

Fourth Sunday of Advent-A

Is 7:10–14; Rom 1:1–7; Mt 1:18–24

God reveals Himself through relationships of faithfulness.

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, during a severe winter storm in Europe, a small village lost power for three days. The streets were dark, and fear filled the air. Yet one house on the hill glowed softly with candlelight. When asked later why they seemed so calm, the family said, “We were prepared. We had candles ready—and hope burning in our hearts.”

Dear brothers and sisters, today, on this **Fourth Sunday of Advent**, all four candles of our wreath are glowing. They remind us that when the world seems dark and uncertain, God’s light never goes out.

This final candle burns for those who dare to hope when others have stopped believing—

for those like **Joseph**, who stay faithful even when life does not go as planned.

Today’s Gospel shows us Christmas through Joseph’s quiet eyes—how a dream led him from confusion to

courage, from doubt to trust.

In a noisy and restless world, we pause. We prepare. We remember that God’s promises are not empty, and His Word is still being fulfilled among us. Let us open our hearts as Joseph did—with courage, trust, and silence.
(brief pause for reflection)

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, you come to bring light into our darkness:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you invite us to trust your Word, even when it challenges us: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are Emmanuel, God-with-us, now and always: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May almighty God,
who guided Joseph in the silence of his heart
and brought light to his confusion,
have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
and lead us in trust toward everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

God of promises,
you revealed to Joseph in a dream your astonishing plan—
that through Mary, a virgin, your Son would enter the
world.

Give us hearts like his—open, trusting, and ready to obey.
Help us to believe in your love, even when it seems
unbelievable.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever. *Amen.*

HOMILY: The Silent Strength of St. Joseph”

Opening Story – The Carpenter’s Silence

A parish priest once told the story of an elderly carpenter in his town—quiet, faithful, never late for Mass. When his wife died, he built her coffin with his own hands. He planed the wood smooth, polished it lovingly, and carved one single word inside: “Trust.”

He said nothing at the funeral.

But his silence spoke louder than any sermon.

That old carpenter, said the priest, reminded him of St. Joseph—the man who said nothing, yet trusted everything.

1. Joseph – The Man Who Said Nothing, Yet Trusted Everything

If only St. Joseph had kept a diary!

What would it have said on the day he learned that Mary was expecting a child? He had his plans: a simple home, a woman he loved, a life he could quietly build.

Then—God rewrote the script. The Gospel tells us nothing of Joseph’s words, but everything of his actions.

He stood at a crossroads of heartbreak and holiness—between what made sense and what God was asking.

Imagine it in today’s world: a young man, engaged, hardworking, humble. One day his fiancée tells him she’s pregnant—and it’s not what he thinks.

How could he possibly believe her?

And yet Joseph doesn’t rage. He doesn’t expose her. He

doesn't shame her.

Matthew tells us: "Being a just man and unwilling to expose her to shame, he decided to divorce her quietly."

Quiet mercy. Silent strength. Dignified obedience.

2. The Quiet Strength of Mercy

There's a story of a young catechist who became pregnant before marriage. Gossip spread like wildfire in her parish. People whispered, judged, and withdrew.

But one older man—quiet, prayerful—said simply: "We don't know her story. Let's pray for her instead of talking about her."

Months later, when the young woman returned to Mass carrying her baby, that same man stood beside her, held the child, and said, "Every life is a blessing. God's mercy makes all things new."

That man's spirit was like Joseph's.

He chose mercy over judgment, protection over punishment.

Joseph shows us that real strength is not in control or

revenge—it's in compassion that costs something.

There's a saying from the Jewish tradition:

"Tell me who you walk with, and I'll tell you who you are." Mary walked with Joseph—and that explains a lot. She too learned to protect others quietly. Remember Cana? She didn't shame the hosts when the wine ran out. She simply said to Jesus, "They have no wine."

She had learned that mercy doesn't expose—it restores.

3. The Dream That Changed Everything

Then comes the turning point:

Joseph sleeps—and God speaks.

An angel says, "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife."

Why a dream?

Because Joseph was the kind of man who could hear God in silence.

Many of us miss God's voice because our lives are too loud. Advent is the time to make space for dreams—because God still speaks: not through angels perhaps, but through a friend's advice, a child's question, a crisis, or a

quiet stirring in prayer.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “I have a dream,” not “I have a plan.”

