

3rd Sunday of Advent (Year A – Gaudete)

Is 35:1–6, 10; James 5:7–10; Mt 11:2–11

Spirit of patient hope, quiet joy, and trusting anticipation.

INTRODUCTION

One winter morning in a small town, an old man was seen planting rosebushes outside his modest home.

A curious passerby asked, “*Why plant roses in December? They'll never bloom this season.*”

The man smiled and replied, “*That's true. But spring will come—and I want the garden to be ready.*”

That's the spirit of this Third Sunday of Advent—Gaudete Sunday—the Sunday of joy in waiting.

The Church invites us to rejoice, not because everything is perfect, but because God is on the way.

Isaiah tells us that the desert will bloom.

James tells us to be patient like farmers.

And even John the Baptist—faithful and fiery—asks, “*Are You the One?*”

Today, we light the rose candle. It glows softly in the Advent darkness—a sign of *patient joy, quiet hope, and*

trusting anticipation.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

As we await the joy of the Lord's coming, let us acknowledge the times we have grown weary in waiting, lost hope in barren places, or doubted the quiet nearness of our God. Let us ask Him for mercy and peace.

(Brief silence)

Lord Jesus, You bring sight to the blind and joy to the brokenhearted: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, You strengthen the weary and renew those who wait in faith: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, You are the One who is to come, and You are already near: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ,

You came to open the eyes of the blind, strengthen weary hands, and bring good news to the poor.

We confess that we have grown tired of waiting, slow to trust, and forgetful of Your presence.

Forgive us our doubts, our weariness, our lack of love.

Renew our hearts with Your mercy, so that with rejoicing we may await Your coming, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

O God of desert blossoms and silent joy,
You sent Your prophets to speak hope in barren times,
and You gave us Your Son as a gentle sign of Your nearness.

Give us patient hearts to wait for Your promises,
open eyes to recognize the signs of Your love,
and deep joy that springs from trust in You.

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: “Gaudete: Patient Joy in the Midst of Waiting”

Opening Story: The Old Organ in the Church

In a small village in Europe stood a centuries-old church with a magnificent pipe organ. It had once filled the

sanctuary with glorious music, but over the years, dust and decay silenced it. The keys stuck, the pipes rusted, and the parish grew used to silence. They sang without accompaniment; joy had faded into habit.

One winter afternoon, an elderly stranger appeared at the door, asking quietly if he might see the organ. With permission, he climbed up to the loft and began working — polishing, adjusting, tuning. For three days, no one heard a sound from him. Then, on the fourth day, during evening Mass, as the priest raised the host, the church filled with sound again — rich, trembling, alive. People wept. They had forgotten how beautiful joy could be.

Later they learned that the old man was the original builder’s apprentice — returning after fifty years to restore what he had helped create.

That’s what Gaudete Sunday is about. When all seems silent, when our faith feels like an instrument fallen out of tune, the Lord returns — quietly, tenderly — to make our souls sing again.

1. Joy That Comes in the Middle of Silence

The readings today speak to hearts that have waited long in silence.

Isaiah paints a picture: “*The desert shall bloom; the weak shall be strong; the sorrowful shall sing.*” It’s a message for those whose hope has run dry, who wonder whether God has forgotten them.

John the Baptist, too, knew this desert of the soul. Once fiery and fearless, now imprisoned and uncertain, he sends messengers to Jesus asking, “*Are You the One?*” It is a question born not of disbelief but of exhaustion — the cry of a prophet who had given his all and saw no results. And what does Jesus answer? Not a sermon, but a sign: “*Go and tell John what you see: the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear.*”

In other words — “*John, the music has started again. You may not hear it from your prison cell, but the song of salvation is playing.*”

Joy, then, is not the absence of sorrow. It is the quiet conviction that God is at work even when we can’t hear His

tune.

2. Waiting with the Heart of a Farmer

St. James, in the second reading, tells us, “*Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth.*”

A farmer can’t hurry the harvest. He can water, till, and protect, but the growth happens in secret. The seed breaks open underground long before the shoot appears above the soil.

Likewise, God’s grace is often hidden before it is visible. There’s a saying among the saints: “*When you cannot feel God, it is because He is working too deep to be felt.*”

Like that silent organ, like the unseen roots of bamboo, something is happening beneath our barrenness. Patience, then, is not passive. It is active faith — faith that believes in spring even when standing in the middle of winter.

3. Joy Hidden in Ordinary Waiting

A nurse once told a story from her hospital’s maternity ward.

Every morning she would see expectant mothers sitting

quietly, hands on their bellies, waiting — sometimes in pain, sometimes in fear, but always with hope. She said, *“They are the most patient people I’ve ever met — because they are waiting for life.”*

That’s Advent joy. It doesn’t shout or sparkle; it breathes. It listens. It trusts.

