

4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT



A Body Prepared

Saving God,
you shepherd your flock
and give new life.
Preparing to welcome the king of all nations,
we call upon your name.
Let us see your face,

guide us to serenity so we can discern
your will.
Grant us the courage to respond to you.
Come to save us!
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 22, 2024

Leaping for Joy



Today's readings: Micah 5:1–4a; Psalm 80:2–3, 15–16, 18–19; Hebrews 10:5–10; Luke 1:39–45. Just before today's Gospel, the angel Gabriel tells Mary that she will "bear a son" (Luke 1:31). As confirmation of the pregnancy, Gabriel says that Elizabeth, is also pregnant. Since Elizabeth is past childbearing age, Gabriel implies that if Elizabeth is pregnant, Mary can be as well: "for nothing will be impossible for God" (1:37). Finally, when Elizabeth greets Mary, we hear that she is blessed because she "believed that what was spoken . . . by the Lord would be fulfilled."

This fulfillment is proclaimed in the first reading as Micah shares his prophecy of salvation: "From you shall

come forth for me / one who is to be ruler in Israel / . . . / his greatness / shall reach to the ends of the earth; / he shall be peace." The Letter to the Hebrews tells of Jesus' sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins, for as is sung in the refrain of the responsorial psalm, "we shall be saved."

Knowing this, Elizabeth exclaims, "the infant in my womb leaped for joy" the moment she heard Mary's greeting. Overcome by the Holy Spirit, mother and son anticipated the coming of the Lord. As we enter the final week of Advent, how can you ready yourself so that you, too, can leap for joy when the Lord approaches?



Illustration: the Advent O Antiphons (O Come, O Come Emmanuel)

This Week at Home

Monday, December 23

O Emmanuel

Today's "O" antiphon is "O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: come to save us, Lord our God!" With the end of Advent near, pray with the song "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" Ask God to help you see that the Lord is coming to save us. Consider how you, like Zechariah, might speak blessing God. *Today's readings: Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Psalm 25:4-10 and 14; Luke 1:57-66.*

Tuesday, December 24

Sing the goodness of the Lord

Today we hear the Cantic of Zechariah in the gospel. Like the Cantic of Mary, this biblical hymn proclaims the greatness of the Lord. Zechariah's praise of God speaks of the Lord's mercy, guidance, and salvation. Apart from the inevitable chaos of preparing for tonight's and tomorrow's celebrations, write a cantic of praise. And remember to "worship him without fear!" *Today's readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-16; Psalm 89:2-3, 5, 27 and 29; Luke 1:67-79.*



Wednesday, December 25

The Nativity of the Lord

Alleluia! "A light has shone," today a Savior is born for us! Amid the darkness and constant pull of worldly desires, rest in abundant joy knowing that the "Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace" reigns and sustains, "both now and forever." Resolve to proclaim this good news during the Christmas season (forthcoming). How can you "announce his salvation" and tell of "God's wondrous deeds"? Consider sending mail to family and friends, baking Christmas cookies for someone who is homebound, or serving at a shelter. *Today's readings: Christmas eve: Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20 Christmas day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:1-14*

Thursday, December 26

Stephen, deacon and martyr

The Church celebrates the witness of Stephen, it's first martyr, who was chosen by the community of disciples to share Jesus' teachings. Stephen was stoned for "working great wonders and signs among the people." Read the account of his witness and martyrdom in Acts 6—7:60. Pray for the courage to model yourself after his example of discipleship. *Today's readings: Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59; Psalm 31:3-8, 16-17; 2 Chronicles 24:17-22; Matthew 10:17-22, 23:34-39.*

Friday, December 27

John, apostle and evangelist

Today we celebrate the witness of John, beloved apostle and evangelist (gospel writer). From his life and writings, we hear that the faithful are to share the Good News, or to evangelize "so that you too may have fellowship... with the Father and with his Son." The work of evangelization is done in community: in today's gospel, Mary Magdalene and two disciples share the news of the resurrection of the Lord. With whom do you share the call to evangelize? Say a prayer for that person and consider reaching out in gratitude for the partnership. *Today's readings: Genesis 1:1-5, 26-31; 1 John 1:1-2:2; Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; John 20:1-8, 21:20-25.*

Saturday, December 28

The Holy Innocents, martyrs

Just as the angel told Joseph in the dream, King Herod searched for Jesus "to destroy him." Mary and Joseph take Jesus and flee, seeking refuge and safety. Today, on the commemoration the Holy Innocents, we honor the first martyrs: the children massacred in Bethlehem by King Herod as he searched for baby Jesus. If there is a pantry or community center near you, donate baby supplies, such as diapers or baby food. Say a prayer for those who are persecuted, for the stranger in your midst, for refugees, migrants, and displaced persons seeking safety. *Today's readings: Jeremiah 31:15-17; 1 John 1:5-2:2; Psalm 124; 1 Peter 4:12-19; Matthew 2:13-18.*