Dreams are what God uses to pull us beyond what we can control.

Joseph also had a dream—and he followed it.

“When Joseph awoke,” Matthew says, “he did what the angel of the Lord commanded.”

No debate. No delay. No drama.

Faith isn’t always about understanding everything.

It’s about trusting enough to take the next step

4. Obedience in the Shadows

Every time Joseph obeys, it costs him something.

Take Mary as your wife—people will whisper. He does it.

Flee to Egypt—leave everything behind. He goes.

Return again—start from scratch. He obeys.

Each time, he steps into uncertainty and finds God waiting.

Once, a father who lost his son in a tragic accident told his priest, “I didn’t want my grief to block out God’s voice.

I needed to hear Him more than ever.”

That’s Joseph’s spirit—obedience not out of fear, but out of love.

He shows us that holiness is not in words, but in quiet, consistent faithfulness—doing what God asks even when no one sees.

5. Isaiah and Paul – The Echo of Hope

Isaiah had prophesied long before:

“The Lord Himself will give you a sign: the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.”

Not a warrior. Not a king.

A child.

God comes in weakness so He can be close.

And through Joseph’s “yes,” that prophecy is fulfilled.

St. Paul adds in the second reading: “You are called to belong to Jesus Christ.”

We may not dream like Joseph, but we share his calling—to make Jesus present in the world.

Every time we forgive instead of condemn, protect instead of expose, and trust instead of control—we continue

Joseph's mission.

6. When Life Doesn't Go as Planned

Some of you here may be living a life you never planned: an unexpected illness, a loss that still hurts, a career that changed direction, a family situation that feels unfair. So did Joseph.

But faith isn't about controlling outcomes—it's about trusting that even the detours are part of God's design.

There's a saying among woodworkers: "The grain of the wood resists the chisel, but it's that resistance that reveals its beauty."

Joseph's life was like that—the chisel of suffering revealed the pattern of grace.

7. A Father's Yes

A priest once said of his father:

"My father never preached. Never prayed aloud. Never gave advice.

But when my mother got cancer, he washed her wounds every night.

When she could no longer walk, he carried her to church. And after she died, he sat silently in the pew and wept." He never spoke faith—he lived it.

That father was Joseph in modern form.

8. Why We Need Joseph Today

In a world of noise, Joseph teaches silence.

In a culture of outrage, Joseph teaches mercy.

In a time of fear, Joseph teaches trust.

He is the quiet strength our world needs:

- A protector who doesn't dominate.
- A leader who listens.
- A man who obeys without hesitation.
- A believer who says "yes" even without full understanding.

The Father Who Carried Love

A priest once saw an elderly man carrying his frail wife into church every Sunday.

When asked why he didn't use a wheelchair, the man

smiled and said,

"I carried her into my heart long before I carried her in my arms."

That's Joseph. He carried love quietly.

He bore the weight of God's plan with tenderness and faith.

God Still Looks for Josephs

As Christmas draws near, Joseph stands before us not as a background figure, but as a guide for our own Advent journey:

- Silent enough to hear God's voice,
- Brave enough to follow it,
- Loving enough to protect others,
- Faithful enough to say yes.

He didn't understand everything—but he trusted.

And because he said yes, God came into the world.

God is still looking for hearts like Joseph's—hearts that whisper: "Lord, I don't understand—but I trust You."

Will you be one of them? Amen.

INVITATION TO THE CREED (adapted to the readings)

Like Joseph, who trusted in God's mysterious plan, let us now profess our faith in the God who is always faithful to His promises.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS (adapted to the readings)

Dear brothers and sisters, as Joseph offered his silent yes to God's plan, trusting even when he didn't fully understand, let us now offer our gifts and our hearts—in faith, in obedience, and in love, and pray that this, our sacrifice, may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Good and gracious God, in this bread and wine, you come near to us again. As we prepare for the birth of your Son, strengthen our faith, deepen our trust,

and help us, like Joseph, to embrace your will in silence and courage. Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

PREFACE (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

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.

In these final days of Advent,
you reveal the quiet glory of your plan—
a plan that unfolded in silence,
welcomed by the obedient heart of Joseph
and the trusting yes of the Virgin Mary.
Though your ways were hidden from the wise,
you spoke through dreams and promises,
guiding your people with mercy,
preparing a place for your Son in a troubled world.

