgin beside a well or spring likely intended to be what is known as Mary's Well. According to Christian tradition, it is a site in Nazareth where Mary would have gone daily to draw water.

The angel presents Mary with a lily, a symbol of her purity. Notably, the lily is also associated with rebirth and resurrection, imbuing the gift with a double meaning, both honoring Mary's virginity and welcoming the son who will become the Resurrected One. The white spots on the head and shoulders of her cloak represent stars, which have been interpreted across the centuries as representing her virginity before, during, and after giving birth. For her part, Mary raises a hand to her breast in a look of surprise and wonder at the angel's announcement.

As the Holy Spirit hovers just above the heads of the two central figures in the tableau, surrounded by gold and shining rays of divine light upon the scene, we are left to close our eyes and imagine this miraculous meeting between the angel and the Mother of God.

Pray for us, O Holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

—Br. Ælred Senna

Ælred Senna, OSB, is a monk of Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, and publisher of Give Us This Day.

Give Us **ThisDay**[®]

DAILY PRAYER FOR TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Heidi Busse, *Editor*

Ælred Senna, OSB, *Publisher*

Catherine Donovan, *Associate Publisher*

Kendra Richards Ohmann, *Publishing Coordinator*

Lori Dahlhoff, *Special Content Editor*

Angie Steffens, *Production Manager*

Julie Surma and Mark Warzecha, *Desktop Publishers*

Monica Bokinskie, *Art Design*

Robert Ellsberg, *"Blessed Among Us" Author*

Susan Barber, OSB, *Intercessions*

Therese L. Ratliff, *Liturgical Press Director*

Editorial Advisors

James Martin, SJ ♦ Irene Nowell, OSB

Carolyn Y. Woo ♦ Timothy Radcliffe, OP

Kathleen Norris ♦ Ronald Rolheiser, OMI

giveusthisday.org

Give Us This Day, Liturgical Press

PO Box 7500, Collegeville, MN 56321-7500

Customer Service: 888-259-8470, subscriptions@giveusthisday.org

Give Us This Day® (December 2024/Vol. 14, No. 12. ISSN 2159-2136, print; 2166-0654, large print; 2159-2128, online) is published monthly by Liturgical Press, an apostolate of Saint John's Abbey, 2950 Saint John's Road, Collegeville, Minnesota. Rev. Douglas Mullin, OSB, *Abbot*. Periodicals postage paid at Collegeville, MN 56321 and other mailing offices. The annual standard subscription rate is \$46.95; single copy price is \$5.95. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 507.1.5.2): NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address changes to *Give Us This Day*, PO Box 417, Congers, NY 10920-9984.

© 2024 by the Order of Saint Benedict, Collegeville, Minnesota.

Printed in the United States of America.

Give Us **ThisDay**®

DAILY PRAYER FOR TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Beautiful. Simple. Life-giving.



PRINT

**Standard and large
print editions**

Parish or group subscriptions
available with **special pricing!**

**FREE APP
access** with
an individual
paid print
subscription

DIGITAL

**Online,
Android, iOS,
and Kindle**

GUTD.net—24 hours a day
888.259.8470

(8:00 am–6:00 pm, Monday–Friday CST)  

Share HOPE



*“I was in prison and
you visited me.”* Matt 25:36

Learn more and donate at

Share the blessing of

Give Us ThisDay®

With your support, we put *Give Us This Day* in the hands of thousands of prisoners each month.

We can't do it without you. Your generosity provides FREE subscriptions to prisoners.



Bring comfort
through the Gospel



Offer hope through
daily reflections



Connect lives
through daily prayer

GUTD.net/prison

AL PRINCIPIO
EXISTIA LA
PALABRA Y
LA PALABRA
ESTABA JUNTO
A DIOS Y LA
PALABRA
ERA DIOS.

Canticle of Mary (Magnificat)

Luke 1:46-55

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him
in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm,
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,
and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel
for he has remembered his promise of mercy,
the promise he made to our fathers,
to Abraham and his children for ever.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now,
and will be for ever. Amen.



giveusthisday.org

888.259.8470

Front cover: *Annunciation* (detail) by Natalya Rusetska

Back cover: *Holy Family* by James B. Janknegt

Liturgical Press  litpress.org