It is the joy of a mother waiting for birth, of an old man lighting the Advent candle, of a believer who still prays even when heaven seems silent.

Sometimes, like John, we too are in prison — of anxiety, loneliness, or delay. But Jesus says to us, *“Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me,”* meaning: *“Blessed is the one who still believes, still hopes, still rejoices — even when I come quietly and slowly.”*

4. The Joy of Restoration

Once, during the Second World War, a small English church was bombed. The only thing that survived amid the rubble was a wooden statue of Christ — broken, with both hands missing. The parish decided to leave it that way, placing a sign below it that read:

“Christ has no hands but yours.”

Every Advent, they would decorate that statue with candles and greenery, reminding themselves that *joy is not something we wait to feel; it’s something we bring to others.*

When we comfort, forgive, or serve, the broken world hears again the sound of divine music.

That’s Gaudete joy — not loud, not fleeting, but the music of mercy in a silent world.

Closing Reflection

The old organ in the church did not repair itself overnight; it was restored by the patient hands of its maker.

So too, the Lord patiently restores us — key by key, heart by heart — until our lives become instruments of His praise again.

This week, as the rose candle burns, remember: You may not yet hear the full melody, but the Organ Builder is already here. He is tuning your heart for Christmas — not with noise, but with quiet joy.

INVITATION TO THE CREED (adapted to the readings)

As we await the Lord who comes quietly yet surely among us, let us profess together our faith —
the faith that gives us joy and strength in every season:
I believe in one God...

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

(adapted to the readings)

As we prepare this altar, we bring not only bread and wine, but our waiting, our weariness, and our trust that God is near. May these humble gifts become a song of joy before the Lord and be acceptable to God the Father almighty.

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

May the sacrifice of our waiting hearts, O Lord, be united with these gifts of bread and wine. Transform them—and us—by the power of Your Spirit, so that we, too, may become signs of hope and joy in a world that still waits for Your coming. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Preface: “The Quiet Joy of the Desert” (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 in the days of old You spoke through the prophet Isaiah, promising that the wilderness would blossom, that the blind would see and the lame would leap for joy. In Your Son Jesus Christ, these promises took flesh—in quiet healings, in lifted burdens, in the dawning of hope amid despair. Even when we, like John, question and wait, You send signs that Your kingdom is already among us: a heart forgiven, a wound healed, a life renewed. Therefore, with patient joy and steadfast hope, we join our voices with the choirs of heaven, as we acclaim: ***Holy, holy, holy...***

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

You are indeed Holy, O Lord,
the fount of all holiness **and the source of all joy.**

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we enter this sacred moment of Your Son's self-giving, we remember that You come quietly, as joy comes to the desert— as sight to the blind and strength to the weary. On this Gaudete Sunday, we bring before You our waiting hearts, trusting that even in silence, Your promise is near. Like John the Baptist, we look toward the One who is to come, and like Isaiah, we believe the wilderness will bloom again).

**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 be in your presence and minister to you.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: In this Eucharist, O Lord,

*we proclaim not only Your Death and Resurrection,
but also the quiet joy of Your nearness.*

In a world that grows weary of waiting,

*You teach us to hope like farmers who trust the hidden
seed, and to rejoice even before the harvest appears.*

*May this memorial strengthen our hearts with patient faith,
so that, renewed by Your presence,
we may become signs of Your coming joy).*

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 his assistant Bishops] and all the clergy.

Remember also our brothers and sisters

who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection,

and all who have died in your mercy:
welcome them into the light of your face.

Have mercy on us all, we pray,

that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,

with the blessed Apostles, and all the Saints
who have pleased you throughout the ages,
we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life,
and may praise and glorify you
through your Son, Jesus Christ.

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

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

As we await the coming of our Savior with joy and trust,
let us pray as He taught us—
for His kingdom to come, for His will to be done,
and for the grace to wait in hope.

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
and graciously grant peace in our days,
that, sustained by patient hope and quiet joy,
we may await with faith the coming of our Saviour,
Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ, You are the one who is to come,
and yet You come quietly, gently, unexpectedly.
Look not on our sins, but on the faith and hope of Your
Church. Graciously grant her peace and unity
in accordance with Your will—
peace that springs even from barren hearts
and blossoms in the patient joy of Your coming.
You who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Behold the Lamb of God, the One who comes not with
noise and thunder, but with healing in His touch and joy in
His eyes. Blessed are those called to the supper of the
Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Lord Jesus, You came to open blind eyes and give strength
to the weary.
You come now into the dryness of our hearts
to water us with joy.
Help us carry this peace into the world—
so that through our words and presence,
others may also hear:
“Be strong, do not fear. God is near.”

