

## 26th December - Feast of Stephen the First Martyr

*Acts 6,8-10. 7,54-59; Mt 10,17-22*

*“From the Crib to the Cross — Witness of Faith and Forgiveness”*

### INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a Christian nurse in the Middle East was asked by her supervisor to remove the small cross she wore around her neck. “It might offend someone,” he said. She smiled and replied, “It’s not meant to offend—it reminds me whom I serve.” That simple act cost her an easy job—but she kept her cross on.

Today, as we gather the day after Christmas, the Church asks us to remember another servant who bore his cross with courage—St. Stephen, the first to die for Christ. From Bethlehem to martyrdom, the message is one: the love that was born in a manger is a love strong enough to forgive even one’s enemies.

Let us celebrate this Eucharist with gratitude for Stephen’s witness, praying that the same Spirit may give us strength to live our faith boldly and lovingly.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you came as light into our darkness, yet we often hide our faith — **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you forgave your enemies and prayed for your persecutors — **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you call us to witness to your truth even when it costs us — **Lord, have mercy.**

### PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the God of mercy, who forgave Stephen’s executioners through the prayer of his servant, forgive us our sins, fill us with the courage of faith, and lead us to everlasting life.

Amen.

### INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

Yesterday the angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest,” and today the Church takes up their song once more—not beside the manger, but beside the witness of Stephen. For the same Child who was wrapped in swaddling clothes now clothes His servant with the glory of heaven. With hearts full of gratitude for the love that came down at Christmas and the faith that stood firm in Stephen, let us join the angels and saints as we sing:

***Glory to God in the highest!***

## COLLECT

God of strength and mercy, you crowned your servant Stephen with the glory of your risen Son.

Grant that, filled with your Holy Spirit, we may bear faithful witness to Christ in word and deed, forgiving where we are wronged, loving where we are opposed, and living in the hope of your open heaven.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. Amen.

## HOMILY

A few years ago, a young Christian nurse in a Middle Eastern hospital was told to remove the small cross she wore around her neck.

“It might offend someone,” her supervisor said.

She smiled gently and replied,

*“It’s not meant to offend—it reminds me whom I serve.”*

That night, she was transferred to a harder ward—but she kept her cross on. Quietly, with courage and grace, she bore witness to Christ.

Today, on the day after Christmas, we celebrate someone who did the same—**St. Stephen**, the first to give his life for

Christ. It might seem strange that the Church moves from the manger to martyrdom so quickly. Yesterday, we saw the tenderness of Bethlehem; today, we hear of stones and blood. But the Church places Stephen here to remind us that the child in the manger and the man on the cross are one and the same. Without the cross and resurrection, Christmas would be only a sweet story soon forgotten.

Stephen was among the first deacons—faithful, wise, and *“full of grace and power.”* He cared for widows and the poor, and he spoke with such truth that his words pierced hardened hearts. Like Jesus, he was falsely accused, dragged before the council, and condemned. And like Jesus, he forgave his enemies: *“Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”*

Stephen teaches us that the joy of Christmas is not fragile sentimentality; it is the joy of knowing that God’s love is stronger than hatred, stronger than death. The Christ Child was born into a world that would one day crucify Him—and yet He came anyway. The light that shone over Bethlehem would one day shine over Calvary.

Some years ago, a missionary priest working in a remote African village was attacked during a time of civil unrest. His

small chapel was burned, his house looted. When the violence ended, he returned and began rebuilding—not first the house, but the chapel.

A local villager asked, *“Why start with the chapel when you have no roof to sleep under?”*

He smiled and said, *“Because the people must see that faith stands even when everything else falls.”*

That is the spirit of Stephen: the faith that rebuilds, forgives, and stands firm when the world crumbles around it.

In our world, no one may stone us for our faith, but we can be struck by the stones of indifference, mockery, or rejection.

A classmate’s sneer, a colleague’s sarcasm, a society’s coldness—these can wound deeply. Yet in these small trials, we are invited to stand beside Stephen and bear gentle, courageous witness to Christ.

Stephen saw heaven opened and Jesus standing at the right hand of God—not seated, but standing—as if to receive His faithful servant. That same Lord stands ready to strengthen us by His Spirit whenever we feel alone or afraid to confess Him.

A persecuted Christian once wrote:

*“We do not ask for an easier life, only for stronger hearts.”*

That is the spirit of Stephen.

A young boy once asked his grandmother, “Why did Jesus let Stephen be stoned if He loved him so much?”

The grandmother thought for a while and then said, *“Because sometimes love doesn’t rescue us from suffering—it walks with us through it. And when Stephen looked up, he saw that Jesus wasn’t sitting far away in heaven. He was standing—waiting to welcome him home.”*

That is Christmas carried to its fullness—the God who comes down to be with us, stands beside us in suffering, and lifts us into glory. Amen.

## INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Sisters and brothers, as we bring bread and wine to the altar, let us bring also our courage, our compassion, and our quiet acts of faith—gifts that God alone can see, but that transform the world. Pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God, the Father almighty:

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

Lord of all holiness, receive these gifts of bread and wine,  
and with them our promise to bear your name with courage.  
As this offering becomes the Body and Blood of your Son,  
may we become a living sacrifice of love and mercy,  
after the example of your servant Stephen,  
who saw your glory and prayed for his persecutors.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
holy Father, almighty and eternal God.  
For today we honour Saint Stephen,  
who first bore witness to your Son's victory over death.  
In the face of hatred, he spoke words of forgiveness;  
in the hour of death, he saw the dawn of glory.  
By his courage, the infant Church was strengthened;  
by his prayer, the persecutor Saul was transformed.  
And so, united with the choirs of angels,  
and with all who stand firm in faith,  
we proclaim your glory as we sing:

***Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...***

## EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER II

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,  
the fount of all holiness.

*Lord, as we bring these gifts to your altar, we recall the witness of your servant Stephen, who, like your Son, bore the cross with courage and forgave his enemies. May this same Spirit strengthen us to live our faith boldly, to forgive as we have been forgiven, and to bear witness to the love born in Bethlehem that leads all the way to Calvary.*

**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.**

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.