Now, filled with hope and wonder,
we rejoice at the nearing of his birth,
and, like Joseph, we dare to trust in what we do not yet
fully see.
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...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we stand in this holy season of Advent, we remember Joseph's silent faith and Mary's trusting yes. In the quiet faithfulness of human hearts, you reveal the mystery of your divine plan.

You come not in thunder or power, but in relationships of love and trust — where obedience becomes worship, and silence becomes faith.

**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.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we remember your Son's saving death and resurrection,

we also remember Joseph's quiet obedience and Mary's steadfast trust.

*Through their faithfulness, your promise took flesh;
through our faithfulness, may your love be revealed again
in the world.*

*Teach us to trust your plan when we cannot see the whole
path, and to say our own "yes" with the courage of those
who believe your word.*

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 (adapted to the readings)

Like Joseph, who trusted in God's plan even in confusion,
and like Mary, who welcomed the Word in faith,
let us now turn to the Father with hearts open to his will,
praying the prayer Jesus taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every fear and confusion.
Grant us the peace that Joseph found in your mysterious
will, that, upheld by your mercy, we may walk in trust,
free from sin and safe from anxiety,
as we await with quiet hope,
the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you calmed Joseph's doubts and strengthened his heart
with the peace of your divine plan.
Look not on our sins,
but on the faith that seeks to trust you in all things.

Grant your Church the peace and unity that come from listening to your voice and walking in your will.

You live and reign forever and ever. **Amen.**

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

In the quiet of this moment, after receiving the Bread of Life, let us linger in the stillness that Joseph once knew.

He did not speak many words, but he listened.

He did not fully understand, but he obeyed.

He did not see the whole path, but he took the next step.

Now, like Joseph, we have received Jesus—
not in a dream, but in the Eucharist.

He is Emmanuel—God with us, not only in the stable of Bethlehem, but in the stable of our hearts.

In this sacred silence, let us ask:

Lord, what are you asking me to carry?

What plan of yours am I being invited to trust, even without full understanding?

Perhaps the greatest faith is not loud or eloquent, but quiet and faithful.

May the grace we have received give us courage to say a simple, silent yes—

A yes that welcomes Christ, a yes that changes the world. Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

God of faithful promises,

in this Eucharist you have given us your Son once again.
As Christmas draws near,

may we, like Joseph, carry your Word with reverence and trust.

Help us live the miracle of your nearness in all we do.
Through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

FINAL BLESSING

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May His face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

May He look upon you with kindness and grant you peace.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son,  and the Holy Spirit,
come down on you and remain with you always.

Amen.

DISMISSAL (adapted to the readings)

Go forth in peace, as people of hope and trust.

Like Joseph, carry God's promise into the world.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

When you don't understand God's plan—still trust His heart. One quiet **yes** can change the world.

Advent - December 22 - 1 Sam 1:24–28; Lk 1:46–56

Gratitude expressed through humble surrender and joyful praise, which transforms lives and extends God's mercy to others.

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a little girl in a small village received a simple wooden box for Christmas. Inside was a tiny, handmade doll. Her eyes sparkled as she held it close. She had nothing else, yet she spent the day thanking God for this small gift, sharing it with her friends, and singing in joy. Her gratitude was visible, contagious, and transformed an ordinary moment into a celebration.

In just a few days, we will celebrate the great mystery of Christmas—God becoming human. Today's readings invite us to step into that spirit of grateful joy.

In the first reading, Hannah dedicates her son Samuel to God in thanksgiving, acknowledging God's mercy and faithfulness. In the Gospel, Mary bursts forth with the Magnificat, praising God for lifting the lowly and filling the hungry with good things. Their gratitude is not private—it spills into action, into generosity, and into participation in

God's plan for the world.

Like that little girl and like Hannah and Mary, we are invited to reflect: where has God lifted us up? Where have we resisted His mercy or withheld it from others? Today, let us bring our hearts before Him in humility and hope, ready to magnify the Lord in our own lives.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, you are the Son of the Eternal Father, sent to show us the face of mercy: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, born of Mary, you come to lift up the lowly and fill the hungry with good things: **Christ, have mercy.**
Lord Jesus, you are the Savior of the world, the joy of all who trust in you: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAAYER OF ABSOLUTION_(adapted to the readings)

May the God whose mercy lifts up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things, have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

O God, who looked on the lowliness of the Blessed Virgin Mary and through her gave us the gift of your Son, help us to recognize your mercy at work in our lives. May we, like Mary and Hannah, offer ourselves in gratitude, and live as faithful servants of your plan of salvation.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son...**Amen.**

HOMILY: “My Soul Magnifies the Lord...”

