

2. SUNDAY OF ADVENT-A-2025 (07.12.2025)

Is 11:1-10; Rom 15:4-9; Mt 3:1-12

“The Kingdom Is Near – Not a Fairy Tale, but a Call to Wake Up”

INTRODUCTION

One foggy morning, a traveller driving through the countryside stopped at a small farmhouse to ask for directions. A child came out, pointed to the horizon and said, “You’re almost there—but the road bends before it opens to the view.” Curious, the traveller drove on, and as the fog lifted, he suddenly saw before him a breathtaking valley filled with sunlight.

Today’s readings are like that. They show us a glimpse of a world beyond the bend—a world where wolves live with lambs, children play in safety, and enemies become friends. It sounds like a fairy tale, yet Isaiah insists: this is God’s promise, not a dream.

John the Baptist stands on that road bend today, calling us to wake up—to repent, to change direction, so that when the fog lifts, we may see the Kingdom already breaking in.

Let us begin this Eucharist by turning our hearts toward that light, asking forgiveness for the ways we have fallen asleep to God’s coming.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Let us acknowledge our sins, so as to prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

Lord Jesus, you call us to wake up and repent,
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you invite us to welcome one another as you have welcomed us, Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are near, even when the world seems far from peace, Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May almighty God,
who draws near to the humble of heart,
have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,
awaken us to His coming Kingdom,
and lead us into the fullness of everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT (from the Missal)

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Almighty and merciful God,
who sent your prophets to prepare your people for the coming of the Kingdom,
stir up our hearts, we pray,
to make straight your paths by the grace of repentance,
that we may bear fruit in unity and love,
and welcome one another as Christ has welcomed us.
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: “Repent and Welcome One Another – Because the Kingdom of God Is Already Breaking In”

Some years ago, a city mayor organized a “peace picnic.” He invited everyone—rival business owners, estranged families, even those in conflict—to a meal in the park. Among them were two neighbours locked in a bitter property dispute. They sat apart in silence—until one of

their children crossed over and offered a flower to the other. That simple act softened hardened hearts. By the end of the day, the men were laughing and shaking hands. A fairy tale? Perhaps.

But Isaiah would say: *No—it’s a prophecy fulfilled in miniature.*

“The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and a little child shall lead them.”

I. The Impossible Becomes Reality

Isaiah’s dream sounds impossible. Yet, whenever Christ is truly welcomed, the impossible begins to take shape. Think of the early Church. It was not a perfect community of saints. It was a fragile fellowship of opposites: Simon the Zealot, who hated Roman rule, sat beside Matthew, who worked for Rome as a tax collector. James and John—the “Sons of Thunder”—shared bread with quiet Andrew and doubting Thomas.

By every human measure, they should have exploded into division.

But when Jesus stood at the centre, something miraculous happened: the lion lay down with the lamb.

The same miracle reappeared after Pentecost. Masters and slaves worshipped side by side, exchanging the kiss of peace. In a world obsessed with rank and power, they discovered a new identity—as brothers and sisters in Christ.

That was no utopia—it was the Kingdom of God breaking into human history.

In our own times, we have seen glimmers of it. In the 1960s, amid the hatred of segregation, a preacher named Martin Luther King Jr. stood before those who despised him and said, “I love you. You are my brothers.”

They killed him—but not his love. The dream of Isaiah lived on.

II. The Kingdom Is Near, Yet Not Fully Here

And yet, even with all this, John the Baptist was beheaded. Jesus was crucified. The morning news still bleeds with violence.

A little boy once said to his father, “If God’s Kingdom is near, why is there still war?” The father smiled sadly and said, “Because it’s near, not yet complete. But every time you choose kindness over cruelty, the Kingdom takes another step closer.”

That’s what Advent teaches us: God’s reign is dawning, not finished. We live in the tension between *already* and *not yet*.

Like dawn breaking through the night, the Kingdom begins in the hearts of those who repent.

III. Repentance: The Doorway to the Kingdom

John’s voice cries out across the centuries: “Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is near!”

His message is not meant to scare us—it’s meant to awaken us.

Repentance is not punishment; it’s liberation. It’s not “I’ll try harder to be good.” It’s: “Lord, I can’t change myself. You must change me.”

A priest once told the story of a woman who confessed that she could not forgive her sister. “I’ve tried everything,” she

said. “I just can’t.” The priest answered gently, “Then stop trying to forgive her. Instead, ask Jesus to love her *through you*.”

Tears fell as she whispered, “I can do that.”

That’s repentance—not moral heroism, but surrender to divine grace.

IV. Repentance Is Practical

Repentance also shows in small, concrete acts.

A journalist once calculated that if every German gave just nineteen cents a month to global aid, millions could be lifted out of poverty. Small acts—multiplied—can transform the world.

Advent repentance is like that.

It means refusing to gossip, walking instead of driving, reconciling with a sibling, volunteering an hour, smiling at a stranger, writing a letter of thanks.

These may seem tiny compared to Isaiah’s vision, yet that’s exactly how the Kingdom grows—quietly, personally, locally.

John says: “Bear fruit worthy of repentance.”

Don’t just *feel sorry*—*live differently*.

V. What Fruits Are Growing in My Life?

St. Paul offers a simple mirror:

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness...”

If bitterness, jealousy, or anger dominate our days, something is misaligned.

An old monk once said: “If you want to know whether you’re growing in holiness, ask your family. They see the fruits.”

The same test applies to parishes and nations.

Are we bearing the fruit of peace—or of division?

Because where Christ reigns, peace follows.

VI. Welcoming One Another as Christ Welcomed Us

Paul tells the Romans, “Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you.”

In Rome, the Church was divided over food laws and customs. Today, we divide over liturgy, politics, or personal style. Yet the command remains the same: *Christ has already accepted them*.

A beautiful story comes from a monastery where two monks could not stand each other. The abbot finally said, “Tonight

you will wash each other's feet." They did—awkwardly, silently—and something in them broke open. The next morning, they prayed side by side, no longer enemies. Repentance always ends in reconciliation.

It begins when I say: "You too are welcomed by Christ, even if I disagree with you."

VII. The Fairy Tale That Isn't One

Isaiah's prophecy ends with hope:

"They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord."

That's not knowledge *about* God—it's the intimacy that comes from loving Him and one another.

It starts small: in your kitchen table conversations, your workplace, your parish, your heart.

During World War II, a French farmer named André risked his life hiding Jewish families from the Nazis. When asked why, he said, "Because I read the Bible every day. And I realized—if the Kingdom of God is coming, I must live as if it were already here."

André understood: Isaiah's vision is no fairy tale. It's a call to wake up and live as citizens of that Kingdom now.

CONCLUSION

The Kingdom has not yet fully come.

But it is near—near in every act of repentance, every gesture of welcome, every time we forgive.

Let it begin in you. Let it begin in me.

Let it begin here, at this altar—where enemies become one Body, and where the Lion of Judah lies down with the lamb of our brokenness. Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

(adapted to the readings)

As we await the coming of God's Kingdom
not as a distant dream,
but as a present call to transformation,
let us now profess the faith
that awakens us from complacency,
unites us across our differences,

and strengthens our hope
in the One who is already near. *I believe in one God...*

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

Pray, brothers and sisters, that our offering today—
these gifts and our longing to live differently,
to bear the fruits of repentance and love—
may be pleasing to God the Father almighty.

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

Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble offerings and prayers,
and accept them as signs of our longing
for your peace and justice.

May these sacred gifts purify our hearts,
so that, renewed by your grace,
we may be ready to receive your Kingdom
already breaking into our 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,
through Christ our Lord.

For the voices of the prophets spoke of the peace to come,
and John the Baptist proclaimed your Son as the Lamb who
takes away our sin.

He called us to repentance, not with fear,
but with hope,
announcing the nearness of your Kingdom.
In Him you have shown us
that the lion can lie down with the lamb,
and the master can call the slave his brother.
Through Him, you restore creation
and gather a people who welcome one another
as Christ has welcomed them.
And so, with angels and archangels,
with all the hosts and powers of heaven,

we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim: ***Holy, Holy, Holy...***

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER II - “The Kingdom Is Near”

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,
the fountain of all holiness and peace.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day:

*Even now, your Kingdom draws near—
a world where the wolf and the lamb shall dwell together,
and every heart made new by your mercy shall find rest in
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 ~~the~~ 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.

*(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: **May that same Spirit make us instruments of your coming Kingdom— turning our hearts from division to peace, from fear to faith, from apathy to love.**)*

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, the clergy
and all who serve your people in faith and love.

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,
where all wounds are healed and all divisions cease.