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

We thank You, O God,
for feeding us with the bread of life
and the quiet joy of Your presence.
As we continue our Advent journey,
may we trust in Your timing, recognize Your signs,
and bear Your hope to those still waiting.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May God bless you with the joy of blooming deserts,
with the patience of those who wait for rain,
and with the peace of those who trust the quiet signs.
And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son **+** and the Holy Spirit,
come down upon you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go now in joy.
Say to those who are fearful of heart:
“Take courage. Do not be afraid. God is near.”
Be signs of hope in your homes, your workplaces, and
your world.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

This week, look for one quiet sign of God’s presence in
your life—
and become one quiet sign for someone else who is still
waiting.

Monday of the 3rd Week of Advent

Num 24:2–7,15–17a; Mt 21:23–27.

Expectant Waiting for God’s Intervention

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, an astronomer working in a remote desert observatory spent night after night gazing through his telescope. One evening, he spotted a faint but growing light moving across the horizon. He thought it was a comet—but as he tracked it over weeks, he realized it was something far more beautiful: the planet Venus, gleaming in the pre-dawn sky, signalling that morning was near. “Even in the darkest hours,” he later wrote, “that star reminded me that dawn was coming.”

We have crossed the halfway mark of our Advent pilgrimage, and the dawn of Christmas draws near. But the One we await is more than the Child of Bethlehem—He is the Morning Star, the Light that breaks into our darkness. In today’s readings, we meet two striking figures: Balaam, a pagan prophet who tries to curse Israel but ends up blessing them under the Spirit’s power, foretelling a star

that shall rise from Jacob; and Jesus, questioned by religious leaders about the source of His authority. In both moments, God reveals His surprising way: light emerging from unexpected places, authority flowing not from status or title, but from truth and divine mission.

Let us come before the Lord who knows us and calls us, not only to await His coming, but to open the doors of our hearts now—that His light may reign there.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, you are the rising star who lights our path.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you speak with the authority of the Father, but we often close our ears. *Christ, have mercy.*

Lord Jesus, you come to cleanse our hearts and make them your temple. *Lord, have mercy.*

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May the star of God's mercy rise over us. May He forgive our blindness and restore our hearts to the light of His truth. Through the Spirit who renews all things, may He bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

O God, whose Spirit made even a foreign prophet proclaim your promises, and whose Son confounded the proud with heavenly authority, open our eyes to your unexpected work in our lives, that we may recognize your presence in unlikely places and welcome your rule in our hearts.

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 Star and the Scepter – What Authority Leads Your Life?”

The Man in the Marketplace

A few years ago, in a crowded marketplace, a stranger began clearing blocked stalls. “Who are you to do this?” people shouted. He replied, “This place was meant to be open for everyone.”

That's Jesus in today's Gospel. He walks into the Temple,

overturns the tables, and restores it to its true purpose—a house of prayer. But when the chief priests see Him, their first question is: *“Who gave you the authority to do this?”*

I. Balaam's Unexpected Prophecy

Balaam, a pagan prophet, is hired to curse Israel, but the Spirit of God comes upon him and he blesses them instead: “A star shall rise from Jacob, and a scepter from Israel.” God works through unexpected people and ways. He can still act through the ordinary, the overlooked, and the unexpected—teaching us to recognize His Spirit beyond our assumptions.

II. The Power of True Authority

The religious leaders demand proof of Jesus' authority, yet He acts from divine mission, not human approval. True authority is rooted in God's truth and love, not in titles or recognition.

The Young Volunteer

During a flood, a young man without ID organized rescues calmly. When asked, “Who authorized you?”, a nurse said, “He's the only one helping.”

Jesus is that authority—acting to save, heal, and restore even when unrecognized by the world.

III. Advent and Authority in Our Lives

Advent asks us: whose authority guides your life? Do we let Jesus reorder our hearts, cleanse what's false, and reclaim what's buried?

An old German Advent story tells of children cleaning every corner of the house to welcome the Christ Child. Jesus comes not to shame, but to prepare a place for light, truth, and joy.

IV. Conclusion: The Star that Still Guides

As stars shine on Christmas trees and streets, remember Balaam's vision: a star rising from Jacob, a scepter of divine authority. Christ's light still shines. Let Him rule your heart, cleanse your life, and guide your path.

A few years ago, when a storm hit the coast and the lighthouse lost power, villagers brought lanterns along the cliffs, guiding every ship safely. Christ's star still shines in hearts that welcome Him—may His light guide your words, choices, and actions this week. Amen.

INVITATION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

(adapted to the readings)

As we present these humble gifts at the altar, may we also offer the temples of our hearts to the One whose authority brings life. May our sacrifices be pleasing to the God the Father almighty...

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

Look with favor, Lord, upon these gifts we bring, and sanctify them by the same Spirit who inspired the words of your prophets.

May this holy offering prepare our hearts to receive the One who comes not in earthly power, but in divine authority to renew and reign.

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 promised your people a ruler who would come forth from Jacob, a star to guide them and a scepter to lead. Through Balaam's voice, you spoke words of hope, even when your people walked in the wilderness.