*As we celebrate the memorial of his Death and  
Resurrection, we remember that faith often calls us to stand  
in the face of rejection and suffering, as Stephen did. May  
partaking of this Bread of life and Chalice of salvation  
inspire us to forgive, to endure trials with courage, and to  
witness boldly to the love of Christ, who came down from*

*the manger to stand beside us in every hardship.*

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,  
all the clergy, and all who serve your people.  
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...Amen.**

## INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At the Savior's command and formed by the courage of the saints, we dare to say:

### EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil—  
from fear that silences truth,  
and from bitterness that poisons love.

Protect us from the violence of hatred  
and from the weariness that dulls our hope.

Grant peace to our hearts and courage to your Church,  
that, like Stephen, we may speak with wisdom and forgive  
with mercy,  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

### PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you 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,  
which you have built upon the witness of martyrs and  
saints.

Grant her that peace which comes from truth,  
that courage which flows from love,

and that unity which reflects your Spirit.

Turn our hearts from vengeance to mercy,  
our fears into trust,  
and our divisions into the harmony of your kingdom.  
You who live and reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,  
who once lay in the manger and now reigns in glory.  
Blessed are we who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

## SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Lord Jesus,  
you fed Stephen with courage,  
and filled him with mercy even for his enemies.

May this Eucharist strengthen us  
to live with open eyes and forgiving hearts,  
and to recognize your glory even in the stones of life.

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord our God,  
we have shared in the mystery of your Son,  
who gives life through death and victory through love.  
May the example of Saint Stephen inspire us  
to witness with compassion and courage,  
until the heavens open for us  
and we see your glory face to face.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## BLESSING

May God, who called Stephen to be the first witness of His  
Son, strengthen you in faith and protect you in every trial.  
Amen.

May Christ, who stood at the right hand of the Father,  
stand beside you in every moment of difficulty. Amen.

May the Holy Spirit, who filled Stephen with love and  
forgiveness, fill your hearts with peace and joy this  
Christmas season. Amen.

**And may almighty God bless you,  
the Father, the Son,  and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace,  
to bear witness to Christ with courage and compassion.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“The joy of Christmas is not fragile—it is forged in the fire of  
love.  
Like Stephen, keep your eyes on heaven and your heart on  
forgiveness.”

## FEAST OF SAINT JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

27 December 2025 - 1 John 1:1-4; John 20:2-8

*"He saw and believed — Love gives sight to faith."*

### INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, an artist was asked to paint a portrait of faith. He thought long and hard — should he paint someone praying, or someone preaching? Finally, he painted an old woman holding a candle in the darkness. Her eyes were closed, but her face glowed in the light. Beneath it, he wrote: *"Faith is not about seeing; it is about light within."* Today we celebrate Saint John, the apostle who saw with the light of love. At the empty tomb, when others doubted, he *saw and believed*. John teaches us that true vision comes not from open eyes, but from an open heart.

Let us pray that, like him, we may see the Risen Lord in our world — even when life feels dark.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, your light shines even in the night of unbelief:  
Lord, have mercy.

You call us to see your presence in what seems empty:  
Christ, have mercy.

You open our hearts to love, that we may see and believe:  
Lord, have mercy.

### PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God, who enlightens every heart that seeks Him, forgive us our sins, renew our faith, and lead us to walk in the light of His truth and to everlasting life. Amen.

### INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

**Option 1 -** Today, as the joy of Christmas still fills our hearts and we remember the Apostle who saw and believed, let us join the angels' song that first echoed over Bethlehem, giving glory to God who became flesh for our salvation. **Together we sing: Gloria in excelsis Deo!**

### Option 2 – Johannine Theme: The Word Made Flesh

Through Saint John, we have come to know  
that the eternal Word has become visible among us.  
In gratitude and wonder,  
let us lift our voices with the Church on earth and heaven,  
and give glory to God whose love has been made flesh.

**Glory to God in the highest!**

## COLLECT

God of eternal light,  
through the Apostle John  
you revealed to us the mystery of your Word made flesh.  
Fill our hearts with love, that seeing with the eyes of faith,  
we may proclaim with joy what we have heard, seen, and  
touched — the life that was made visible in your Son, Jesus  
Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy  
Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

## HOMILY

A little boy once asked his grandmother, “How do you know God is real if you can’t see Him?” She smiled and said, “Can you see the wind?”

“No,” he said.

“But can you feel it when it touches your face?”

“Yes.”

“Then,” she said, “faith is like the wind — unseen, but felt when love touches the heart.”

Saint John, whose feast we celebrate today, was the disciple who *felt* the love of Jesus most deeply. He rested on Jesus’ heart at the Last Supper. He stood by the Cross

when others ran away. And on that Easter morning, when he saw the empty tomb, he didn’t just see — he *believed*. John reminds us that faith is not a theory but a relationship — it is the heart’s response to the love of God. He teaches us that truth is not grasped with the mind alone but received in love. That is why his Gospel begins not with shepherds or a manger but with a thunderous mystery:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

For John, every sunrise, every breath, every act of kindness is a word spoken by God. The world, he says, is the echo of that Word. That is why he calls Jesus “the Word made flesh.” He is God’s message written in human life — visible, touchable, lovable.

And at the tomb, John becomes our model disciple: while Peter hesitated, John “saw and believed.” Why? Because love gives sight. Only love recognizes love.

When we love like John, we too can see what others miss:

- Light in the middle of darkness,
- Hope in the middle of grief,
- Christ in the middle of ordinary life.

## Ending story:

It is said that in his old age, Saint John could no longer preach long sermons. Every Sunday, he would simply repeat, *“Little children, love one another.”* When asked why he said the same thing every week, he replied, “Because if you do that, everything else will follow.”

Today, as we stand at the tomb of faith and the cradle of Christmas, may we, too, be disciples whom Jesus loves — who *see and believe*, because we *love*.

## INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we bring these gifts of bread and wine, let us bring also our longing to see with the eyes of faith and our desire to love as Saint John loved the Lord and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

## PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Lord, accept these gifts of your people,  
who come in faith and love like the beloved disciple.