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.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER (adapted to
the readings)

United as one family, and awaiting the fullness of the
Kingdom, let us pray with longing and love
as our Savior taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from all that blinds us to your
coming, and awaken our hearts from complacency.
Grant us peace in our days,
that, trusting in your mercy,
we may walk in repentance and bear the fruits of your
Kingdom.

Keep us free from sin and safe from despair,

as we live in hope
and long for the full arrival of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you came to break down walls of division
and to make enemies into brothers and sisters.
You said to your Apostles:
“Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.”
Look not on our failures or divisions,
but on the faith and longing of your Church.
Grant us the peace that comes through repentance,
and the unity that reflects your coming Kingdom.
You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Behold the Lamb of God,
who enters our broken world with healing and hope,
who takes away the sin that divides us.
Blessed are those who are called to live by His peace
and to share in the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

As we receive your Body, Lord Jesus,
make our hearts your resting place.
Let your Kingdom break in through us—
in the words we speak,
in the peace we offer,
in the love we dare to show even to our enemies.
Help us to live not by the law of the predator,
but by the law of love. Amen.

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

Replenished by the food of spiritual nourishment, O Lord,
we humbly ask you:
help us to walk always in the light of your Kingdom,
bearing fruit that shows our repentance
and welcoming one another with the heart of Christ.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the God of hope fill you with all joy
and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope
by the power of the Holy Spirit. – Amen.

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

DISMISSAL (adapted to the readings)

Go forth in peace
and live as if the Kingdom were already here.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

*“If the Kingdom of God is coming, I must live as if it were
already here.”*

Let your week be marked by small acts of repentance,
unexpected welcome,
and courageous love.

Because the fairy tale is not a fantasy—
it's a call to wake up.

Immaculate Conception of the B V Mary (08.12.2025)

Gen 3,9-15.20;Eph 1,3-6.11-12; Lk 1,26-38

“The grace of God, by which Mary was preserved from all guilt and sin, and the love of God, who is always close to us human beings, be with you!”

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, an elderly Austrian woman told me a story I never forgot. During an intense election season, when campaign posters covered every wall, she received a letter in the mail. On the envelope were the words: “You have been chosen.” Her heart leapt — perhaps she had won a prize? Perhaps she had been selected for some honour? But when she opened it, she realised she had simply been chosen for jury duty. She laughed and said:

“Being chosen, Father, is always a little frightening. Even when it is an honour, suddenly you feel the weight of responsibility.”

Today we celebrate God’s choice — not of a politician, not of the powerful, not of the clever, but of a humble young woman of Nazareth.

The Immaculate Conception is the feast of God’s election.

Mary is *chosen*, she is *disturbed*, and she *surrenders*.

In her, God begins a new story — a new creation — the beginning of our redemption.

Let us enter this celebration with gratitude for God’s trust in humanity, and with the desire to answer Him as Mary answered: “*Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.*”

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the feast)

Mary was preserved from sin, not to be distant from us, but to show us what God desires for each of His children. We, too, are called to holiness.

Let us acknowledge our sins, and ask for the grace to trust God as she trusted.

Lord Jesus, You chose Mary to be your Mother and filled her with grace: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You entered fully into our human reality and offer salvation to all. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, through prophets, saints, and especially through Mary, You show us the path that leads to you. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the feast)

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and lead us into the freedom of His grace, so that, like Mary, we may say “yes” to His will. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE GLORIA (adapted to the feast)

Today heaven rejoices, for God’s grace has shone uniquely in the heart of Mary. Let us join the angels and saints, and with joyful voices proclaim:

COLLECT (adapted to the feast for personal meditation)

Loving God, on this feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we praise you for the new beginning you have made for all humanity.

From the first moment of her existence, you prepared her to be the Mother of the Redeemer and preserved her from every stain of sin.

Through her intercession, make our hearts open, trusting, and ready to receive your grace.

May we, like her, serve you with joyful surrender.

Through Christ our Lord your Son, who lives...

Amen.

HOMILY - “Chosen, Disturbed, and Surrendered:

Learning to Trust as Mary Trusted”

Many years ago, an elderly Austrian woman told me a story that has stayed with me.

During an election season, when political campaigns were at their loudest, she received a letter in the post. On the envelope were the words: “*You have been chosen.*” Her heart raced. For a moment she wondered if she had won a prize, or whether she had been selected for some civic honour. As she opened the envelope with trembling hands, she realised it was simply her name randomly picked for jury duty.

But she laughed as she told me: “Father, being chosen is always a bit frightening. Even when it is an honour, suddenly you feel the weight of responsibility.”

Being chosen is an honour.

Being chosen is also disturbing.

Being chosen demands a response.

Today we celebrate not simply a doctrine, not simply a privilege, but an election — the election of Mary, God’s

choice of a humble young woman of Nazareth to enter into His saving plan. And, like every election, it comes with trust, uncertainty, responsibility, and a leap of faith.

1. A Different Kind of Election

These past years, both in Austria and Germany, political elections have drawn enormous attention, debates, headaches, and hopes. Election campaigns are loud; they stir emotions. But they matter, because they determine whom we entrust with guiding our nations.

In politics, in business, in entertainment, people are scrutinized:

Who is the most capable? Who appears strong? Who seems trustworthy?

God's election is different.

He does not hold auditions or run assessment centres. He does not choose those who are cleverest or loudest. He chooses the humble, the receptive, the open-hearted. He chooses Mary, a teenage girl with no public profile, no qualifications, no public reputation — except for a heart completely open to His grace.

When theologians call Mary's privilege "*Immaculate Conception*," they are describing not a prize she earned, but a grace she received — a heart free from the original mistrust that burdens every human being.

That deep interior suspicion that whispers: "*Maybe God does not truly want my good.*"

Mary was preserved from that mistrust.

That is the meaning of her Immaculate Conception: She was all openness, all receptivity, all trust.

She was *full of grace* because she was *empty of fear*.

2. "Highly Favoured... and Deeply Disturbed"

But let us be honest:

Being chosen by God is *not always* comfortable.

When the angel Gabriel appears and calls Mary "highly favoured," Luke immediately adds:

"She was deeply disturbed."

And who wouldn't be?

When God enters a person's life, He disturbs before He consoles.

Think of Moses at the burning bush,
Isaiah in the Temple,
Peter when the nets overflowed,
Paul on the road to Damascus.
God's favour unsettles us because it stretches us beyond ourselves.

Mary's *first* reaction is questioning:

"How can this be?"

Not doubt, but honest searching — the same question we whisper when we face new responsibilities, new crosses, new chapters of life.

A young university student once told me after unexpectedly being accepted into a prestigious program:

"Father, I wanted this, but now that it's real, I'm terrified."

Mary's fear does not disqualify her.

Her questions do not disqualify her.

Her humanity does not disqualify her.

It is precisely through her humanity that God works.

And then — a miracle greater than the Virgin Birth —

Mary surrenders:

"Behold, the handmaid of the Lord;
let it be done to me according to your word."

This is how God's salvation enters the world:
not through force, but through consent;
not through power, but through trust.

3. Adam Hides; Mary Stands

Our first reading gives us the opposite scene: Adam and Eve hear the sound of God walking in the garden — and they hide.

Shame makes them run from the One who loves them most.

Fear makes them conceal rather than reveal.

Blame replaces responsibility.

God calls gently:

"Where are you?"

He has been asking this question ever since —
to every heart that hides in guilt or anxiety or fear.

But today we celebrate one human being who never hid from God.

Mary never needed to hear God say, "Where are you?"

Her Immaculate Conception meant that her heart was always turned toward Him — even through real fear, real pain, real sorrow.

She was not a goddess.

She was not protected from human suffering.

She experienced confusion, worry, misunderstanding, loss:

— Simeon's prophecy of the sword

— losing Jesus in the temple

— standing at the foot of the Cross.

But she never turned her back on God.

She never hid.

She kept saying "yes."

Her entire life was one continuous, unbroken act of trust.

4. The Challenge for Us: Trusting in the Darkness

This feast is not only about Mary.

It is a mirror held up to us.

Because within each of us there lives Adam's instinct to hide: fear of God's will,
fear of surrender,
fear of not being in control.

A man once confessed to me:

"Father, I trust God in theory.

I just don't trust what He might ask of me."

We all know those moments:

the unexpected diagnosis,

the broken relationship,

the loss of work,

the death of someone we love.

Advent is called the "quietest time of the year,"

but it is often when the deepest fears rise to the surface — fears we drown out with lights, noise, shopping, activity.

Yet Advent is also the season when God whispers:

"Do not be afraid.

Let me find you.

Let me work in you.

Let Christ be formed in you."

Mary shows us the way:

Trust that God desires your good more than you do.

Trust that His plan is gentler than your fears imagine.

Trust that His grace is already preparing you for what He asks.