In Jesus your Son, that promise is fulfilled:

He entered your Temple with authority not borrowed, but divine, to purify what had grown corrupt and to call all hearts back to you.

Now, as we await His glorious coming, we join the choirs of heaven, singing without end the hymn of your praise:

Holy, Holy, Holy...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As Balaam beheld from afar the star that was to rise from Jacob, so we lift our eyes in Advent hope toward the One whose authority comes from Heaven, not from men.)

Like the people who awaited your promise, we too watch for your light to dawn within us, trusting that even in hidden ways, your Spirit is at work bringing forth your saving plan).

**Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray,
by sending down your Spirit upon them like the
dewfall, so that they may become for us
the Body and + Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

At the time he was betrayed
and entered willingly into his Passion,
he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY,
WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP FOR YOU.**

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
he took the chalice and, once more giving thanks,
he gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,**

**WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR
MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.**

DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.

The mystery of faith.

Therefore, as we celebrate
the memorial of his Death and Resurrection,
we offer you, Lord,
the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation,
giving thanks that you have held us worthy
to be in your presence and minister to you.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we remember, O Lord, your Son who spoke with the authority of Heaven and brought light to those in darkness, we pray that the star of His mercy may rise anew within your Church. Let His truth purify our hearts as He once cleansed the Temple, and let His divine authority reign in our lives until He comes again in glory).

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 his assistant Bishops] and all the clergy.
Remember also our brothers and sisters
who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection,
and all who have died in your mercy:
welcome them into the light of your face.
Have mercy on us all, we pray,
that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse,
with the blessed Apostles,
and all the Saints who have pleased you throughout the
ages, we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life,
and may praise and glorify you
through your Son, Jesus Christ.

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

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

Gathered around the One who teaches not like the scribes,
but with the authority of Heaven,
we dare to pray with confidence the words He gave us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil;
grant peace in our days, that by the light of your rising star
and the guidance of your Spirit, we may be always free
from sin and safe from all distress, 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 entered the Temple with the authority of truth and love,
and now you come to dwell in our hearts.
Look upon us with mercy, and grant that your peace may
fill our souls, so that, freed from fear and discord, we may
walk in unity and joy.

May the light of your rising star guide our hearts,

and may your authority reign in our lives, bringing lasting peace to our homes and to all the world.

You live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Behold the Lamb of God,
the star who has risen in our darkness,
the scepter of God's mercy and justice.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, you enter our lives not with thunder, but with truth. You cleanse gently but thoroughly, you speak with the authority that sets us free.

Help us to carry the light of your presence from this table into the dim places of our world and our hearts.

Come and reign within us.

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

Lord our God, you have fed us with the bread of life and strengthened us by your Word of truth.

May the star of your Son guide our decisions, and may His authority reign in our lives as we await the glory of His coming.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the Lord, who spoke through prophets and entered the Temple with holy fire,

shine His star over your path this Advent. Amen.

May Christ the scepter of peace reign in your home and purify your heart. Amen.

And may the Spirit who opens blind eyes give you courage to witness His authority in the world. Amen.

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

DISMISSAL

Go forth in peace, following the star of Christ.

Proclaim His truth, live under His authority, and prepare the way of the Lord.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“When Jesus enters our lives with His cleansing authority, He doesn’t come to shame us, but to restore us. Let the star of His truth rise in your heart this week—and allow His Word to guide your way.”

Tuesday of the 3rd Week of Advent

Zep 3:1–2, 9–13; Mt 21:28–32: Light overcoming darkness, second chances, and the grace of a changed heart

INTRODUCTION

As Advent deepens, and the world seems to rest under a cloak of darkness. But in this season of waiting, we turn our gaze toward the light—the Light that the darkness cannot overcome.

In the readings today, we hear both a strong prophetic warning and a gentle invitation. The prophet Zephaniah addresses a people who are spiritually deaf and disobedient—but he also foretells a humble remnant who will seek refuge in God.

And Jesus, in his parable, surprises his listeners: it is the tax collectors and prostitutes—the very people dismissed by society—who are entering the Kingdom ahead of the religious elite.

Let us ask ourselves today: Are we saying “yes” to God only with our lips? Or are our lives, our actions, and our love echoing that “yes” in truth?

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, Light shining in our darkness: *Lord, have mercy.*

Christ Jesus, Friend of sinners and healer of hearts: *Christ, have mercy.*

Lord Jesus, Hope of the poor and humble of heart: *Lord, have mercy.*

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

Lord our God,
you see into our hearts—beyond our words, beyond
appearances.

You know the many times we have said “yes” with our lips
but “no” with our lives.

You are patient, giving us time to think better of it, to return,
to change.

Pour out your mercy on us now.

Forgive the pride that refuses to turn back,
and strengthen in us a humble spirit that listens and obeys
and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

God of light and mercy,
you do not judge by appearances or empty promises
but look with compassion on the humble and contrite of
heart.