May the mystery we celebrate at this altar  
open our eyes to your hidden presence  
and unite us more closely with your Word made flesh,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## PREFACE - “The Word Who Makes Us See”

It is truly right and just, our duty and our joy, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

Through Saint John, your Apostle and Evangelist, you opened for us the depths of your divine mystery: that the eternal Word, born in time, has made the invisible God visible, the untouchable God tangible, and the distant God near to our hearts. Through his witness, we have come to see with believing eyes and to love with your own love.

And so, with angels and archangels, and with all the saints who behold your glory, we praise you and acclaim:

***Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...***

## EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,  
the fount of all holiness.

*Today, as we celebrate Saint John, the beloved disciple who “saw and believed,” we are reminded that love opens the eyes of faith. May this same love inspire us to recognize your presence in our midst, to see not with our eyes alone but with hearts touched by your Spirit.*

**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.**

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.

*As we recall Saint John at the empty tomb, who “saw and believed,” let us too see your love in the midst of our lives. May our hearts be enlightened by the same faith and charity that guided him, so that in partaking of this mystery, we may recognize Christ in every moment and every*

*brother and sister we encounter.*

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,  
all the clergy, and all who serve your people.

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...Amen.**

## INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

As beloved disciples of the Word made flesh, and with faith  
that sees beyond what eyes behold, we dare to say:

### EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from all blindness of heart,  
that we may see your light even in our darkness,  
and, with the eyes of Saint John,  
believe in the victory of love over death,  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your Apostles:

*“Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.”*

Look not on our sins but on the faith that believes even in  
emptiness. Grant your Church the peace that comes from  
love, that we may see your presence in every person we  
meet. You who live and reign forever and ever.

Amen.

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,  
the Word made flesh who gives Himself to us in love.  
Blessed are those who see and believe,  
who are called to the supper of the Lamb.

## SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

*Soft music or silence.*

Let us rest for a moment as John rested on Jesus' heart.  
In this stillness, let the Word become flesh within us —  
that we may carry His light into the world.

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord God,  
you have fed us with the life made visible in your Son.  
Grant that, enlightened by the Apostle John's faith,  
we may go forth to see your presence  
in every moment of our lives  
and to make known to others the joy we have received.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## BLESSING

May the God of light,  
who revealed His love through the Word made flesh,  
fill your minds with truth and your hearts with peace.  
Amen.

May you, like Saint John,  
see and believe the presence of Christ in all things.  
Amen.

**And may Almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son ☧ and the Holy Spirit.**  
Amen.

## DISMISSAL

Go forth, beloved disciples,  
to make visible the Word you have received.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

*"To see and believe, we must love — for only the heart that loves can recognize the Lord."*

## Feast of the Holy Family – Year A – 2025

Sirach 3:2–6, 12–14; Col 3:12–21; Mt 2:13–15, 19–23

### *From Ideal to Reality — God Dwells Where Love Lives*

#### INTRODUCTION

A father once told me, “When my children were small, I thought I had to make our family perfect.

Now that they’re grown, I’ve realized God never asked for perfection—only presence.”

He had discovered what the Holy Family teaches us: that holiness grows not in flawless homes but in faithful hearts.

Today, in the midst of the Christmas week, we celebrate that **God chose to dwell in an ordinary family**—a home where there was laughter and work, travel and fear, misunderstanding and love.

Jesus learned to walk, speak, pray, and trust under the roof of Mary and Joseph.

Let us ask that our homes too may become Nazareth: simple, loving places where God feels at home.

#### PENITENTIAL ACT

Brothers and sisters, the Lord who was born among us knows our weakness and our weariness. Let us ask him to heal what divides and forgive what wounds love.

**Lord Jesus**, you were born into a family that faced both poverty and joy: – Lord, have mercy.

**Christ Jesus**, you lived among us, sharing the joys and trials of human love: – Christ, have mercy.

**Lord Jesus**, you call our homes to become places of forgiveness and peace: – Lord, have mercy.

#### PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the God who chose to dwell in human hearts forgive us our sins, renew in us the gift of family love, and lead us together to everlasting life. **Amen.**

#### INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

Brothers and sisters,  
on this feast of the Holy Family,  
we give thanks to God who chose to dwell in our human homes. With the angels who sang in Bethlehem,  
let us now join in their hymn of praise and joy:

**Glory to God in the highest...**

#### COLLECT

God of love and nearness,  
you sent your Son to grow within a human family  
and to learn the warmth of affection, the ache of  
misunderstanding, and the beauty of belonging.

Bless our homes with the same presence of your Spirit.  
Teach us to honour one another,  
to forgive quickly, to listen with patience,  
and to build communities where every heart finds a place.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **HOMILY: “From Ideal to Reality: God Dwells Where Love Lives”**

When we hear the words “*Feast of the Holy Family*,” what picture comes to mind?

Perhaps the familiar image from holy cards and altar paintings: a gentle Mary sewing by the window, Joseph planning wood in the workshop, and the child Jesus helping with a serene smile—everything bathed in golden light. It’s a beautiful image. But the closer you look, the more the paint begins to flake away.

Because real family life—ours and even that of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph—is not an idealized painting. It’s real, messy, beautiful, painful, and full of surprises.

When the Church established this feast just over a century ago, it wasn’t meant to romanticize one perfect family.

Rather, it wanted to remind us that God became part of an

ordinary family so that every human family, in all its complexity, could find hope.

#### **1. The Holy Family Was Not an Ideal Family**

Think for a moment of what that first “holy family” actually experienced.

A young woman—pregnant before marriage.

A man—struggling to understand and to believe a dream.

A child—born in a stable because no one would take them in.

A refugee family—fleeing for their lives into Egypt.

Later, a boy—lost for three days in Jerusalem, and parents frantically searching.

A son—misunderstood, even by his family.

A mother—standing beneath a cross.

That’s not a sugary picture; that’s life. That’s *our* life.

And that’s exactly why this feast matters.

An old man once told me: “Father, our family’s not perfect—but when we eat together, laugh a little, and forgive by bedtime, that’s miracle enough.”

That’s the holiness God sees. Family life isn’t about perfection—it’s about love that keeps trying.