5. Mary, Mother of the Yes

Mary is the model of what humanity was meant to be: open, responsive, receptive, trusting.

She is the opposite of the hiding Adam.

She is the “blessed air we breathe,” as Hopkins said — the atmosphere where no sin can suffocate love.

And she is close to us.

She is not distant or idealized.

We do not say, “Holy Mary, pray for the saints.”

We say,

“Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.”

Because she knows our weakness.

She knows our fears.

She knows what sin costs — she saw it on Calvary.

And yet she also knows the power of grace — she lived it from the first moment of her existence.

6. Ending Story: Letting Ourselves Be Found

A catechist once described the spiritual life to her children by comparing it to the game of hide-and-seek. The children laughed until she added:

“In our game with God, we are always the ones hiding, and God is always the One seeking.”

One small girl raised her hand and said:

“But, Miss, if God is seeking, then we should let Him find us!”

Yes.

That is the message of today’s feast.

Let God find you.

Let God choose you.

Let God favour you.

Let God form Christ in you.

For when Mary said “yes,”

God changed the world.

When you say “yes,”

He can change your life.

Conclusion

On this Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, we honour

Mary, the Woman of the Yes,
the Woman of trust,
the Woman who never hid,
the Woman full of grace.

May she help us
to step out of hiding,
to trust more deeply,
to surrender more freely,
so that Christ may be born again — in us.

Holy Mary, Immaculate Mother,
pray for us sinners
now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

INVITATION TO THE CREDO (adapted to the feast)

Mary believed the impossible and trusted God's promise.
Let us now profess the faith she embraced with her whole life: I believe in God...

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

(adapted to the feast)

As Mary, full of grace, offered her whole self to God with the words, "*Let it be done to me,*" let us now place not only bread and wine, but our lives, our hopes, our wounds, and our desire for holiness upon the altar, and pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

OFFERTORY PRAYER (adapted to the feast)

Lord our God,
on this feast of Mary's election,
we bring before you the gifts of bread and wine,
and with them we bring our lives.

As you transform these gifts into the Body and Blood of Christ, transform us also: our fears into trust, our darkness into light, our confusion into surrender, our discouragement into hope.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PREFACE (adapted to the feast)

It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God.
For you have blessed us in Christ
with every spiritual blessing in the heavens.
You chose us to be your children
and destined us for the praise of your glory.
In Mary, the humble daughter of Nazareth,
we behold the masterpiece of your grace.
From the first moment of her existence,
you preserved her from every stain of sin
and prepared her to be the Mother of the Redeemer.
In her we see what your grace can accomplish
and how you desire to dwell in every human heart.
Through her obedient “yes,” your eternal Word took flesh
and made His home among us.
Through Him the whole world receives salvation.
And so, with Mary and with all the angels and saints,
we sing the hymn of your glory: Holy, Holy, Holy...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

*(Optional thematic insertion based on the Feast of the day:
Lord, as we prepare to call down your Spirit upon these
gifts, we remember the grace you poured uniquely into the
heart of Mary. She was the first to receive your Word with
perfect trust, the first to give herself entirely to your plan,
the first to allow Christ to be formed within her.*

*As you overshadowed her with your Spirit,
so now overshadow us and these gifts,
that Christ may be formed in us
as truly as He was formed in her).*

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. Remember, Lord, your Church, spread throughout the world, and bring her to the fullness of charity, together with N. our Pope and N. our Bishop, and all the clergy.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the Feast of the day:

*Remember also, Father,
your servants whom you have chosen in Baptism
to reflect the holiness of Mary.
Strengthen us in moments of fear,
when your call disturbs our plans
or stretches us beyond our comfort.
Teach us, like her, to stand before you without hiding,
to surrender without fear,
and to trust that your grace always prepares the way
for the mission you give.*

*May her “yes” become the pattern of our lives,
until Christ is fully alive in us).*

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 OUR FATHER (adapted to the feast)

God’s will was fulfilled perfectly in Mary.
With confidence that His will is always love,
let us pray as Jesus taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the feast)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil.
Grant peace in our days,
and free us from the fears and anxieties
that make our hearts restless and hide from your light.
Through the loving intercession of the Immaculate Virgin,
whose “yes” opened the door of salvation,
help us to trust your mercy more than our weaknesses
and to await with steadfast hope
the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the feast)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you are our peace, born of Mary, the spotless Queen of
Peace. Look not on our sins, our failures, or our doubts,
but on the faith and the prayer of your Church,
which seeks your face and longs for your kingdom.

Grant her the peace, unity, and healing
that flow from your Cross and Resurrection,
that we may be one in heart and mind in your love.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION (adapted to the feast)

Behold the Lamb of God,
borne in the immaculate womb of Mary.
Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the feast)

“Mary from Next Door”

Mary is never far from us.
She is not a distant queen whom we approach only with trembling.
She is more like the quiet neighbour next door—
the one who notices when our lights stay on too long,
who senses when our hearts are tired,
who knocks gently to ask whether everything is alright.
Mary enters our lives without noise or drama.
She steps into our ordinary days—
into kitchens where we worry,
into hospital rooms where we wait,
into empty corridors where we walk alone.
She does not come with answers ready-made,

but with a presence that steadies the soul
and gives courage to take the next step.
Today, after receiving her Son in the Eucharist,
Mary stands beside us again.
She does what she has always done:
she leads us quietly to Jesus.
She whispers into our uncertainty,
“Do whatever he tells you.”
She opens our hearts to grace
as she once opened her own heart in Nazareth.
Mary from next door knows our struggles—
the fears we carry,
the prayers we do not speak aloud,
the burdens we hide behind polite smiles.
She gathers these unspoken things
and carries them to the Lord with a mother’s tenderness.
And she does one thing more:
she teaches us how to trust.
Not with perfect strength,
but with a humble heart that believes

God can work wonders even in small, hidden places.
She reminds us that every 'yes'—even a trembling one—
can let light into the world.
Jesus, whom we have just received,
comes to us through her hands.
Let us rest for a moment in this quiet companionship—
with the Son who feeds us
and with the Mother who stays close.
Mary from next door, pray for us, walk with us,
and lead us always to your Son, now dwelling within us.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER (adapted to the feast)

God our Father,
you have nourished us with the Bread of Life,
the Son born of the Immaculate Virgin.
As you called Mary and prepared her heart,
so call and prepare us to carry Christ into our world.
Strengthen us in times of darkness,
guide us in moments of confusion,
and help us trust you as she trusted.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

SOLEMN BLESSING (adapted to the feast)

May the God who chose Mary from her first moment
bless you and keep you in His grace.
Amen.
May He purify your hearts
and make you steadfast in trust and holiness.
Amen.
May He fill you with the joy that Mary bore
and lead you to the fullness of life in Christ.
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 for ever.**
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go now in peace,
and as Mary did, bring Christ into the world
through your words, your actions, and your trust.
Thanks be to God.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

Mary was chosen, disturbed, and surrendered — and through her “yes,” God changed the world. Let God find you today. Let God choose you. Say your “yes,” and He will change your life.

Monday of the Second Week of Advent

Is 35:1–10; Lk 5:17–26 - “*God’s saving presence brings healing, joy, and the courage to walk again.*”

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a weary traveller drove across the Australian outback, miles away from the nearest town. His car broke down, and his phone had no signal. As the sun began to set, fear crept in—until he noticed something extraordinary. Out of the barren red earth, just beside the road, bloomed a single bright flower. That fragile life in the midst of desolation whispered a truth his heart needed to hear: *“Even here, there is hope.”*

Today, Isaiah proclaims the same message: “Say to those who are of a fearful heart: Take courage! Your God is coming.”

God’s promise is to make the desert bloom and the fearful stand tall again. He comes to strengthen trembling knees and revive fainting hearts—not only through power, but through mercy made flesh in Jesus Christ.

As we begin this Advent liturgy, let us open our hearts to that promise.

May Christ find in us not barren ground, but soil ready for hope, healing, and joy.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

Lord Jesus, You are the living water of the world:

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You are the light in our human darkness:

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You are the way, the truth, and the life for all:

Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May the God who causes the desert to bloom
and strengthens trembling hearts
have mercy on us.

Through the healing word of Jesus,
who forgives sins and restores the broken,
may we be lifted up in grace,
freed from our burdens,

and brought to walk again in the joy of His peace
and to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Lord our God,

You have promised that the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom,

and that the fearful of heart shall be strengthened.

In the midst of our broken world,
send us Your healing Word.

Renew our hope,

and make us agents of faith and compassion
for those who cannot walk alone.

We ask this 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: “*Faith That Carries and Mercy That Heals*”

“The Roof Above Jesus”

Many years ago, in a small coastal village, a house caught fire in the night. The family inside managed to escape—except for one small boy trapped on the upper floor. His father stood below, calling out to him, “Jump! I’ll catch you!” Through the thick smoke, the child cried, “But Daddy, I can’t see you!”