In this holy season of Advent,
help us to turn from every false “yes,”
and teach us to walk in your ways with sincerity and love,
that we may be among those who truly do your will
and enter your Kingdom with joy.

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

HOMILY: “THE POWER OF A CHANGED MIND”

The Unexpected Helper

Some years ago in a small parish in the Philippines, a teenage boy with a reputation for trouble started showing up at the church gates every morning. He had tattoos, skipped school, and everyone avoided him. But the parish priest noticed that he was quietly helping the old sacristan sweep the grounds. One day, the priest asked him why. The boy simply said, “I said ‘no’ to God for a long time. But I’m tired. I want to start saying ‘yes’—even if it’s just with a broom.”

This is what today’s Gospel is about: the grace of changing our mind.

Jesus tells a story that would have shocked his audience. A son who says “no” to his father—but later changes his mind—is praised. Another son who says “yes” but never acts is criticized. Why? Because God isn’t fooled by polite words. He wants real love—love in action.

Reflection – Grace in the Delay

The phrase “he thought better of it” is key. God gives us

time. He doesn’t lock us into our first reaction. Many of us carry the burden of past “no’s”—times we ignored God’s call, walked away from prayer, rejected mercy, or stayed silent when love asked us to speak.

But Advent is a season of second chances.

The Kingdom of God is not a reward for the well-behaved. It is a home for those who finally, even after years, come to say “yes.”

And the most dangerous spiritual state is not sin—it is pride that refuses to change. That was the trap of the chief priests. They saw tax collectors and prostitutes responding to John the Baptist, but they clung to their “no,” refusing to rethink.

Jesus invites us to do the opposite.

The CEO and the Caretaker

In a corporate townhall meeting, a CEO once asked the staff: “What’s one thing you’d change about how we work?” A janitor stood up and said, “Sir, we need better gloves in winter. Our hands freeze before the floors are done.”

There was an awkward silence. The executives had made

promises for years—always polite, always unfulfilled.

But that year, gloves arrived.

When asked why he listened to the janitor, the CEO simply said, “He didn’t say it nicely. But he meant it.”

God hears sincerity, not smooth words. God waits for authentic change, not perfect performance.

SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE

So today, let us ask ourselves:

- Where have I said “no” to God?
- Where am I being invited to think better of it, to rethink, and to return?
- Am I willing to admit I was wrong—and let God's mercy write a new ending to my story?

Remember: It's not where we began. It's where we turn to now. And in that turning, light dawns again.

INVITATION TO PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters, that our offering today like the humble “yes” of the first son may be acceptable to God our loving and patient Father.

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

Be pleased, O Lord, with the gifts we bring, not because of the worth of our actions, but because of the sincerity of hearts that turn back to you. As we offer this bread and wine, make us a people who do your will in truth, and who welcome your Kingdom with obedient joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

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

For in this Advent season, you call your people not only to watch, but to turn, to think better of their ways, and to walk again in your paths. You offer light to those in darkness,

mercy to those who have strayed,
and time for every heart to come home.
And so, with Angels and Archangels,
with Saints Lucy and Odilia,
and with all the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join in their unending hymn of
joy: **Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...**

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we bring our Advent hearts before you, O Lord, we remember today's Gospel that speaks of two sons—one who said "no" but later turned back in obedience.

*You are the God of second chances,
the Light that shines into our darkness,
calling each of us to think better of our ways
and to return to you with sincerity of heart.*

*May this altar be the place where our "no" becomes "yes,"
and our hearts are changed by your grace).*

**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.

*(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the
day: Lord, as we share in this holy communion,
let the grace of this sacrament
bring light to every shadowed part of our hearts.*

*May those who once said “no” to your call
find the courage to rise again and do your will.*

*Transform our polite promises into living obedience,
and make our lives reflections of your mercy—
for you delight not in perfection, but in hearts that change).*

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.

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

With humble hearts, confident in the mercy of the One who
gives us time to return, let us pray as Jesus himself has
taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
especially from the pride that refuses to turn back to you.
Graciously grant peace in our days,
that by the help of your mercy,
we may be free from sin and safe from all distress,
as we await the blessed hope—
the dawning of your light and
the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you spoke peace not only to the righteous,
but to those who were rejected and dismissed.
Look not on our sins, our many "no's" to your call,
but on the faith of your Church,
and graciously grant her peace and unity 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, who comes not for those who say "yes" with lips only, but for those who think better of it and return to him with all their heart.

Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

Take a moment in silence to reflect:

What part of your life is still saying "no" to God?

What is God waiting patiently for you to "think better of"?

Or spoken meditation:

Lord, you have met us in this Eucharist not because we were perfect, but because we were willing to change.

You wait for our real "yes"—the yes of action, love, humility.