Let me begin with a story. A few years ago, a young mother in a struggling rural village in South India arrived at church every morning, carrying her baby on her hip. She had nothing—no proper shoes, almost no food. Yet each day, after Mass, she would light a candle and whisper, “Thank you.” When asked why, she said, “For the child I begged God to give me. He heard me. And for that, I will praise Him all my life.”

Mary’s song, the Magnificat, is not just a hymn of praise—it is a revolution of joy. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called it “the most

passionate, the most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung.” Why? Because Mary, a poor young woman, sings not only of God’s greatness but of how His greatness turns the world upside down.

Mary sings not from a palace, not after a triumph, not in certainty, but while pregnant, away from home, and facing an uncertain future. Still, she trusts God, who lifts the lowly, fills the hungry, and scatters the proud.

Hannah in our first reading teaches the same lesson: gratitude is not hoarded; it is offered back to God in trust. What Mary, Hannah, and that mother in South India show us is that gratitude transforms us. It frees us from fear, despair, and self-centeredness. It helps us see God in simplicity, in need, and in surrender.

This Christmas, don’t just unwrap gifts—unwrap your heart. Ask:

- What has God done for me this year?
- Am I truly thankful?
- Am I willing to let His gift in me bless others?

As Mary's soul magnified the Lord, may our souls magnify Him—not only in song but in action, in generosity, and in humble service to others.

Let me close with a story: A boy once found a stray kitten, small and shivering. He could have kept it for himself, but instead he brought it to the village vet to care for it. In return, the kitten brought warmth and joy to his whole family and neighbours. Like that boy, like Mary, like Hannah, when we return God's gifts to the world, they multiply and transform lives.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS (adapted to the readings)

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice—offered in thanksgiving like Hannah's,
and with praise like Mary's—
may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Lord, may the offering of our lives, along with these gifts of bread and wine,
rise like Mary's song of praise before you.
As you accepted the gift of Samuel, and as Mary bore your Son for the world,
so accept what we place on this altar and transform it into your saving grace. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

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 in the fullness of time, you fulfilled your promise to Israel, raising up a lowly virgin to bear the Savior of the world.

Through her humble yes, the hopes of the poor were lifted, and your mercy extended from age to age.

Now we, too, join with her in proclaiming your greatness,
as with angels and saints we sing the hymn of your glory:

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

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: On this day, as we recall Mary's humble "yes," we remember that holiness begins in trust — the trust to let Your Word take flesh within us. Just as You sent Your messenger Gabriel to a young woman of Nazareth, so now You send Your Spirit among us to bring forth divine life in our midst. In this Eucharist, we open our hearts to Your promise, believing that nothing is impossible for You.

**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.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we remember Mary's trust and Your saving promise fulfilled in her, we bring before You our own "yes," fragile yet sincere.

May this memorial strengthen our faith in divine intervention, and teach us, like her, to believe before we see—to let Your Word dwell in us and shape the course of our lives.

Through this offering of Christ, may our hearts learn to say with her: "Let it be done to me according to Your word."

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 (adapted to the readings)

In communion with Mary, who rejoiced in the God of her salvation, let us now pray in the words our Savior gave us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
you who scatter the proud in their conceit
and remember your mercy from generation to generation.
Lift us up in our lowliness, fill us when we are empty,
and cast out fear from our hearts.

In your compassion, sustain us in peace,
as we await the blessed hope
and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ, you came to bring peace not as the world gives, but as heaven sings—peace born of mercy, justice, and joy.

Look not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church,
on the songs of the poor and the trust of the lowly.

Grant us the peace that comes from knowing we are remembered, lifted, and loved by you,
and lead us to live as instruments of your peace,
who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

In this Eucharist, the Lord has come to us as He came to Mary—quietly, humbly, yet powerfully.
We have received Him not in a palace, but in the simple stable of our hearts.

Let our response be like Mary's and Hannah's:
not silent possession, but joyful praise;
not clinging to the gift, but offering it back to God in love.
Let our lives magnify the Lord—in our homes, our work,
and in how we lift up the lowly.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Lord, we have shared in the mystery of your mercy.
As you filled Mary with joy and grace,

so fill us, who have received the Bread of Life,
with trust in your promises and gratitude for your gifts.