The father replied, “You can’t see me, but I can see you—so jump!” The boy leapt into his father’s arms.

That moment of trust—jumping into love unseen—is what faith looks like in today’s Gospel.

There’s a beautiful image at the heart of this passage: A man who could not walk was carried to Jesus by the faith of his friends.

It’s easy to overlook the drama of that moment. He was completely dependent on others. And yet, he had something precious—a community of friends who refused to give up on him. When they found no way through the

door, they made one through the roof. They literally opened heaven for him.

That’s not just determination—that’s faith in motion.

“Carried in the Snowstorm”

Some winters ago, in the American Midwest, a snowstorm hit unexpectedly on a Sunday morning. Despite the weather, a tiny country church held its service. As people trudged through the snow, a farmer noticed an elderly woman struggling at the edge of the parking lot. Without hesitation, he picked her up in his arms and carried her to the front pew.

Later someone asked, “Why did you do that? You didn’t even know her.”

He replied, “You don’t let someone freeze outside when you know there’s warmth waiting inside.”

That’s what the friends of the paralysed man did. They knew Jesus was inside—and they wouldn’t let their friend remain outside the circle of mercy.

All of us, at some point, find ourselves unable to walk—spiritually, emotionally, even physically. And all of us need

someone who will carry us with faith and love. Likewise, there will be times when we are called to be the ones who carry others.

When Jesus saw this group lowering the man, the Gospel says: "Seeing their faith..."

It wasn't the man's faith alone that moved Jesus—it was the *faith of his community*.

That's what opens the floodgates of grace.

This is the living image of the Church: a people who lift, who intercede, who carry each other toward Christ when one of us can no longer move.

"Faith on a String"

A missionary once told of a remote African village where there was no church building—only a circle of believers who gathered under a tree. One Sunday, an elderly man who had always led their prayers was missing. He had become too weak to walk.

The next week, four young boys arrived carrying him on a stretcher made of bamboo and string. The priest was astonished. "Why go through all this trouble?" he asked.

One of the boys smiled and said,

"He has always prayed for us. Now we pray with our legs for him."

That's faith that carries. That's what Jesus saw in today's Gospel.

But notice what comes next: before the man even stands up, Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven."

Why forgiveness first? Because the deepest paralysis is not in the legs, but in the heart.

Jesus heals from the inside out.

He restores dignity before mobility, peace before movement.

This is the Advent Christ—the One who enters the broken places of our lives to make us whole again. The One who tells each of us:

"Take courage. Do not be afraid. Your God is coming."

Take-Home Points

1. Let your faith carry others. Like those four friends, lift someone in prayer, encouragement, or simple presence.
2. Let yourself be carried. Don't be afraid to lean on the faith of others—Christ works through community.
3. Believe that forgiveness begins the healing. When Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven," He is giving you the courage to start anew.

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

As we prepare to place our gifts upon this altar, let us also offer our shared faith, our needs, and our desire to bring others into the healing presence of Christ and pray that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Father almighty...

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

Lord, accept these gifts we bring,
and bless the faith that moves us to offer them.
May this sacrifice, united with the love that carries others to You, prepare us to celebrate the healing and joy of Your Kingdom. 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.

You spoke through the prophets of a time when the desert would bloom,

the blind would see, and the lame would leap for joy.

And in Your Son Jesus Christ, that promise has been fulfilled. He brings healing to our wounds,

light to our darkness, and joy to the weary.

Even now, as we await His return,

He strengthens our weak hands and confirms our trembling

knees. And so, with angels and saints, we join in the unending hymn of praise: ***Holy, Holy, Holy...***

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: You make deserts bloom and bring life where hearts have grown dry. Through Your Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, You strengthen trembling hands, raise up the fallen, and open a way of healing and peace for Your people).

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 You 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 You 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 counted us worthy to stand 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.
Lord, remember Your Church, spread throughout the world,
and bring her to the fullness of charity—
together with our Pope N., our Bishop N.,
and all who serve Your people in faith and love.
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 carried others in faith and love,
we may be made sharers of 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

Together as one family,
carried by the faith of the Church throughout the ages,
let us pray with confidence in the words Jesus taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every burden that paralyses
the soul, and grant us peace in these waiting days.
By the help of Your mercy, may we rise again from sin,
be upheld in every trial,
and find strength in the faith that carries us to You,
as we await the joyful coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

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 the Church—
especially the faith of those who carry others in love.
Grant us that same peace and unity,
that we may be a community of healing, forgiveness,

and hope, in accordance with Your will.

You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Behold the Lamb of God—

He who sees the faith of His people,
forgives sins, and restores the wounded.

Blessed are those who are invited to this altar
to share in the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

“Seeing their faith...”

Let that be said of us too, Lord—

That we carried someone else to You today.

May this Communion strengthen us to be signs of Your
mercy and presence in our world.

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

Lord our God,

You have nourished us with this holy gift,
and shown us again the healing mercy of Your Son.

May this sacrament strengthen us

to walk with courage, carry one another in faith,
and live as signs of Your Advent hope in the world.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the God who strengthens trembling hands
and makes the lame leap for joy
bless you with courage, mercy, and peace.

May Christ, who heals and forgives,
carry you when you are weak
and empower you to carry others in love.
And may almighty God bless you,
the Father and the Son  and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, carrying Christ’s love to the world.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

When we cannot walk alone, faith carries us.

This Advent, be the friend who lifts others up to Jesus—and allow others to carry you when you are weary.

God works miracles through community and compassion.

Tuesday of the 2nd Week of Advent

Is 40:1–11; Mt 18:12–14

“God’s tender, persistent care for the lost and weak, and our call to share that care.”

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, during a fierce winter storm, rescuers in the Scottish Highlands discovered a shepherd searching frantically through the snow. He had lost one of his sheep—a small lamb that had wandered off into the blizzard.

Though visibility was near zero and night was falling, the man refused to give up. When he finally found the lamb trapped in a snowdrift, he wrapped it in his coat and carried it home on his shoulders, whispering, “You’re safe now. I’ve got you.”

That image of the shepherd, braving the cold and darkness for one fragile life, captures the heart of today’s liturgy.

Advent calls us to awaken to this truth: **God Himself comes seeking us.** He does not abandon us in the storm; He carries us with tender hands back to safety. Through Isaiah and the Gospel, we are reminded that even in times

of fear, exile, or weariness, our God is near—faithful, gentle, and full of compassion.

Let us open our hearts to the Shepherd who never tires of finding us and who gently leads us home.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ, Shepherd of the little and weak.

Lord have mercy.

Christ Jesus, Friend of the lost and forgotten.

Lord have mercy.

Lord Jesus Christ, Healer of our broken hearts.

Lord have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

God our Father,

who is the Good Shepherd of all,
calls us back from the wilderness of sin and despair.

In His mercy, He restores our souls and heals our wounds.

May He forgive your sins, strengthen your spirit,
and lead you safely home to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

God of tender compassion,

You are the Good Shepherd who seeks out the lost and carries the weak.

In this season of waiting,

help us to trust in Your care,

and to find comfort in Your steadfast love.

Strengthen our hearts to welcome You with joy
and to walk in Your ways all our days.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, Your Son,
who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever. Amen.

HOMILY: “*Carried in Tender Hands: The God Who Seeks the Lost*”

A few months ago, a fire broke out in a small family home late at night. Amidst the chaos, the father managed to get everyone out—except for his youngest child, trapped upstairs. Without hesitation, he ran back into the flames. Moments later, he emerged from the smoke, coughing, cradling the child close to his chest. When asked why he risked his life, he said simply, “Because he’s mine.”

That's how God loves us. That's what today's readings proclaim: **God comes searching, rescuing, and carrying us—not because we deserve it, but because we belong to Him.**

Through Isaiah, we hear God's voice breaking through the silence of exile: "Comfort, comfort my people."

These words are spoken to people who have lost everything—their home, their hope, even their sense of God's nearness. But God's answer is not judgment; it is tenderness. He comes not as a warrior, but as a Shepherd. "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs in His arms and carry them close to His heart."

It's one of the most intimate images in all of Scripture. The God of the universe stoops down, lifts the weary and wounded, and whispers, "You're safe now. I've got you."

Jesus deepens this image in today's Gospel. He tells of a shepherd with a hundred sheep—one wanders off, and he leaves the ninety-nine to go after it. To human logic, that seems foolish; to divine love, it's natural. For **God's**

mathematics are not about numbers but about names.

Every person matters. No one is replaceable.