Let this communion strengthen us

to go into your vineyard and do your will. Amen.

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

We thank you, Lord, for this holy food that strengthens us to turn back to you. As you are patient with us in our weakness, teach us to be patient with one another.

May the grace of this sacrament help us to live not by empty promises, but by the actions that flow from true conversion of heart. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the Lord bless you with a heart open to change, a spirit humble enough to learn, and a courage strong enough to say “yes” to God anew each day.

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

Go in peace, not just saying “yes” with your lips, but doing the will of the Father in your life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“The most important ‘yes’ is the one you choose to live today. Even if your story began with a ‘no,’ God is still waiting for your ‘yes.’”

Advent - 17 DECEMBER (17-24 Christmas Novena)

Gen 49:1–2, 8–10; Mt 1:1–17 – The Genealogy of Jesus

Theme: God Writes Straight with Crooked Lines

INTRODUCTION:

A little boy once asked his grandmother while looking through a dusty old photo album, “Grandma, why are you keeping all these pictures of people I don’t even know?” She smiled and said, “Because without them, you wouldn’t be here. Each one is part of your story.”

Dear brothers and sisters, today the Church opens a similar album — a long list of names in the Gospel according to Matthew. It might sound like an ancient record, but it’s really God’s family photo book — filled with saints and sinners, heroes and failures — all woven together to prepare the way for Jesus. We are only eight days away from Christmas. As we begin this final stretch of Advent, let us thank God for the story of salvation that continues through us — through our families, our flaws, and our faith.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

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

You were born into a broken world to bring healing and hope: **Lord, have mercy.**

You embraced a human family with all its struggles and wounds: **Christ, have mercy.**

You are the fulfilment of every promise God has ever made: **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May almighty God,
who called each generation by name and worked through flawed and faithful alike, have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and weave us into the story of salvation, bringing us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT (adapted for personal meditation)

O God of promise and purpose,
you sent your Son, born of a human family,
to fulfil your ancient plan of salvation.
As we recall the names and generations

through whom your grace has passed,
help us to recognize that you also call us by name,
to be part of your redeeming work.
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 - "God Writes Straight With Crooked Lines"

There's a story of a little parish in Spain that had a very old wooden crucifix. One day, a young carpenter noticed that the figure of Jesus on the cross was slightly tilted, one arm shorter than the other.

The priest asked if he could fix it.

The carpenter smiled and said, "Father, I could — but then it wouldn't be the same cross that saved us."

That's how God works — not by erasing our crookedness, but by writing straight with it.

At first glance, today's Gospel feels like one of those passages we might skim over — a long list of names. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob... all the way to Joseph. But

Matthew is not giving us trivia. He's telling us a truth: **every name carries a story, and every story is part of God's plan.**

Look closely and you'll find not only heroes like Abraham and David — but also broken lives and scandalous tales:

- **Tamar**, who pretended to be a prostitute;
- **Rahab**, who really was one;
- **Ruth**, a foreigner and widow from Moab;
- **Bathsheba**, remembered only as "the wife of Uriah";
- and **Manasseh**, one of Judah's most evil kings.

Why would God let such people be in the lineage of His Son?

Because God is not ashamed of broken stories. He redeems them. He doesn't choose perfect people — He perfects those He chooses.

A priest once shared how a parishioner, a recovering alcoholic, came across this passage and said, "Father, I used to think my family was too messy for God. But if He could bring the Messiah out of that family, maybe He can

bring some grace out of mine too."

That's the Good News. You are not defined by your past; you are destined for God's future. Every one of us has a name, and God is writing that name into His story of salvation.

This Advent, as we prepare for Christmas, don't just look back to Bethlehem — look around your home.

Where there's division, God can write reconciliation.

Where there's disappointment, He can write hope.

Where there's imperfection, He can write redemption.

And perhaps you'll see, like the little boy looking through the family album, that even the forgotten and the flawed belong in the picture — because in God's story, every name matters.

A missionary once said, "The Bible is not a book of perfect people—it's a book of God's persistence."

He keeps writing, even when we smudge the page.

And that's what Christmas really means — God entering our human story so that no line, however crooked, remains outside His grace.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

(adapted to the readings)

Pray brothers and sisters,
as we prepare to offer this bread and wine,
let us also place upon the altar our family stories,
our histories both holy and broken—
trusting that the God who worked through Abraham, David,
and every name in the genealogy
will receive our lives as part of His saving plan.

Pray, then, that this sacrifice—ours and Christ's—
may be acceptable to God, the Father almighty.

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

Sanctify these gifts, O Lord,
and in your mercy, receive not only this offering
but the lives and stories we bring before you.
May we become living signs of your faithfulness
through every generation. Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PREFACE (adapted for personal meditation)

The Coming of Christ through the Generations

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

For in the fullness of time, you fulfilled the promise made to
our ancestors, by sending your Son, born of a woman,
born into the human family of Abraham and David,
to bring salvation to all peoples.