May we, like her, bring Christ into the world through lives of
praise and service. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the Lord, who looked upon Mary in her lowliness and
raised her to be the Mother of His Son,
bless you with His mercy and joy.

May you, like Mary, find strength in humility and courage in
surrender.

**May Almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son
✠ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord with your life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

“Let your soul magnify the Lord today—not just in words,
but in trust, in joy, and in humble service to others.”

Advent - 23 December

Mal 3:1–4, 23–24; Lk 1:57–66,

John the Baptist's birth, Divine preparation, and God's gracious initiative.

INTRODUCTION

A small village had a tradition: whenever a child was born under unusual circumstances, the neighbors would gather and wonder aloud, “What will this child become?” One winter morning, Elizabeth’s neighbors were asking the same question. She had long been barren, and now, in her old age, she held a child—John. Joy, awe, and curiosity filled the air.

O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the Hope and
Saviour of the nations: come and save us, O Lord our God!
Everything now points to tomorrow: the moment when God steps fully into our human story. Today’s Gospel speaks of the birth of John the Baptist—the Forerunner, the one who goes before. His birth reminds us that God’s plans often arrive in surprising ways, that He turns silence into song, barrenness into new life, and prepares a way for His grace.

As we gather, let us open our hearts to the God who surprises, the God who acts first, and the God who calls us to watch, to wait, and to prepare.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

As we await the coming of Christ with hope and joy, let us acknowledge our sins and prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. (Brief pause)

- Lord Jesus, the whole earth awaits your coming. You bring forgiveness and mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**
- You will come again to judge the living and the dead. You bring justice and peace. **Christ, have mercy.**
- You are the light that shines in our darkness. You are the joy of all who trust in You. **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May almighty God have mercy on us, who calls forth new life even from barren places, who loosens tongues and opens hearts to praise, who prepares a way for His grace in surprising ways. May He forgive us our sins, renew our joy, and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Almighty ever-living God, as the birth of Your Son draws near, You gave Zechariah and Elizabeth joy in the birth of John, the prophet who would go before Him. Grant that we too may rejoice in Your gracious works and prepare a way for Christ in our hearts and lives. 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. **Amen.**

HOMILY – "What then will this child become?"

A teacher once asked her students to write down what they wanted to become when they grew up. Most answers were "doctor," "pilot," "teacher." One boy simply wrote: "a servant of God." The teacher laughed and asked, "But what will you do?" He replied, "Serve God wherever He wants me." That boy grew up to become a priest, and even in old age, people would ask, "What became of him?" And the answer was simple: "He prepared many for the Lord." That is the story of John the Baptist.

The question that echoed through the village when John was born—"What then will this child become?"—is a question of wonder, hope, and destiny. His name, John, means "God is gracious." His birth came to aged parents—an impossible situation, yet God made it possible.

John's birth breaks convention:

- He is not named after his father.
- His father, Zechariah, had been struck mute for his unbelief.
- The name itself is a message: this child's life is about transformation, not tradition.

God's ways often shake our comfort zones. Zechariah had to write the name "John," and when he obeyed, his voice returned. Sometimes, when we stop resisting God's will and obey His word, our faith deepens, our voice returns, and our mission becomes clear.

As we approach Christmas, let us reflect:

- What is God asking me to name in my life?

- What new thing is He doing that breaks old patterns?
- What message am I called to speak into the world?

Like Zechariah, let us move from silence to praise.

Like John, let us prepare a way.

Like the neighbours, let us treasure these things in our hearts. And just as that boy grew into a life of quiet service, may we too respond to God's surprising grace by preparing paths for His coming in our families, communities, and hearts. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

(adapted to the readings)

"Pray, brothers and sisters, that our sacrifice and offering, like Zechariah's praise and Elizabeth's joy, may be found acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS (adapted to the readings)

May this offering, O Lord, by which You wondrously worked a new beginning through the birth of John the Baptist, cleanse and renew us, so that we too may be ready to welcome Your Son with joy. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

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 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 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...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: Lord, as You once prepared the world for the coming of Your Son through the birth of John the Baptist, the voice crying in the wilderness, so now prepare our hearts at this altar. In this sacred moment of waiting and wonder, we remember that You act first, You surprise us with grace, and You turn silence into song. May this Eucharist be for us the moment when Your gracious plan unfolds anew, and our barren hearts bear the fruit of praise).