## 2. Family: Many Faces, One Love

Today, “family” has many faces. There are traditional families, blended families, single parents, foster homes, and those who live as communities of faith. There are families marked by divorce or loss, by distance or difference.

But wherever there is *faithful love, forgiveness, and belonging*, there is family—and God is present.

A few years ago, the Caritas association in Germany published a photo series on “unexpected families.”

One picture showed a wealthy couple and their only child, yet the child looked lonely.

Another, a mother pushing her elderly mother’s wheelchair.

Another, a group of punks cradling a baby in bright pink blankets.

At first glance, people were shocked. But the message was clear: *where love and responsibility meet, there is family.*

The Holy Family was no different. They faced tension, poverty, displacement, misunderstanding—but God dwelt in their midst. Their holiness came not from perfection, but from presence.

## 3. Dream and Reality – Joseph’s Courage

And then there is Joseph—dreamer and doer.

Four times, Matthew tells us, he heard God’s guidance in dreams. “Do not be afraid to take Mary.” “Flee to Egypt.” “Return to Israel.” “Settle in Nazareth.”

Each time, Joseph woke and *did* what God asked.

Sometimes faith means waking up and doing the hard thing.

A father I once knew had lost his job but refused to give up. Every morning, he rose early, packed his kids’ lunches, and said, “One day God will open another door.” Years later he told me, “Father, that was my Nazareth. I learned to trust the quiet work of God.”

Joseph reminds us that faith isn’t about escaping reality—it’s about finding God’s voice within it.

## 4. Consecrating Our Families to God

In today’s Gospel, Mary and Joseph bring the child Jesus to the Temple to consecrate him to the Lord. They do not keep him for themselves; they acknowledge that he belongs first to God.

That is what makes any family holy.

Parents who entrust their children to God, who raise them

not to possess them but to guide them—these parents follow the example of Mary and Joseph.

Every child is first of all God's child. Every home is meant to be a place where that divine gift is cherished and protected. Like Simeon, we too “wait for the salvation of the Lord.” Like Anna, we are called to “speak to all about this child.” Our mission as Christian families is to make Christ visible—not just in our words, but in the daily gestures of patience, forgiveness, and compassion.

### **5. A Letter from Saint Paul—If He Wrote Today**

If Saint Paul could write us a new letter for this feast, perhaps it would sound something like this:

“Partners, submit to one another out of love;  
Parents, do not exasperate your children, but encourage them;

Children, respect your parents, and don't take their care for granted.

Above all, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

Forgive one another as the Lord has forgiven you.  
And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.”

These are not outdated commands; they are a living invitation—to mutual respect, shared sacrifice, and forgiveness that keeps families whole.

### **6. The Hidden Years – Where Holiness Grows**

Most of Jesus' life was spent not in miracles or public ministry, but in the quiet years of Nazareth—learning, growing, helping, loving.

The “hidden years” remind us that holiness is born in the ordinary: in washing dishes, in bedtime prayers, in working late for the sake of others, in forgiving before sleep.

A mother once told me, “Father, I never preach, I never travel, I never do great things—but every day I make breakfast and pray for my kids. Is that enough?”

I smiled and said, “That's Nazareth. And Nazareth is where God delights to live.”

### **7. Jesus at Our Side**

Perhaps your family life feels fragile, or your home is marked by distance, tension, or grief.

Remember: Jesus stands beside you. The child who fled into Egypt, who worked in Nazareth, who wept in Jerusalem—he knows the full range of human family life.

And he whispers the same promise he gave to Joseph and Mary: *“I am with you.”*

When human love falters, divine love sustains.

When families break, God still gathers us into his larger family—the Church—where we are called to support and strengthen one another.

### Conclusion: Becoming a Blessing

The Feast of the Holy Family is not about nostalgia for something that never really existed.

It is about *becoming a blessing to one another*—in whatever form our families take.

It is about letting the spirit of Christmas—God made flesh in love—transform the way we live together.

Maybe tonight, as a small gesture, make the sign of the cross on one another’s hands and say:

“May Christ dwell in our home. May love guide our hearts. May peace reign among us.”

Because holiness begins not in perfection, but in presence. Not in the ideal, but in the real.

And in every real, loving family—however imperfect—God makes his home.

**Amen.**

### INVITATION TO THE CREED

In Mary and Joseph, faith became a living home for the Word made flesh.

Let us now profess that same faith—the faith that unites our families, the faith in which Christ dwells among us:

***I believe in one God...***

### INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Dear friends, as Mary and Joseph once placed their child in God’s arms, let us now place our gifts—and our families—upon this altar, that the Lord may bless, heal, and unite us in love. Let us pray that our prayers may be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

### OFFERTORY PRAYER

Loving Father,  
receive these gifts of bread and wine,  
and with them the hidden offerings of our hearts—the struggles we bear, the hopes we nurture, the love we wish to deepen.

Transform our giving into your grace,  
and make this meal a sign of the unity you desire for every family on earth. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## PREFACE

It is truly right and good to thank you,  
God of life and tenderness.

In your wisdom, you chose that your Son should grow  
among us,  
learning in the home of Mary and Joseph  
how to work, to trust, and to pray.

In that household of Nazareth,  
you sanctified the daily rhythm of human love—  
work and rest, silence and song, giving and receiving.

Through Jesus, you taught us that holiness begins  
where hearts are faithful and love endures.

And so, with the angels who rejoice at his birth  
and with every family that seeks your peace,  
we join in the hymn of your glory:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...**

## EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,  
the fount of all holiness.

*As we prepare to share in this sacred mystery, we recall  
how Jesus grew within the loving presence of Mary and  
Joseph, learning obedience, patience, and compassion.*

*May this same Spirit of faithful love dwell in our families,  
that our homes, like Nazareth, may be places where God is  
made real in daily care, forgiveness, and shared life.*

**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.

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.