Maybe you have been that lost sheep—caught in sin, buried in sorrow, or feeling forgotten by faith. Maybe you've asked, "Would God still come looking for me?" Today's Gospel answers with a resounding **Yes**. Advent is not about our search for God—it's about God's search for us. And once He finds us, He doesn't scold or shame. He lifts us up and carries us home. That's grace. That's Advent hope.

But this Gospel also invites us to *become shepherds ourselves*. To look around and ask: Who in my family, my parish, or my community is lost or hurting? Who needs to be carried with kindness and prayer? Saint Nicholas, whose feast we celebrate this week, did exactly that—quietly bringing relief and hope to those forgotten by the world. Advent is a time not only to be found but also to help others be found—to bring comfort where there's loneliness, light where there's despair, and forgiveness where there's division.

Let me end with one more story.

A young boy once asked his grandfather, a retired shepherd, “Grandpa, were you ever scared of getting lost in the hills at night?” The old man smiled and said, “No, my boy. I always kept my ear open for the sound of the sheep that wandered off. When I heard its cry, I knew where I was meant to go.”

Perhaps this Advent, God is listening for *our* cry—and maybe He’s sending us to listen for someone else’s. Either way, the Shepherd is near. And when He finds us, He will lift us in His tender hands and carry us home.

INTRODUCTION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

(adapted to the readings)

With grateful hearts, let us present our gifts—symbols of our hope and trust in the Good Shepherd who guides and saves us. May these offerings be pleasing to God the Father almighty.

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

Lord, accept these gifts we bring to You, signs of our longing to be renewed and restored. May they help us to become instruments of Your comfort and peace, bringing hope to those who feel lost and forgotten. 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. For You are the Good Shepherd, full of tender mercy, who seeks out the lost, lifts up the weak, and carries the weary in Your arms.

You never abandon those who stray, but pursue them with patience and love, delighting in their return to Your care.

Even when we falter, when fear and sorrow surround us, Your steadfast love finds us, restores us, and sets us on safe paths.

Through Your Son, Jesus Christ,

we see the fullness of this mercy:
the Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep,
who rejoices over each sinner who repents,
and who calls us to share His compassionate care.
Therefore, with angels and archangels,
and with all the company of heaven,
we proclaim Your glory,
and join their unending hymn of praise:

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

EUCARISTIC PRAYER

You are indeed holy, O Lord, the fountain of all holiness.

**Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray,
by sending down Your Spirit like a shepherd's gentle
hand to sanctify them, 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, gave You 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 the same way, He took the chalice,
gave You thanks, and 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.***

We proclaim Your death, O Lord,
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 counted us worthy
to stand 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.
Lord, remember Your Church, spread throughout the world,
and bring her to the fullness of charity—

together with our Pope N., our Bishop N., and all who serve Your people in faith and love.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day:

Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd,

You sought the lost sheep and carried it upon Your shoulders.

You healed the sick, comforted the sorrowful, and rejoiced when the sinner returned to You).

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 carried others in faith and love, we may be made sharers of 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)

Trusting in the care of our Good Shepherd, let us now pray as Jesus taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, Good Shepherd,

You seek out the lost and carry the weak upon Your shoulders. Deliver us from every evil and guide us with Your loving care. Fill our hearts with Your peace, that we may trust Your mercy and rejoice always in Your presence, as we await Your glorious coming as our Saviour.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ,

Shepherd of the lost and weak, grant us Your peace. May Your peace dwell in our hearts and minds, that we may welcome You with joy and confidence.

Fill us with the peace that comes from Your gentle love,
so that we may share Your peace with others,
bringing comfort, hope, and reconciliation.
Keep us united in Your Spirit, and strengthen us with Your
peace, that we may walk in Your ways and serve our
brothers and sisters faithfully.

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

INVITATION TO COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Behold the Lamb of God,
the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost,
carries the weak, and heals the broken-hearted.
Blessed are those called to His supper.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In receiving the Good Shepherd in the Eucharist,
we are reminded that He carries us in His arms,
seeking us out when we are lost,
and rejoicing over our return.
May this presence strengthen us to be shepherds to one
another, bringing comfort and hope in a world that so often
feels lost.

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

Lord God, You have fed us with the bread of life,
the Good Shepherd who leads us to green pastures.
May we live in Your care and protection, and bring Your love
to those in need. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING

May God, the Good Shepherd, who leads us with gentle
care, bless you and keep you in His peace.
May Christ Jesus watch over your hearts,
and the Holy Spirit guide your steps, now and forever.
And may Almighty God now bless you...Amen.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

This week, remember the story of the lost sheep and the Good
Shepherd who seeks you out personally. No matter how far you
may feel from God, His care is tender and unceasing. In
moments of struggle, open your heart to His comforting
presence and be encouraged to extend that same love and care
to others around you in a world that longs for God's mercy.

Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent

Is 40:25–31 and Mt 11:28–30: “God Invites the Weary”

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever received an invitation when you were too tired to respond? Too worn down by life to even celebrate or rejoice? Today, we hear one such invitation—not from a human friend, but from Jesus Himself. “Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Advent is a season of many lights—but also of many burdens. In the darkness of our personal struggles—whether it be illness, loneliness, or discouragement—the Lord comes as Light and Strength. The Scriptures today remind us: God does not forget us, even when we feel forgotten. The everlasting God does not grow weary, and He shares His strength with the tired and the weak.

So let us begin this celebration by opening our hearts to His invitation. Let us acknowledge our burdens and allow God’s grace to carry us.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

As we prepare to celebrate the sacred mysteries, let us pause and acknowledge the burdens we carry—our sins, our weariness, our hidden struggles—and entrust them to the Lord who says, “*Come to me, all you who are burdened, and I will give you rest.*” (**Pause in silence**)

Lord Jesus, you invite the weary to come to you:
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you are gentle and humble of heart:
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you carry the yoke with us and give peace to our souls: Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May the God of mercy, who knows the weight each heart carries, forgive us all our sins,
lift from us what is too heavy to bear alone,
and restore us with the gentle peace of Christ,
who walks beside us always and bring us to everlasting life.
Amen.

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

O God, who never grow weary,
and who lift up the lowly and strengthen the faint of heart,
look kindly upon your people who long for your coming.
Grant that we may always find rest in your Son,
whose yoke is easy and whose burden is light,
so that renewed in spirit,
we may walk with Him in trust and humility.
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: “The Strong Shoulders Beside You”

One morning in a small farming village, a young boy was walking with his grandfather beside a pair of oxen pulling a wooden cart. One ox was huge and powerful, the other surprisingly young and small. The boy asked, “Grandpa, how can they pull together? Isn’t the smaller one too weak?”

The old man smiled and said, “That big ox does most of the pulling. The little one is learning—but it’s connected so it walks, feels the rhythm, and slowly becomes stronger.” That’s exactly how Jesus describes His relationship with us today: *“Take my yoke upon you... my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”* The yoke doesn’t mean He gives us more weight. It means *He walks with us*, pulling more than His share.

1. A God Who Strengthens the Weary

Isaiah speaks to a people worn out by exile—forgotten, beaten down, discouraged. He reminds them of something they’ve lost sight of: God does not grow weary. He doesn’t tire of us, even when we tire of ourselves. In fact, Isaiah says: *“Those who hope in the Lord shall renew their strength... they shall run and not grow weary, walk and not faint.”*

You may know the story of Florence Chadwick, the swimmer who attempted to swim from Catalina Island to the coast of California. After hours in cold, foggy waters, she gave up just half a mile from the shore—because she

couldn't see it. Later she said, "If I had just seen the land, I might have made it."

Sometimes we just need a glimpse of hope—some sign that we are not alone in the struggle. That's exactly what Jesus gives us: not an escape from life, but a companion through life. A strong shoulder, a silent strength.

2. Come to Me—Even With Your Mess

Jesus doesn't invite the strong, the perfect, or the rested. He says, "Come to me, *you who are burdened*." That includes all of us—those with broken marriages, financial stress, caregiving exhaustion, anxiety about tomorrow. It includes those who feel abandoned by others or even by God.

There's a beautiful line in the psalms: "*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit*" (Ps 34:18). The brokenness in your life is not a disqualification—it's the very reason for God's invitation. There's a story of a nurse in a palliative care ward. She said, "At the end of life, it's not strength people ask for—it's peace. They want to know they're not alone." Jesus gives

that. His rest is not sleep. It is *peace in the soul*—a peace the world cannot give.

3. The Great God Who Became Small

As the Swiss theologian Kurt Marti once wrote: "Man wants to be big – God wants to be small." In Advent, we prepare for the mighty God who became a helpless baby. He doesn't wait for us at the top of the ladder; He descends into our pain and walks with us.

We often want to appear strong—especially in a world that rewards success and image. But true strength, as Jesus shows us, is found in humility. "*Learn from me*," He says, "*for I am gentle and humble of heart*."