In the long line of names and generations,
you revealed your patient mercy and faithful love.
Through sinners and saints, kings and outcasts,
you prepared a people for the coming of the Messiah,
and showed that your grace works through every human
story. And so, with angels and archangels,
with thrones and dominions, and with all the hosts and
powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory,
as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: From generation to generation, you have guided your people, O Lord,

weaving your saving plan through saints and sinners alike.

*In the long and imperfect lines of human history,
you have shown that your mercy is greater than our
failings,*

and your promise endures despite our crookedness.

*As we bring before you the story of our own lives —
our families, our wounds, our hopes —
we trust that you, the divine Author, continue to write
straight with crooked lines.*

**Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray,
by sending down your Spirit upon them like the
dewfall, so that they may become for us
the Body and + Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

At the time he was betrayed
and entered willingly into his Passion,
he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP
FOR YOU.**

In a similar way, when supper was ended,
he took the chalice and, once more giving thanks,
he gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR
MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.**

The mystery of faith.

Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection,
we offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation,
giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minister to you.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we recall the generations that led to the birth of your Son, we remember, too, that you continue to work through our own generation — through our families, our histories, and our stories.

Through Christ's Body and Blood, you gather the scattered fragments of our lives into the great family of your redeemed people, showing that no life is too broken, no story too twisted, for your grace to transform.

Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.

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

Remember also our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all who have died in your mercy: welcome them into the light of your face.

Have mercy on us all, we pray, that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with the blessed Apostles, and all the Saints who have pleased you throughout the ages, we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life, and may praise and glorify you through your Son, Jesus Christ.

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

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER:

With confidence in the God who knows each of us by name and invites us to be part of his family, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, you who have guided generations from Abraham to David, from exile to hope, and from brokenness to blessing.

In your mercy, free us from sin and shield us from despair, that we may live in peace and purpose, awaiting with joyful hope the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ, you are the Prince of Peace, born into a human family to bring reconciliation.

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 forever and ever. **Amen.**

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, in this Eucharist, we have received not only your Body and Blood, but also the assurance that we belong to your family—a family shaped by grace, not perfection. You chose to be born into a human lineage—full of brokenness, courage, and redemption—so that none of us would be left out of your saving story. As we leave this table, may we carry the hope that our own names, our own families and stories, are now written into your genealogy of grace. Amen.

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

Lord our God,
you have nourished us at the table of your Son,
the promised heir of David,
born into a human family to redeem every generation.
As we recall the names and stories
through whom your grace has come into the world,
may this sacrament strengthen us
to live as faithful members of your family—
witnesses of hope, even in brokenness,
and bearers of Christ into the world today.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the God of Abraham and David,
who fulfils every promise in Jesus Christ,
bless you with hope and purpose. **Amen.**
May Christ, born into a human family,
bring healing and peace to your family and home. **Amen.**

And may the Holy Spirit write your name with love
into the great story of salvation. **Amen.** And may almighty
God bless you,
the Father, and the Son + and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL:

Go forth in peace, trusting that God is writing something
beautiful with your life.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

God doesn't need perfect people – He works through real
families, real stories, real mess.
This week, thank God for your family, and trust that He is
using you, just as you are.

Advent - 18 DECEMBER - *Jer 23:5-8; Mt 1:18-24*

INTRODUCTION – “When God Whispers in the Night”

Some years ago, a man in Italy restored an old family house that had been abandoned for decades. When he removed the old wallpaper in the bedroom, he discovered a small inscription written faintly in pencil on the wall:

“Trust Him, even when you do not understand.”

No one knew who had written it—perhaps his grandfather during the war. But those words struck him deeply. They became his daily prayer.

Dear brothers and sisters,

We are just a week away from Christmas. The lights are brighter, the carols louder—but today the Gospel takes us into silence. Into the quiet faith of Joseph—a man who trusted when he did not understand.

He was ready to walk away quietly, until God whispered to him in a dream. He stayed—because he believed.

He believed—because he trusted that “*God is with us.*”

Today, as we draw near to the mystery of Emmanuel, may we too become listeners—people who notice God’s

whisper through Scripture, through the Eucharist, and through the people beside us.

Let us begin by acknowledging our need for His mercy and His voice.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, you are Emmanuel, God with us, who enters into the messiness of our lives. **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you come not with condemnation, but with a mission to save. **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you call us to listen deeply, as Joseph did, and to follow you in trust. **Lord, have mercy.**

PRAAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May Almighty God have mercy on us,
who sees our fears and speaks into our confusion,
as He once spoke to Joseph in a dream.

May He forgive us our sins, calm our restless hearts,
and lead us with gentle strength

into the peace of Emmanuel, God-with-us,
and bring us to everlasting life. **Amen.**

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

O God, eternal and ever-near,
you spoke to Joseph in a dream, and in his obedience,
your plan of salvation moved forward.