*As we receive Christ, may we be reminded of the hidden years in Nazareth, where holiness was born in the simple acts of family life. May our love, patience, and forgiveness at home be signs of your presence in the world, and may our families grow as living temples of your love, bearing witness to your grace in everyday life.*

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, all the clergy, and all who serve your people. 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...Amen.**

### INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

At Nazareth, Jesus learned from Mary and Joseph to pray. Now, as one family in Christ, let us join our voices in the prayer he himself has taught us:

## EMBOLISM

Lord Jesus Christ,  
born into the peace of Bethlehem,  
you know how fragile our peace can be.  
Deliver us, Lord, from every evil—  
from the resentments that divide our homes  
and the fears that trouble our hearts.  
Renew the gift of forgiveness within us,  
and teach us to begin again with patient love.  
As we await the joy of your coming,  
grant us the courage to build your kingdom of peace and  
love,  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

## PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles,  
*“Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.”*  
Look not on our sins but on our love—  
our longing to live as your family.  
Grant peace to our homes, healing to our wounds,

and reconciliation where words have failed.

You who live and love forever and ever. **Amen.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

This is the Lamb of God,  
who was born into our human family  
so that we might belong forever to God's.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

## SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Lord Jesus, you grew within a family that knew both joy and  
struggle. Stay now within our homes.  
Bless our conversations, our silences, our laughter, and our  
tears. Where love is weak, strengthen it;  
where hearts are closed, open them;  
where memories hurt, heal them.  
May our families become small Nazareths—  
places where God is at home.

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

God of tenderness and strength,  
you have nourished us with the Bread of Life,  
the food of your household.  
Grant that we who have shared this meal  
may also share one another's burdens,

rejoice in one another's gifts,  
and grow together into the likeness of your Son,  
who lives and reigns forever and ever. **Amen.**

### TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

"Holiness doesn't mean a perfect family—it means a present God.  
Wherever love forgives and begins again, there Nazareth lives."

### BLESSING

May the God who made the family the dwelling place of love bless and protect your homes. **Amen.**

May Christ, who was born into the household of Mary and Joseph, fill your hearts with patience, understanding, and joy. **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit, who unites all people in one communion, make you witnesses of peace in your families and in the world. **Amen.**

**And may almighty God bless you,  the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

### DISMISSAL

Go now and bring the warmth of Nazareth into your world.  
Let your homes shine with the light of Christ's love.  
Go in peace to live as God's family.

## 29.12.2025 – 5TH DAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

*1 John 2:3–11; Luke 2:22–35*

*“My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation”*

### INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, in a small mountain village, an old man was seen every evening carrying a lantern as he walked slowly down to the river. One winter night, a curious child followed him and asked,

“Grandfather, why do you take your lantern out every night when you can hardly see?”

The old man smiled: “My eyes grow dim, child, but I carry the light for those who come after me.”

In these final days of the year, we meet another old man who carried the light for generations—Simeon. His eyes, too, had grown dim, but his heart remained bright with hope. When he saw the Child Jesus, his waiting was fulfilled, and his life complete.

So as this year closes, let us bring before the Lord both our light and our darkness, our gratitude and our regret, and ask Him to fill us with the same peace that filled Simeon’s heart.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, Light of the world, you came to scatter the darkness of sin and fear. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, Word made flesh, you entered our fragile humanity with healing and hope. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace, you guide our steps into the way of reconciliation and love. **Lord, have mercy.**

### PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May Almighty God shine His light into our hearts, forgive us our sins, renew in us the joy of salvation, and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

### INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

#### **Option 1 – “Echo of the Angels”**

As the shepherds once heard the song of angels filling the night sky, we now lift our own voices to join in that same hymn of praise. The Word has become flesh, and God’s glory shines upon us.

Let us echo the angels of Bethlehem and proclaim together:  
**Glory to God in the highest...**

#### **Option 2 – “Gratitude at Year’s End”**

These days between Christmas and the New Year invite us to pause in gratitude—for light received, for love shown, for

faith renewed. Like Simeon, our hearts are full, for our eyes have seen God's salvation. Let us now give glory to the God who has done great things for us as we sing:

**Glory to God in the highest...**

**Option 3 – “The Song of the Heart”**

The Child of Bethlehem has opened heaven to earth, and the peace of God has touched our world.

Now our hearts cannot remain silent. With the Church throughout the world and with all who have seen His light, let us lift our voices in joy:

**Glory to God in the highest...**

**COLLECT**

God of eternal light,  
You have kindled in our world  
a flame that no darkness can extinguish.

As we stand between the ending of one year  
and the dawning of another, keep us steadfast in Your love,  
grateful for what has been, and hopeful for what lies ahead.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son, born for our  
salvation, who lives and reigns with You  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

**Amen.**

## **HOMILY**

### **“The Bucket List”**

Some years ago, a journalist asked a group of elderly residents in a nursing home:

“What’s left on your bucket list?”

One woman replied quietly, “I’ve already seen what I needed to see.”

“What’s that?” asked the reporter.

“My Savior,” she said. “I see Him every morning in prayer, and one day I’ll see Him face to face.”

Her words echo Simeon’s song today. After years of waiting, longing, and hoping, Simeon finally held the Child Jesus in his arms and whispered, “Now, Lord, you may let your servant go in peace.”

Simeon’s joy was not about seeing the end of life, but about seeing its fulfillment. For him, life’s greatest achievement was not wealth or fame, but seeing the salvation of God with his own eyes.

We, too, look for many things in life: success, stability, recognition. Yet, in the end, what matters most is whether we have seen Christ—whether His light has truly entered our hearts.

Saint John reminds us, “Whoever loves his brother or sister remains in the light.” The true proof of having seen Christ is not in our religious words, but in our daily love—our ability to forgive, to encourage, to lift up those around us.

As this year draws to a close, Simeon teaches us to look back with gratitude and forward with peace. Gratitude for the moments when God’s light shone through the cracks of our weakness, and peace in trusting that His promise still holds true for the days to come.

### **“The Candle and the Mirror”**

A teacher once placed a candle before his students and said, “This is Christ.” Then he held up a mirror and asked, “And what is this?”

They answered, “It’s us.”

The teacher nodded, “Then remember this: your task is not to be the light, but to reflect it.”

Simeon reflected the light he had seen. May we, too, carry that same light into the new year—into homes, workplaces, and hearts still waiting for warmth.