In many ways, we are that little ox, yoked with Christ. We think we're carrying the load. But when we look back one day, we will see: He was the one doing the real lifting.

Conclusion

Dear friends, Jesus' invitation is not a sentimental phrase. It is a *daily lifeline*. And in Advent, He invites us once more to come—not perfect, but honest; not ready, but willing. His

rest is not escape—it is companionship. His yoke is not punishment—it is partnership.

So, as we prepare for Christmas, let us hear again the words that echo through centuries:

“Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest.”

Let that invitation guide you this week. Whatever burdens you carry, you do not carry them alone.

INVITATION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

As we present our gifts upon this altar,
we also place upon it the burdens of our hearts,
trusting that Christ, who bore the Cross,
will transform them by His gentle strength. Let us pray that
our sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS (adapted to the readings)

Be pleased, O Lord, with our humble offerings,
and as we lay before you our daily struggles and hidden
weariness, may these gifts become a source of grace and
renewal 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 days of Advent,
we await the One who makes Himself small,
so that we who are weak may find strength in Him.
You do not grow weary of us,
but walk beside us when we are tired.
In His gentleness, your Son carries the burdens of the
world, inviting the weary to rest in His heart.
And so, with angels and saints,
we lift our voices in joyful hope, as we acclaim:
Holy, Holy, Holy...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fountain of all holiness,
(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day:

*whose strength never fails
and whose mercy never grows weary.*

*You lift up those who stumble,
you renew the faint-hearted,
and through your Son, Jesus Christ,
you invite all who labour and are burdened
to find rest in your gentle love).*

**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...
*We proclaim your Death, O Lord,
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 stand in your presence and minister to you.
Humbly we pray that,
partaking in the Body and Blood of Christ,
we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit—
renewed in strength and comforted in our weariness.
Remember, Lord, your Church, spread throughout the
world, and bring her to the fullness of charity,
together with N. our Pope, N. our Bishop, 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 **under the weight of life's burdens;**
welcome them into the light of your presence,
where every tear is wiped away and every heart finds rest.
Have mercy on us all, we pray,
that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
who bore your Son in humble faith,
with Blessed Joseph, her spouse,
with the apostles and all the saints

who trusted in you when they were weary,
we may come to share eternal life
and praise 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)

With faith in God who walks beside us and never abandons
the weary, let us pray in the words Jesus taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every burden and distress,
and grant peace to our days,
that by the strength of your mercy
we may carry our yoke with Christ—
not crushed but comforted—
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 said to your apostles:
“Peace I leave you, my peace I give you.”

Look not on our sins, but on the burdens we bear,
and grant us the peace that comes from walking with you.
Give us that rest of heart which only you can give,
you who live and reign for ever and ever. *Amen.*

INVITATION TO COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Behold the Lamb of God,
who carries the burdens of the world and offers us rest.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

*“Come to me,” says the Lord,
“all you who are burdened, and I will give you rest.”*
In this Holy Communion, He has come to walk beside you
again. Let Him carry the weight with you.

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

O Lord,
having received your Son who strengthens the weary
and gives peace to the burdened,
grant that we may go forth with renewed hearts,
gentle in spirit and humble in faith,
eager to share with others the comfort we ourselves have
received. Through Christ our Lord. *R. Amen.*

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the Lord, who never grows weary, strengthen you in
your weakness. *Amen.*

May Christ, who walks beside you, give rest to your soul
and hope to your heart. *Amen.*

May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, teach you to carry life's
burdens with faith and grace. *Amen.*

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

DISMISSAL (adapted to the readings)

Go in peace, walking with Christ who carries the yoke beside you.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

“You are never alone in your burden—
you are yoked with Christ,
whose strength is greater than your weariness,
whose peace is deeper than your pain.”

Thursday of the Second Week of Advent

Is 41:13–20; Mt 11:7b,11–15

“God renews the weary and brings hope to those in darkness.”

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a hiker got lost in the desert of Arizona. After hours under the blazing sun, his water was gone, his lips cracked, and his hope fading. Just as he was about to give up, he saw something glimmering ahead — a small stream trickling from the rocks. “It wasn’t much,” he said later, “but that little stream saved my life.”

In many ways, Advent is like finding water in the desert. It reminds us that even when life feels dry and barren, God is near — quietly sending hope into our wilderness.

In today’s first reading, God tenderly speaks to His weary people: *“Do not be afraid, you poor little worm; I will help you.”* It’s not an insult, but a word of deep compassion — a God who sees our frailty and still promises strength, rivers, and renewal.

And in the Gospel, John the Baptist, the fiery prophet, now sits in prison — tired, uncertain, asking questions. Yet Jesus calls him the greatest born of women and reveals that even in our doubt, the Kingdom is near.

So as we begin this Mass, let us bring to the Lord our own deserts — our fears, our dryness, our longing for hope — trusting that God will make rivers flow again in our hearts.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, You are the fountain of life who quenches our thirst for hope. Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You bring rivers of grace to our dry and barren places. Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, You meet us in our doubts and fears and renew our spirits. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May God, who holds us gently like a tender parent, who strengthens the weak and revives the faint-hearted, forgive you your sins, renew your spirit, and lead you into the fullness of life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

O God, our refuge and strength, who lift up the lowly and make rivers flow in the desert, renew in us a living hope through the coming of your Son, that we may trust in your promises, even in the darkest times, and rejoice in the life you freely give.

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

HOMILY: “From Prison to Promise – Finding God’s Rivers in Our Dry Places”

There’s a story told about a missionary in Africa who worked among a tribe living through a terrible drought. Every day the people prayed for rain, but none came. One evening, the missionary found a little girl digging in the dust near the dry riverbed. “What are you doing?” he asked. She smiled and said, “Making a hole for the rain when it comes.”

That's faith — preparing space for grace even when the sky is still empty.

John the Baptist knew something about dry places — literally and spiritually. He had spent his life crying out in the desert, preparing the way of the Lord. But now, he is no longer by the Jordan River; he is in a prison cell. His once-bold voice has grown faint. “Are you the one who is to come,” he asks, “or should we look for another?”

What honesty! Even the greatest prophet struggled to see God's plan in the darkness. Many of us have been there — when prayers go unanswered, when we feel trapped in sorrow, when faith seems like a dry well.

But Jesus does not rebuke John. He points to signs of life: *“The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear.”* In other words, *“Yes, John — the river is flowing, even if you can’t see it from your cell.”*

The prophet Isaiah uses the same image: God making *“rivers flow on barren heights, fountains in the midst of valleys.”* These aren't just poetic words; they describe how God meets us precisely where we feel empty. Sometimes

His grace doesn't come as a flood, but as a hidden spring — steady, quiet, faithful.

There's a flower called the “Resurrection Lily” that grows in the driest parts of Africa. It looks dead most of the year, just brown stalks in the sand. But when the first rain falls, within hours it blooms in radiant colour. Life was always there — just waiting for the water.

Perhaps your heart feels like that dry ground today. Maybe you've prayed for years and nothing seems to move. Maybe like John, you're wondering, *“Lord, are you really there?”* Advent invites us not to give up digging that little hole for the rain. God's promise is sure: *“I will open rivers on the barren heights.”*

Saint John of the Cross, imprisoned for months in a dark cell, once wrote, *“In the dark night of the soul, bright flows the river of God.”* He discovered that God's deepest work often happens in silence, in hidden ways.

And so, when you feel imprisoned by fear or loneliness, remember — grace might already be flowing unseen beneath your desert. The Kingdom is near. It begins in

small acts of faith, in moments of trust, in love that refuses to dry up.

Let me end with one last story. After the Second World War, a small village in Europe rebuilt its bombed church. The statue of Christ had been broken, and the villagers could not find its hands. Someone suggested leaving it that way — with a sign beneath that read: *“Christ has no hands but ours.”* That’s the river of God — flowing through us, turning our dryness into life for others.

So this Advent, dig a little hole for the rain. Trust that even in your prison or desert, God’s promise is alive. The streams are coming — and soon, they will make all things new.

INVITATION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

(adapted to the readings)

As we bring our gifts today, let us offer our lives to the God who makes water flow on barren heights, trusting that through these offerings, grace will renew our hearts and refresh our spirits.

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

Lord God, accept our humble gifts, and through the power of your Spirit, transform them into a spring of living water that nourishes us in our journey of faith. May these offerings strengthen us to proclaim your kingdom in joy and hope, 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, who renew your people through the promise of your Word, turning our exile into homecoming, our thirst into streams of living water. Through Christ your Son, you sent John the Baptist to prepare the way, even in darkness and doubt, calling us to trust in your nearness.