**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.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we remember, Lord, the mystery of Your saving love, we recall how You prepared the world through humble servants like Zechariah and Elizabeth, through a child whose name means “God is gracious.” In every age, You raise up witnesses to announce Your coming. Strengthen us, O Lord, to be forerunners of Your grace in our world—to prepare a way for Your Son in hearts that doubt, in lives that wait, and in places that long for Your light).

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

With longing for the coming of God's Kingdom, and formed
by the teaching of Christ, let us pray.

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, as You once
delivered Zechariah from doubt, Elizabeth from reproach,
and their child from the expectations of convention. In Your
mercy, free us from sin and silence, that we may proclaim
Your wonders with joy and prepare the way for Christ with
courage and faith, as we await the blessed hope and the
coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ, You came into a world waiting in silence
and longing, and Your herald was born to go before You in
peace. Look not on our sins, but on the faith of Your
Church, and grant her the peace You promised—peace
that opens the mouth of the mute, peace that turns
astonishment into praise, peace that prepares hearts for
Your coming—You who live and reign for ever and ever.
Amen.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Today we received not just bread, but the living promise of God. As the birth of John stirred joy and awe, this Eucharist stirs our hearts with hope. God is already at work—opening mouths to praise, preparing paths in the wilderness of our hearts, bringing life where there was none. Let us go forth, like John, as forerunners—proclaiming that God is near, and grace is on the way.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Lord God, You have nourished us with this holy gift as You once prepared the world through the birth of John. As we await Your Son with longing hearts, make us ready by Your grace to speak Your word, to live Your joy, and to prepare a place for Christ in our lives. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the Lord, who turned Zechariah's silence into praise, open your lips to proclaim His love. **Amen.**
May the God who is gracious and faithful make your hearts ready for the coming of His Son. **Amen.**
And may Almighty God bless you, the Father and the Son  and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace to prepare the way of the Lord.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

"God is still doing new things—are we listening?" Like Zechariah and Elizabeth, we are invited to break with old patterns and embrace the grace of God's surprising plan. Prepare Him room—not just in your home, but in your heart.

Advent - 24 December (Morning Mass)

2 Sam 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Lk 1:67–79

“God visits His people with light, hope, and presence, transforming darkness into dwelling places for Himself.”

INTRODUCTION

One Christmas Eve many years ago, a little girl named Anna pressed her nose against the frosted window, watching the snow fall silently outside. Her family had little to celebrate that year—her father had lost his job, and the house felt cold and empty. Suddenly, a soft knock echoed at the door. It was the local parish priest, holding a small candle and a loaf of bread. “This is for you,” he said gently. “God’s light never leaves those who wait.”

Tonight, we are like Anna, waiting in the quiet of the world, on the threshold of the greatest gift imaginable. “Now the fullness of time has come,” the Entrance Antiphon tells us, “and God sends his Son into the world.” The Light is breaking into the darkness. The silence of waiting hearts is about to be pierced by the cry of a newborn—Emmanuel, God with us. We stand ready to open the doors of our

hearts, so that this Light may dwell within us. Let us prepare ourselves by asking for the Lord’s mercy.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, you are the radiant dawn breaking upon those in darkness: Lord, have mercy.

You come to fulfil God’s promise of eternal peace: Christ, have mercy.

You make your dwelling among us, even in our weakness: Lord, have mercy.

PRAAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May the God who visits his people with tender mercy cleanse you from all your sins,
shine his light into your darkness,
and lead to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Come quickly, we pray, Lord Jesus,
and do not delay,
that those who trust in your compassion

may find solace and strength
as they await your coming with joy,
who live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY

Have you ever watched the sun rise after a long and stormy night? You sit in darkness, unsure of what the day will bring, and then—almost imperceptibly—a gentle light begins to seep across the horizon. And suddenly, the sun bursts forth, golden and glorious, casting away the shadows.

This is exactly what Zechariah experienced in today's Gospel. For months he had been silent, his voice held captive by God's mysterious plan. But when he finally held his newborn son, John, in his arms, he did not just see a baby. He saw hope. He saw the dawn of salvation breaking upon a weary world. He sang the Benedictus: *"The dawn from on high shall break upon us, to shine on*

those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death."