For those who walk in the light of love, the darkness will never overcome them.

**Amen.**

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Dear friends, as we bring bread and wine to the altar, let us also bring the moments of this year—its joys and sorrows, its light and shadows. May God receive them, bless them, and turn them into a new beginning of grace and may our sacrifice be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

### **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Lord of time and eternity,  
Receive these gifts of bread and wine  
and the offering of our grateful hearts.

Transform what we bring  
into signs of Your lasting light,  
that in this Eucharist  
we may find the peace of Simeon  
and the hope that never fades.

Through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

### **PREFACE – “*Christ, Light of the Passing Year*”**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our joy,  
always and everywhere to give You thanks,  
holy Father, eternal God.

In the Child of Bethlehem,  
You have revealed a light that no night can quench.  
Through Him, You have renewed our weary world  
and given meaning to every season of our lives.  
As the days of the year draw to their close,  
we lift our eyes to the One who never fades—  
Your Son, our Savior, who is our dawn and our peace.  
And so, with the angels and all creation,  
we sing the hymn of Your glory,  
as without end we acclaim:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...**

## EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,  
the fount of all holiness.

*As we prepare to share in this sacred mystery, we recall  
how Jesus grew within the loving presence of Mary and  
Joseph, learning obedience, patience, and compassion.*

*May this same Spirit of faithful love dwell in our families,  
that our homes, like Nazareth, may be places where God is  
made real in daily care, forgiveness, and shared life.*

**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.**

*As we recall the moment when Simeon held the Christ  
Child in his arms, we remember that in this Eucharist, we  
too are invited to see God's salvation made visible among*

*us. Just as Simeon's eyes were opened to the fulfillment of God's promise, may our hearts be enlightened now, so that in this sacred mystery, we recognize the presence of Christ who brings light, hope, and peace into our lives. May this sacrament strengthen our eyes to see Him in one another, and our hearts to reflect His love in our daily actions.*

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, all the clergy, and all who serve your people.

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.

*Lord, just as Simeon's heart was filled with peace and joy when he saw the Messiah, may we too be filled with the same light as we partake of His Body and Blood. Let us carry this vision of salvation into the days ahead, bringing the light of Christ to our homes, our workplaces, and to all those who wait in darkness. May our eyes truly see Your salvation, and may our lives become living reflections of Your promise fulfilled.*

**Through him, and with him, and in him...Amen.**

## INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered at the manger of mercy,  
and enlightened by the Child who taught us to call God  
Father," we dare to pray:

### EMBOLISM

Deliver us, Lord, from every shadow  
that dims the brightness of Your love.  
Grant peace in our days  
and courage to begin anew,  
that, sustained by Your mercy,  
we may await with joy  
the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

### PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,  
You came as a child to bring peace,  
You grew among us to show the path of love,  
and You reign forever as Prince of Peace.  
Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,  
and grant her peace and unity  
in accordance with Your will,  
who live and reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

## INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Light of the World—  
the Child who became our Bread,  
the Savior who fulfills our longing.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

### SHORT MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Simeon's arms once cradled the Child of God.  
Our hearts now cradle Him within.  
He has come to us again—quietly, completely.  
Let us go forth in His peace,  
bearing His light into the closing days of this year.

### POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Radiant Lord,  
You have fed us with the Bread of heaven  
and filled our hearts with Your light.  
As we step into the unknown days ahead,  
keep our eyes fixed on Your salvation,  
our hearts anchored in Your peace,  
and our lives open to Your will.  
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## BLESSING

May the God of Light,  
who dispelled the darkness of the world through the birth of  
His Son, fill your hearts with peace and joy. **Amen.**

May Christ, who shone in Simeon's eyes,  
shine upon your path and guide your steps. **Amen.**

May the Holy Spirit,  
who led the old man to the temple,  
lead you to see God's promise in every new day. **Amen.**  
And may Almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son  and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go now in peace—  
and may your eyes see the light that never fades.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Simeon waited a lifetime for one moment—and that  
moment made his life complete.

What are you waiting for?  
When you finally see Christ in your midst, may you too find  
peace enough to say:  
*Now, Lord, you may let your servant go in peace.*”

## December 30, 2014 – Sixth Day in Christmas Octave

1 John 2:12–17; Luke 2:36–40

*“Faithfulness that Bears Fruit — Anna’s Silent Song”*

### INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, an old piano sat in the corner of a church hall. Its paint was chipped, several keys were broken, and no one played it anymore. But one day, a young man sat down, pressed a few keys, and began to play a soft melody. As the music filled the hall, the people nearby stopped to listen — and they wept.

It wasn’t the piano that made the sound beautiful — it was the faithful hands that touched it.

In today’s Gospel, we meet Anna the Prophetess, an elderly woman whose faith had not faded with time. Her life was like that old piano — quiet, weathered, but still capable of divine music. Through years of prayer and fasting, her soul had become finely tuned to God’s melody. When she saw the Child Jesus, she recognized the song of salvation — and could not keep silent.

Let us, like Anna, bring before the Lord the music of our lives — the broken notes, the joyful tones, and the quiet silences — and allow Him to turn them into praise.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, You were born into our human weakness to make us strong in your love: **Lord, have mercy.**

You visited your Temple to meet those who waited for redemption: **Christ, have mercy.**

You dwell now among us, hidden but real, in word and sacrament: **Lord, have mercy.**

### PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May almighty God, whose mercy has no end, forgive our sins, heal the wounds of our hearts, and lead us from the fading desires of this world to the joy of everlasting life. **Amen.**

### INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

With Anna and Simeon, with angels and shepherds, let us lift our voices in praise to the God who has come to dwell among us: **Glory to God in the highest...**

### COLLECT

God of all time,  
you filled the waiting years of Anna and Simeon  
with faith that never grew weary.

Grant us the same perseverance in prayer and trust,  
that we may recognize your presence in the ordinary days

of our lives  
and proclaim your mercy with joy.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God forever and ever. **Amen.**

## **HOMILY**

There's a small church in Italy where a candle has been burning continuously for more than 400 years. No one remembers who first lit it — but every day, someone quietly refills the oil so that the flame never dies.