And so, with all the angels and saints,
we proclaim your glory,
as with one voice we sing: *Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...*

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day:

As You once opened rivers on barren heights and made life bloom where all seemed dry, look upon your people who gather in faith this day. In our deserts, in our prisons of doubt, in those places where hope feels thin, let your hidden springs begin to flow. As John the Baptist longed for Your signs even in his darkness, so we prepare a space for Your grace, trusting that Your promise is already at work within 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.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: Lord, as we proclaim this mystery in faith, we remember that Your Son enters every prison of the human heart and every desert of our lives. In the breaking of this Bread and in the outpouring of this Chalice, let the hidden rivers of Your mercy flow again: healing the blind places of our souls, strengthening our weary steps, awakening in us that hope which blooms like the Resurrection Lily after long dryness. Make us, like Christ, Your working hands in the world, so that through our lives Your living water may reach all who thirst for Your love).

Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection, we offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minister to you. Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.

Remember, Lord, your Church, spread throughout the world, and bring her to the fullness of charity, together with N. our Pope and N. our Bishop, and all the clergy, 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.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus taught us to pray with trust and hope, even when we face uncertainty, so let us now join our voices and hearts as we say:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every darkness and despair.
Grant us the grace to trust in Your presence,
to hear Your quiet voice amid the silence,
and to be refreshed by the living waters of Your love,
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 are the peace of the world,
the living water that refreshes the weary soul.
As we prepare to receive You in this Eucharist,
calm the doubts and fears within us,
and fill us with the joy of Your presence.

Make us instruments of Your peace

in a world thirsting for Your love;
who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Behold the Lamb of God,
who takes away the sins of the world.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof,
but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

In the quiet of our hearts,
let us listen for the gentle flow of God's grace,
like rivers in the desert,
bringing new life and hope.
May this holy meal strengthen us
to face our doubts and fears with courage,
trusting that God's promise is true:
we are never alone.

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

God of all consolation,
you satisfy the thirsty and strengthen the weary.
May this holy food renew our hope,
so that, like John the Baptist,
we may prepare the way for your coming
with hearts open and steadfast in faith.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the God who makes rivers flow on barren heights
and quenches our thirst with streams of joy,
bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

DISMISSAL (adapted to the readings)

Go in peace,
to serve the Lord and bring His living water to the world.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

This week, whenever you feel dry or overwhelmed,
remember: God is the fountain of life. Bring your doubts and
fears to Him honestly—and trust that He will refresh your
soul with living water, leading you from darkness into light.

Friday of the Second Week of Advent

Is 48:17–19; Mt 11:16–19

“The Tragedy of Indifference: When God Calls and We Do Not Respond.”

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a young violinist gave a concert in a busy city square.

She played with passion and skill — the same music that had once moved crowds in great halls. But here, people hurried past. Some glanced, a few smiled, most didn’t even slow down. When she finished, no one clapped. She packed her violin quietly and walked away.

What the crowd didn’t know was that this was one of the world’s greatest musicians, performing a priceless piece on a million-dollar instrument — right there on the street. But no one was listening.

That scene could well describe the message of today’s readings.

God has been playing His melody in our lives — through prophets, through His Son, through moments of beauty and

truth — but how often do we hurry past, too distracted to notice?

In the Gospel, Jesus laments a generation that refuses to respond — whether to John’s call for repentance or to His own message of joy.

And in Isaiah, God mourns, *“If only you had listened to my commandments, your peace would have flowed like a river.”*

Today, the Lord asks us the same question:

Will you listen? Will you respond to the music of My grace?

Let us ask for that grace — to open our ears, soften our hearts, and rediscover the melody of His mercy.

PENITENTIAL ACT *(adapted to the readings)*

Let us now acknowledge our failure to respond to God’s call, our deafness to His word, our stubbornness in the face of His mercy.

Lord Jesus, You speak your truth in love, but we turn away.
Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, You sing a song of joy and sorrow,
but we refuse to join in. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You invite us again and again,
but we delay our response. **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May the God of all compassion open our ears to His voice,
soften our hearts to His word, and restore to us the joy of
responding in faith. May He forgive us our sins
and lead us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

O God of patient mercy, you never cease calling your
people to walk in your ways.

Free us from the hardness of heart that keeps us from
hearing your voice, and awaken in us a joyful response to
your Word, that we may live in the peace and abundance
you promise. 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: “When God Plays the Flute and We Don’t Dance”

The Silent Orchestra

A conductor once gathered his orchestra for rehearsal.
Everyone was in place — strings, winds, percussion —
except one violinist who kept his instrument silent.
When the conductor asked why, the man replied, “I’m
waiting for a better song.”

The conductor smiled sadly: “But this *is* the song.”
That’s how Jesus describes His generation in today’s
Gospel. God is playing — but many refuse to join in. “We
played the flute for you, and you did not dance. We sang a
dirge, and you did not mourn.” No melody pleases them. No
message moves them.

God’s Disappointed Melody

In **Isaiah 48**, God sounds like a parent whose heart aches
for a child gone astray:

“If only you had listened to my commandments! Then your
peace would have been like a river.”

Those words aren’t angry — they’re sorrowful. God doesn’t

shout; He sighs.

Like a teacher saying, “If only you had studied, you would have passed.”

Like a friend whispering, “If only you had listened, this pain could have been avoided.”

God is not punishing us; He’s lamenting that we close our ears to His wisdom — the very wisdom that could bring us peace.

The Two Messengers

In the Gospel, Jesus contrasts two messengers:

John the Baptist, who came fasting — and people said, “*He has a demon.*”

Then came Jesus, who ate and drank with sinners — and they said, “*He’s a glutton and a drunkard.*”

Two very different songs — one solemn, one joyful — and yet both rejected.

It shows that the problem isn’t the message.

The problem is the **closed heart** that refuses to hear any melody except its own.

Modern Parable: The Car Warning Light

Imagine driving your car when a red light flashes on the dashboard. It’s a warning — something needs fixing.

You could take it seriously. Or you could put tape over it and pretend it’s not there.

That’s what spiritual indifference looks like.

God sends us signals — a Scripture verse that pierces our heart, a friend’s advice, a crisis that wakes us up — but we cover it over. “Not now, Lord. I’m busy.”

We want God to speak softly, but not too softly. Clearly, but not too clearly. We want Him to comfort us, not confront us. And so we miss His voice altogether.

God’s Melody in Our Lives

Jesus is both the **flutist of joy** and the **singer of sorrow**.

He calls us to dance when there is grace and to weep when there is sin.

But the danger of our age — like His — is apathy.

We scroll, we rush, we fill our lives with noise, and yet our souls remain silent.

The melody of God becomes background music.

The tragedy is not that God stops speaking — but that we stop listening.

Invitation to Respond

The Lord asks us today:

- Do you hear My call to change?
- Do you still allow My joy to make you dance?
- Do you let the world's sorrow move your heart to compassion?

Because the measure of true wisdom is not in what we know, but how we respond.

As Jesus says, "*Wisdom is proved right by her deeds.*"

Closing Story: The Missed Train

A man once ran toward the station, late for his train. He could hear the whistle, see the doors closing — but he hesitated for just a moment, unsure if it was worth the effort.

By the time he decided to run, the train was gone.

He stood on the platform, staring down the tracks, whispering, "If only..."

That's the pain God expresses today: "*If only you had listened...*"

But the good news of Advent is this — **God sends another train.**

His mercy keeps coming. His melody keeps playing.

The invitation never expires.

So today, if you hear His music — don't stand still.

If He plays the flute, dance.

If He sings the dirge, repent.

But above all, **respond.**

Because the saddest silence in the world is the one that refuses to echo God's song.

Amen.

INVITATION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

(adapted to the readings)

As we prepare to offer these gifts of bread and wine, let us also offer our desire to hear and follow God's voice more clearly in our lives, so that our prayers may be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

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

Look kindly, O Lord, upon the gifts we bring before you. Let this sacrifice draw us closer to your wisdom, that we may no longer turn away from your voice but walk the path that leads to peace and 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. For you speak to your people in every age, inviting them to follow your commandments and to share in the abundance of your peace. Even when we turn away, your love does not fail—you continue to call, to teach, and to guide us. In your Son Jesus, you played for us the melody of salvation, yet many refused to listen. Still, your wisdom is vindicated by her deeds,

and your mercy remains open to those who turn back to you. And so, with angels and saints, we raise our voices in thankful praise, as we sing: **Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...**

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

You are indeed Holy, O Lord, the fountain of all holiness. (*Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: You never cease to call your people, inviting us to walk in your ways and to listen to the melody of your mercy. Even when our hearts grow indifferent and our ears grow deaf to your Word, your love continues to sing over us, patiently calling us back to peace and joy.*)

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 You 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 You 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 called us once again to Your table of grace and mercy.

Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit—
(our hearts awakened, our ears opened, our lives attuned to the song of Your wisdom).

Remember, Lord, Your Church, spread throughout the world, and bring her to the fullness of charity, together with N. our Pope and N. our Bishop, and all who serve and guide 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, freed from indifference and stubbornness of heart, we may listen anew to Your voice)

and, with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with Blessed Joseph her spouse,

with the apostles and all the saints
who have heard and responded to Your call through the
ages,
we may become sharers in Your eternal song of praise
and may praise and glorify You
through Your Son, Jesus Christ.

Through Him, and with Him, and in Him... Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Trusting in the One who never ceases to call us back,
let us pray in the words our Saviour gave us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil;
graciously grant peace in our days,
that by the help of your mercy,
we may be freed from the indifference and resistance
that close our ears to your voice,
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 to bring peace to those far and near. You called people to rejoice and to weep, to celebrate and to repent— yet many refused to respond. 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 for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Behold the Lamb of God,
who sings the song of mercy and truth. Blessed are those who hear His call and respond with open hearts.
Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb...

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Lord, you have played the music of your love in our lives— sometimes gently, sometimes as a challenge.
Help us not to walk away unmoved,
but to respond with joy, with repentance, and with trust.
Speak, Lord—we are ready to listen.

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

Renewed by this holy gift, O Lord,
may we no longer be deaf to your voice
or indifferent to your call.
Help us to respond with faith and gratitude
to the melody of grace you place in our lives,
and to walk each day in the wisdom of your will.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May God, who calls us out of stubbornness into grace,
bless you with ears that hear,
a heart that responds,
and a life that dances to His music.

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

DISMISSAL (adapted to the readings)

Go now, and listen for the music of God's mercy.
Respond with joy, with compassion, and with hope.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

This week, listen for God's melody in your life.
Ask yourself:
What is God playing for me today?
And how will I respond—with silence... or with a joyful yes?

Saturday of the Second Week of Advent

Sirach 48:1–4,9–11; Mt 17:9a,10–13

“Recognizing God’s presence in unexpected ways.”

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, a man named David was waiting at the airport to pick up his wife, whom he hadn’t seen for months. He stood near the arrival gate, bouquet in hand, eyes scanning the crowd. After half an hour, he began to worry—had he missed her flight? His phone rang. “David, where are you?” came her voice. He turned around, and there she was—standing right behind him, smiling. He had been waiting so intently for her that he didn’t notice she was already there.

Today’s readings tell a similar story—of a people who waited and waited for God’s messenger, but when he came, they did not recognize him. The people of Israel longed for Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah. Yet when Elijah returned in the person of John the Baptist, they missed him. And when the Messiah himself stood among them, their eyes were blind to his presence.

As we begin this Eucharist, let us pray for hearts that are alert and eyes that are open—so that when Christ comes to us in the poor, the humble, or the unexpected, we may not fail to recognize him.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

As we await the coming of Christ in glory and prepare to encounter him in this Eucharist, let us call to mind the ways we have failed to recognize his presence in our lives and ask the Lord for mercy and healing.

(Brief pause in silence)

Lord Jesus, you came in humility, but we did not always recognize you.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you sent prophets to prepare our hearts, but we often silenced their voice. **Christ, have mercy.** Lord Jesus, you call us daily through the least among us, but we have turned away. **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

Lord our God,
you sent Elijah in fire and John in the desert,
but many did not recognize your messengers.
We confess the times we have failed to see your coming
in the people and moments you placed before us.
Forgive us, open our hearts, and lead us into your light,
that we may be ready to welcome Christ
wherever and however he comes and brings us one day
into everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal
meditation)

God of all time and eternity,
you sent your prophets to prepare the way for your Son,
but their voices were often silenced or ignored.
As we await the coming of Christ,
open our eyes to recognize him in the least and lowly,
in the humble and hidden.
Grant that we may welcome him with joy
and respond to his presence with faith.
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: “When God Comes in Disguise”

Opening Story: The Street Musician

In a busy Washington, D.C. subway station, a man once played the violin while thousands hurried past. A few children stopped, but their parents pulled them away. Only six people paused to listen.

No one knew the man was *Joshua Bell*, one of the world's greatest violinists, playing a \$3.5 million *Stradivarius*. Two nights earlier, he had performed before a sold-out theatre—but here, no one recognized him.

That moment became a parable of how easily we miss beauty, truth, and even God—when He comes disguised in ordinary clothes.

Missing Elijah, Missing Jesus

In today's Gospel, Jesus says, “Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him.”

John the Baptist was that Elijah—yet people missed him because he didn't fit their image of holiness. They expected

fire and thunder, but found a humble man in camel's hair. And soon they would miss Jesus too—the carpenter-Messiah, poor and misunderstood.

The Problem of Expectations

Often our expectations blind us to God's presence. We wait for miracles but miss mercy. We expect thunder but ignore whispers. We look for grandeur but overlook grace. Advent reminds us: the Lord may already be standing beside us, disguised in the ordinary.

Elijah and Fire—or John in the Desert?

Sirach says Elijah “arose like a fire.” Yet God sent John with no lightning, only truth.

God's prophets may come as friends who correct us, children who need our time, neighbours who seek company, or refugees who challenge our comfort.

Will we recognize them as His messengers?

Story: The Candle in the Hospital Room

A nurse once lit a small candle beside a lonely patient on Christmas Eve.

“What's that for?” he asked. “For hope,” she said. Moments later, he smiled and passed away peacefully. The nurse later realized: she had lit a doorway for Christ. She recognized Him in the one everyone else forgot.

The Hidden Christ

Today's Gospel reminds us: God still comes in disguise—in the Eucharist, in those hard to love, in interruptions that disturb our plans.

If our hearts are noisy or distracted, we might miss Him again.

Closing Story: The Little Boy and the Old Woman

One cold evening, a boy brought a sandwich and coffee to an elderly woman shivering on a bench. She smiled, “You're an angel.”

He replied, “No, ma'am. I just saw God today—and He looked cold.”

Brothers and sisters, that is the message of this day: God comes quietly, often in disguise.

Stay awake. Look closely. He's already here.

INVITATION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Let us now pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice, made with watchful hearts,
may be acceptable to God, the Almighty Father.

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

Accept, O Lord, these offerings we place upon your altar,
and as you accepted the voice of Elijah and the witness of
John, so accept our prayer and sacrifice today.

May these gifts prepare us to recognize your Son
and welcome him with ready hearts.

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 you sent the prophet Elijah in fire and zeal
to turn the hearts of your people back to you.

In the fullness of time, you raised up John the Baptist
as a voice crying in the wilderness,
preparing a people fit for the coming of the Messiah.
Though many failed to recognize them,
you continued to speak through their witness.
Even now, in this season of waiting,
you call us to awaken our hearts
and welcome Christ in unexpected places.
And so, with angels and archangels,
and all the hosts of heaven,
we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:
Holy, Holy, Holy...

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 come before you in this Advent time,
we remember how your presence often comes hidden—
not in thunder or fire, but in silence and humility.*

*Open our eyes, O Lord, to recognize you
in the simple gifts we now place upon this altar).*

**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: Lord, you came among us once in hiddenness and
humility,*

and you come again in this mystery of faith.

*May our sharing in this sacrament
awaken our hearts to see you where we least expect—
in the poor, the humble, and the unseen moments of grace).*

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, 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 ... Amen.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER (adapted to the readings)

As we await the coming of Christ, let us pray in the words he taught us, that we may recognize his presence among us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, and open our eyes to the ways you come to us each day. Graciously grant peace in our days, that by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ, you came not with spectacle, but in humility; not with thunder, but with truth.

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,

and graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with your will.

Who live and reign for ever and ever. **Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Behold the Lamb of God,
the one whom Elijah and John foretold,
the one who comes quietly, yet powerfully.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, you came in humility and stillness,
and many did not recognize you.

You come again to us in this Eucharist.

Help us to see your face
in the forgotten and the overlooked,
to hear your voice in the call to conversion,
and to walk with courage as your faithful people. Amen.

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

Refreshed by the bread of life, O Lord,
may we go forth renewed in spirit,
so that like Elijah and John,
we may bear witness to your truth,
and recognize Christ in the hidden corners of our lives.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May God, who spoke through prophets and sends his
messengers even now,
make your hearts attentive to his voice. **Amen.**

May he who came in humility
and will come again in glory

keep you faithful in watchfulness and prayer. **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 for ever.
Amen.

DISMISSAL (adapted to the readings)

Go in peace, and be ready to recognize Christ
in the places you least expect him.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

God's messengers do not always come with fire or thunder.

Sometimes they come quietly, wrapped in humility and
truth.

If we are not watchful, we may miss them.

But if we are open, we will discover—

Christ is already among us.