

Sunday Readings

21st December 2025

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, one God, for ever and ever.

FIRST READING

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 7:10-14

In those days: The LORD spoke to Ahaz: 'Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.' But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.' And Isaiah said, 'Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.'

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 23:1-6. R/. cf. vv. 7. 10

R/. Let the Lord enter! He is the king of glory.

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,
the world and all its peoples.
It is he who set it on the seas;
on the waters he made it firm. **R/.**

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The man with clean hands and pure heart,
who desires not worthless things. **R/.**

He shall receive blessings from the Lord
and reward from the God who saves him.
Such are the men who seek him,
seek the face of the God of Jacob. **R/.**



SECOND READING

A reading from the letter of St Paul
to the Romans

1:1-7

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an Apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Mt 1:23

Alleluia, alleluia!
The virgin shall conceive and give bear a son
and they shall call him Emmanuel,
a name which means 'God-with-us'.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 1:18-24

The Lord be with you.
And with your Spirit.
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel' — which means, God with us.

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Lectionary Year A

The Word of God

Advent Reflections

What is described in today's passage of the Gospel, it hardly needs saying, was a most extraordinary experience for Joseph. As a devout Jew, he had lived his life until then in the expectation of the coming of the Messiah, as all of his people did. How could he have possibly imagined, though, that he would play a central role in his appearance! His life – and that of his future wife – would be changed forever from this day forward. Yet, at the same time, the change probably went completely unnoticed by those around them. Joseph continued to be a carpenter, working day after day to support his family, and Mary kept her home in the simplicity and relative anonymity that characterized other Jewish wives and mothers of her time.

The breaking of God into the everyday routine of this simple Jewish couple's life was both extraordinary and down-to-earth: extraordinary in its impact on their lives and on all of history; modest – even casual – however, in its outward expression. As was probably the case first for Mary and later Joseph, for Elizabeth and Zechariah and all those who have important roles to play in the story of the Saviour's coming – the extraordinary did not always seem extraordinary outwardly. I think that matches the human experience of many of us.

Where we expect to find God in our lives is important therefore. If we wait for astonishing signs of his presence, we may miss a lot. If, however, we are attentive to what is going on inside, in the experience, we will have the opportunity to meet God over and over again in life. That's why Jesus can say, 'what you did to the least, you did to me;' and 'this bread is my body, this wine is really me.' The manner is ordinary, but the experience is exceptional. When we look for God in life, let us look in the right places. He tells us he is with us always. We touch him every day. But we must see with the eye of the heart which alone can recognize in simple things, that which is truly divine.

Memory Awakens Hope
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger,
Seek That Which Is Above, 1986

"Advent is concerned with that very connection between memory and hope which is so necessary to man. Advent's intention is to awaken the most profound and basic emotional memory within us, namely, the memory of the God who became a child. This is a healing memory; it brings hope. The purpose of the Church's year is continually to rehearse her great history of memories, to awaken the heart's memory so that it can discern the star of hope...."

It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope."

Last Days of Advent
St. Pope John Paul II, Dec. 18, 2002

Pope John Paul II in his address on Dec. 18, 2002 said, "The liturgy of Advent...helps us to understand fully the value and meaning of the mystery of Christmas. It is not just about commemorating the historical event, which occurred some 2,000 years ago in a little village of Judea. Instead, it is necessary to understand that the whole of our life must be an 'advent,' a vigilant awaiting of the final coming of Christ. To predispose our mind to welcome the Lord who, as we say in the Creed, one day will come to judge the living and the dead, we must learn to recognize him as present in the events of daily life. Therefore, Advent is, so to speak, an intense training that directs us decisively toward him who already came, who will come, and who comes into our lives continuously."

Prayer of the Week

A Prayer in Preparation for Christmas

Lord God, may we, your people,
who look forward to the birthday of Christ
experience the joy of salvation
and celebrate that feast
with love and thanksgiving.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