Anna was like that candle. Her prayer was steady, her faith constant, her light quietly shining in the temple for decades. While others came and went, she stayed — not out of duty, but out of love. And when the child Jesus was brought into the temple, her long vigil burst into joy. Her eyes, dimmed by age, saw the Light of the World.

### **Reflection**

Anna's story is not about a miracle or a great mission. It's about faithfulness — the simple, steady devotion that prepares the heart for God's arrival. She reminds us that prayer is not a waste of time; it is service. Every whispered rosary, every quiet hour before the tabernacle, every act of

forgiveness — these are the temple lamps that keep our faith alive.

John, in today's first reading, warns us not to be consumed by "the world and its desires." The things we chase — possessions, recognition, pleasure — all fade. But what lasts is the love that flows from communion with God. Anna found that love in the silence of prayer, and it transformed her into a prophetess — an evangelist who proclaimed Christ before any apostle did.

As we come to the end of another year, we are invited to be like Anna — to look back not with regret but with gratitude, to see how God has been quietly at work in our lives, shaping even our waiting into worship.

A teacher once asked her students: "If you had to paint faith, what colour would it be?"

Some said gold, others said white. But one little girl replied, "Faith is gray — like the dawn before the sunrise."

Faith often lives in the gray — in the waiting, in the not-yet, in the long years of Anna's prayer. But when the dawn finally comes, we see that every gray hour was filled with hidden light.

So let us remain faithful. For those who keep their lamps burning, the Child of Bethlehem always comes — quietly, surely, gloriously.

### INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As Anna once offered her life in fasting and prayer before the Lord, let us now offer the fruits of our labour and the prayers of our hearts, that they may become a song of thanksgiving to our God and that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Father almighty...

### PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Loving Father,  
accept these gifts of bread and wine,  
signs of our hope and work.  
Transform them, as you transformed Anna's long waiting,  
into a feast of joy and praise.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### PREFACE

It is truly right and just, our duty and our joy,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
holy Father, eternal God,  
through your beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

In the child of Bethlehem,  
you revealed the tenderness of your love;  
in the faith of Anna and Simeon,  
you showed how your promises never fail.  
Even in the passing of years and the silence of prayer,  
you were preparing the dawn of redemption.  
And so, with the angels and saints,  
we lift our hearts in endless praise,  
and sing the hymn of your glory:  
***Holy, Holy, Holy...***

### EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,  
the fount of all holiness.

*In this mystery, we recall Anna, the faithful prophetess, whose quiet devotion and years of prayer bore fruit in the recognition of your Son. May our own hearts, like hers, be attuned to your presence, so that even the ordinary days of our lives may become a song of praise and faithful witness to your coming.*

**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.**

*As we celebrate this memorial, we remember that  
faithfulness, even in quiet patience and hidden prayer,  
transforms our lives and bears witness to your glory. May  
the sacrifice of your Son, made present here, inspire us to*

*live faithfully, offering each day as a hymn of devotion and  
love, so that our lives, too, may proclaim the light of Christ  
as Anna did.*

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,  
all the clergy, and all who serve your people.

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...Amen.**

### **INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER**

In the same Spirit that moved Anna to praise and Simeon to rejoice, let us now pray to the Father who fulfills every promise:

### **EMBOLISM**

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil —

from the restlessness that forgets to wait,  
and from the desires that fade with time.

Grant us the peace that Anna found in prayer  
and the joy that comes from recognizing your Son,  
as we await the blessed hope  
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

### **PRAYER FOR PEACE**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you came into the temple as the Prince of Peace  
and filled the waiting hearts of Simeon and Anna with joy.  
Look not on our sins,  
but on the faith of your Church,  
and grant her the peace and unity of your kingdom,  
where you live and reign for ever and ever.

**Amen.**

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Behold the Lamb of God,  
the Child whom Anna praised in the Temple.  
Blessed are those invited to share his life and joy.

### **MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION**

Anna waited a lifetime to see the face of her Redeemer.  
Now she dwells forever in his presence.  
We too have seen the Lord —  
in this bread, in this chalice, in one another.  
Let us treasure this encounter  
and carry it back into the quiet hours of our daily lives.

## POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord God,  
you have fed us with the bread of gladness.  
May this holy food strengthen our faith,  
refresh our hope,  
and inspire us to speak of your goodness,  
as Anna once did in the Temple.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

## BLESSING

May the God of endless years bless you  
and make this closing of the year  
a new beginning in grace. **Amen.**  
May the Christ who was born in Bethlehem  
be born again in your hearts with peace and joy. **Amen.**  
May the Spirit who filled Anna with praise  
fill you with patience, prayer, and hope. **Amen.**  
**And may almighty God bless you,**  
**the Father, and the Son ✕ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## DISMISSAL

Go forth in peace,  
and like Anna, proclaim the good news of God's  
faithfulness.

## TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Faith does not grow old.  
The years that seem empty are often the ones in which God  
is at work — quietly shaping your heart for the moment  
when you will recognize Him.  
Keep waiting, keep praying, keep loving — the Child of  
Bethlehem always comes.

## DECEMBER 31 — 7th DAY OF CHRISTMAS OCTAVE

*1 John 2:18–21; John 1:1–18*

*“The Word Became Flesh: From Ending to Beginning”*

### INTRODUCTION

A traveller once sat by the sea on the last evening of the year, watching the waves break against the rocks. He said to himself, “Each wave comes and goes, but the sea remains.”

Tonight, as the year ends, we are like that traveller. We watch the waves of time—the joys and sorrows, successes and failures—rise and fall before us. Yet one thing remains constant: the eternal love of God, who entered time in Jesus Christ.

St. John reminds us, *“Children, it is the last hour.”* Yes, time flies, but Christ holds time in His hands. As we gather on this final evening of the year, let us thank Him for His light that never fades, and place our coming year into His care.

### PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, You are the Alpha and the Omega—our beginning and our end. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You are the Word who became flesh to dwell among us in grace and truth. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You are the Light that shines in our darkness and guides us into the new year. Lord, have mercy.

### PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION

May the God of all mercy forgive us our failings, calm our fears, and renew in us the hope of new beginnings, so that walking in the light of Christ, we may rejoice in His peace, now and forever. Amen.

### INVITATION TO THE GLORIA

Let us join the angels who sang over Bethlehem, giving glory to God for the wonders of this passing year and for the promise of His eternal love.

***Gloria in excelsis Deo!***

## COLLECT

Eternal God,  
You dwell beyond time, yet entered time through your Word  
made flesh.  
As this year draws to its close,  
renew in us the grace of your presence.  
Let all our beginnings and endings rest in Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God forever and ever. Amen.

## HOMILY

A teacher once gave his students a candle and asked them to walk into a dark hall. “You can’t stop the darkness,” he said, “but you can carry the light.”

As this year fades, and the clock will soon strike midnight, we too stand in the darkness of time—its uncertainties, its shadows, its endings. But tonight’s Gospel begins not with an ending, but with a beginning: *“In the beginning was the Word.”*

John’s words echo the first pages of Genesis. But unlike the first creation, where light was spoken into existence, now the Light itself has entered the world in human form. The

Word became flesh—God became one of us—and that means no darkness, not even death or the passing of time, can extinguish His light.

Tonight, St. John’s phrase—*“It is the last hour”*—has double meaning. Yes, it is the last day of the year. But it is also the last age of history, the time of grace that began with Christ’s coming. Each of our days is part of that sacred story. Everything we do—every act of kindness, forgiveness, patience, or prayer—becomes eternal when done in love. Nothing is lost in God’s eyes.

Even our failures are gathered into His mercy, as He renews creation day by day.

In the Gospel, we hear: *“From His fullness we have all received—grace upon grace.”*

The past year, however it unfolded, has been filled with such grace. Perhaps not always visible, but real nonetheless—in every breath, every reconciliation, every time we found strength to begin again.

The Word, made flesh, continues to dwell among us—in the Eucharist, in our relationships, in the quiet faith that kept us going.

So tonight is not only a moment to look back, but to look

forward with confidence:

The same God who began the year with us will walk with us into tomorrow.

A little girl, watching fireworks on New Year's Eve, whispered, "Look, Daddy, the stars are celebrating!"

Her father smiled and said, "No, my dear, those are not stars—they're our hopes rising to heaven."

May our hopes rise tonight toward the One who never changes. For in Him, every ending becomes a new beginning.

### **INVITATION TO THE CREED**

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, let us renew our faith in the eternal Word who became flesh for us.

**I believe in God...**

### **INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

As we bring our gifts of bread and wine, let us also bring the offerings of this past year—our joys and sorrows, our works and our weariness—that Christ may make them new in His love. May our sacrifice be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

### **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

God of all time,  
as the passing hours remind us of life's brevity,  
receive these gifts as signs of our gratitude.  
Through them, renew our hearts with your timeless grace,  
that we may live each day in Christ,  
who is yesterday, today, and forever. Amen.

### **PREFACE**

It is truly right and just, our duty and our joy,  
always and everywhere to give you thanks,  
Lord, holy Father, eternal God.  
For in your Word made flesh,  
time and eternity have met.  
Through Him, you have crowned the years with your  
goodness,  
and renewed creation with your light.

As we stand at the turning of the year,  
we praise you for the moments of grace behind us  
and the promises of your mercy before us.  
With angels and saints,  
we sing the hymn of your glory:

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...**

## EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,  
the fount of all holiness.

*As we prepare to call down your Spirit upon these gifts, we remember that the Word, who was in the beginning, became flesh and dwelt among us. In Him, every ending becomes a new beginning, and every passing moment is held in the light of your eternal love. May this mystery of the Word made flesh deepen in us the hope and grace that flow from Christ's presence, guiding us through all the days of our lives.*

**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.**

*As we celebrate this memorial, we thank you for the Word who became flesh, who entered our time and renewed creation with His light. May partaking of this Body and Blood strengthen us to carry that light into the coming year, to live in love and mercy, and to trust that in Christ, every ending is also a new beginning.*

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,  
all the clergy, and all who serve your people.  
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...Amen.**

## INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

As one year ends and another begins,  
let us place our future into the hands of our Father,  
who is Lord of every moment:

### EMBOLISM

Lord Jesus Christ, born in the quiet of Bethlehem,  
You entered our time to bring peace and hope.  
As we stand at the close of this year,  
deliver us from every evil:  
from the burdens of yesterday, the fears of tomorrow,  
and the temptations that would lead us astray.  
Grant us courage to forgive, patience to endure,  
and wisdom to walk in Your light.

As we await the joys and challenges of a new year,  
strengthen us in faith, hope, and love,  
that we may always serve You faithfully.

***For the kingdom...***

### PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord Jesus Christ,  
You are the Prince of Peace and the Lord of Time.  
Look not on our sins but on the faith of Your Church,  
and grant her peace—

peace for our homes, peace for our hearts,  
and peace for the coming year,  
in accordance with Your will,  
who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

### INVITATION TO COMMUNION

This is the Word made flesh,  
the Bread of Life who gathers our years into His eternity.  
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

### MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

A year fades away— its laughter and its loss,  
its gifts and its griefs.  
Yet through all the hours, the Word has walked beside us.  
We entrust this ending to His mercy  
and this beginning to His grace.  
The light still shines, and the darkness has not overcome it.

### POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Lord of time and eternity,  
You have fed us with the Bread of Life  
that renews all things.  
As we step into a new year,  
fill our hearts with gratitude for the past  
and confidence for the future,

that, guided by Your Word,  
we may walk always in Your light.  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### BLESSING

May the God of all time bless you with His peace. Amen.  
May the Word made flesh dwell with you through every  
season of life. Amen.  
May the light of Christ guide your days and gladden your  
hearts, now and forever. Amen.  
**And may Almighty God bless you,  
the Father, and the Son,  and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

### DISMISSAL

Go in peace,  
carrying the light of Christ into the new year.

### TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Every ending in God is a beginning.  
Time may fly, but love remains—  
and in Christ, the Word made Flesh,  
every moment is held forever.