Let me tell you another story. There was a young boy named Michael who had endured a very difficult year. His father had passed away, his mother struggled to keep their home, and Christmas seemed hopeless. On Christmas Eve, however, their elderly neighbour, Mrs. Fischer, knocked on the door with a basket of food and a small wrapped gift. "Your father helped me one Christmas long ago," she said. "This is my way of continuing his kindness." In that moment, light entered Michael's home—not only the light of generosity, but the light of God visiting His people. God comes to us in small acts of love, often unnoticed until we see them.

In the First Reading, King David wishes to build a house for God. Yet God turns the plan around and promises instead to build David's house—a lineage that will endure forever. God's ways are greater than ours. We offer what little we can, and He responds with a promise that surpasses imagination.

This is the true story of Christmas:

- Not merely we building something for God, but God building something in us.
- Not we visiting God, but God visiting us—and making His dwelling within us.

Tonight, as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us remember that He is the rising Sun, the Light for every shadow, the joy that darkness cannot overcome. Let us open our hearts and become, like Mary and Joseph, a dwelling place for the Word made flesh.

And so, I leave you with one final story: A family gathered around a tiny manger at their Christmas Eve service, children wide-eyed and parents tired from a long day. A baby wrapped in a simple cloth lay in the centre, yet in that moment, every heart knew the world had changed. Light had come, quietly, unexpectedly, irrevocably. That is Emmanuel. That is God with us—tonight, and every night.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS (adapted to the readings)

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that as we place these gifts on the altar,
our offering may be made acceptable to God,
the Father of mercies,
who has visited his people with saving power
and is even now preparing a place in our hearts
for the rising Sun from on high—

May the Lord accept...

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Gracious God,
accept these offerings which we lay before you
in joyful anticipation of your Son's coming.
May they become for us the bread of life and the chalice of
salvation, as we prepare to welcome the Light of the world.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

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.

In the fullness of time you remembered your promise to
David and visited your people with saving power.

Through the prophets you spoke of a kingdom without end;
through the Virgin Mary you prepared a dwelling for your
Word; and in these last days

you have caused the Dawn from on high to break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

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...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: On this holy night of waiting, O Lord, we remember your promise to David and your tender mercy revealed through Zechariah's song. You have visited your people and caused the dawn from on high to break upon us. As we prepare to welcome the Light that dispels all darkness, we bring before you our gifts of bread and wine, signs of our longing for your presence to dwell among us).

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.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we stand before this mystery of light breaking into our night, we remember your faithful promise, O Lord: that you would make your dwelling among us. You have visited your people with mercy, and your Word has become flesh to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death. May this holy communion be for us the dawn of new hope, and may our lives become dwelling places for your radiant presence).

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

With joyful hope and longing for the coming of our Saviour, let us pray in the words he taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, you who have visited us with saving power and raised for us a mighty Saviour in the house of your servant David.

Shine your light on those who sit in darkness,

and guide our feet into the path of peace, as we await with joy the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ...

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you are the dawn from on high
who breaks upon a weary world with healing and hope.
Look not on our sins,
but on the faith of your Church,
and grant her the peace foretold by the prophets
and fulfilled in your coming.

You who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

We have received the Bread of Life—
a sign that God has truly visited His people.
As Zechariah sang of the rising Sun,
so we now sit in the gentle glow of God's mercy.
He has come to dwell not in a temple made by hands,

but in the fragile space of our hearts.
Let His light grow in us—
shining on every fear, every shadow, every longing.
The night is nearly over. The true Light is at hand.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Lord our God,
You have visited us with grace and light
through this holy Sacrament.
As we await the birth of Your Son with joyful hearts,
make us ready to receive Him—
not just in the manger,
but in every moment of our lives.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the God of infinite goodness,
who through the Incarnation of his Son
dispelled the darkness of the world,
and by his glorious Birth

illumined this most holy night,
drive far from you the shadows of sin
and brighten your hearts with the light of grace. **Amen.**
May God, who willed that the great joy
of his Son's saving birth
be announced to shepherds by the angel,
fill your hearts with gladness
and make you heralds of the Gospel. **Amen.**
And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son **☩** and the Holy Spirit,
come down upon you and remain with you forever. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL (adapted to the readings)

Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

"The Dawn from on high has visited us."

As you go home tonight, remember:
No darkness is too deep, no silence too long,
for the light of Christ to enter and stay.
Let Him make your heart His dwelling.