Grant that we too may be open to your voice—
even when it surprises us—

and walk always in the light of Emmanuel,
your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

HOMILY – "The Man Who Stayed"

A teacher once asked her young students to draw a picture of someone brave. One drew a firefighter, another a soldier, another a mother. But one quiet boy drew a man standing beside a woman holding a baby. When the teacher asked who it was, he said,

"That's Joseph. Everyone talks about Mary and the baby, but Joseph stayed."

That little child captured the heart of today's Gospel.

Joseph was ready to walk away. His dreams of marriage were shattered. Mary was with child, and the child wasn't his. And yet, in that hour of heartbreak, God spoke—not with thunder or explanation, but with a whisper in a dream. "Do not be afraid, Joseph... the child is from the Holy Spirit."

It must have been hard to believe. But Joseph believed anyway.

And because he did, the story of salvation moved forward. My friends, this is not only Joseph's story—it's ours.

All of us have moments when we want to walk away:
from a difficult relationship,
from a calling that demands too much,
from a Church that disappoints,
or from a faith that feels silent.

But God still whispers: "Do not be afraid. I am with you."

Like Joseph, we may not see the whole plan.
But obedience is not about seeing—it's about trusting.
It's about staying even when it hurts,
listening even when it's dark,
and believing that God is at work behind the curtain of
confusion.

Think of how many people in Scripture stayed:
Mary stayed beneath the Cross.
Peter stayed long enough to weep and be forgiven.
The Magi stayed until they saw the Child.
And Joseph stayed long enough to see God made flesh in
his home.
Our world needs more “Joseph hearts”—people who stay
faithful even when life makes no sense.

An old carpenter once built a cradle for his first grandchild.
When the child was born, his daughter said, “Dad, how did
you make it so perfect?” He smiled and said, “I didn’t rush.
I just stayed with the wood long enough for it to speak.”

That's what Joseph did—he stayed long enough for God to
speak.
May we do the same.
Stay with our faith,
stay with our families,
stay with the God who still whispers,
and trust that Emmanuel—God with us—is near. **Amen.**

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

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this, our offering—like Joseph’s silent obedience—
may be found pleasing to God the Almighty Father.

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

Receive, O Lord, these offerings of your people,
which we bring in joyful hope and humble trust.
May they become a sign of our readiness
to welcome your Son with obedient hearts,

as did Joseph, the just man.

Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PREFACE (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

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

For all the prophets foretold Him, the Virgin Mother bore Him in her womb with love beyond all telling, and John the Baptist proclaimed His coming.

But in these days, we remember with special reverence the quiet faith of Joseph,

who welcomed your Word in trust and took Mary into his home, becoming guardian of the Redeemer.

And so, with angels and saints, we join in the hymn of your glory, as we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy...

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: Lord, as we present these gifts, we remember Joseph, a man who stayed faithful even when he did not understand, who trusted the whisper of Your Word in the silence of the night. May the same Spirit guide us to listen, to obey, and to welcome Your Son into our hearts with quiet courage and unwavering trust.

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, in this sacred meal, we recall the faithfulness of Joseph, who welcomed Emmanuel without fully understanding the plan, yet trusted that Your word would

not fail. May we, in receiving this Body and Blood, be strengthened to stay faithful in the silence of our lives, to trust Your guidance, and to act in love, even when Your ways are hidden from us.

Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit. Remember, Lord, your Church, spread throughout the world, and bring her to the fullness of charity, together with N. our Pope and N. our Bishop, all the clergy, and all who serve your people.

Remember also our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all who have died in your mercy: welcome them into the light of your face.

Have mercy on us all, we pray, that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with the blessed Apostles, and all the Saints who have pleased you throughout the ages, we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life, and may praise and glorify you through your Son,

Jesus Christ.

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

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

With longing for the kingdom to come,
and confidence in the God who is with us,
let us pray as Jesus Himself taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil—
you who sent your angel to speak peace into Joseph's
fear, and who still whisper courage into our silence.
In your mercy, free us from sin and strengthen us in trust,
that we, like Joseph, may rise in obedience,
walk with quiet courage, and await with joyful hope
the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

PRAYER FOR PEACE (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus Christ, you are Emmanuel,
the Prince of Peace who entered a broken world to heal it.
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.**

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Lord Jesus, you came into Joseph's life as a quiet word in
the night— and he believed.
In this Communion, you come quietly into our hearts.
May we, like Joseph, have the courage to stay,
to trust your voice,
and to welcome you into our lives with obedient love.
Amen.

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

Lord our God,
you have fed us with the Bread of Life,
your Son Jesus, Emmanuel—God with us.
As you once spoke to Joseph in a dream,
so speak now to our hearts through this sacrament.

Give us the faith to follow your will with quiet courage,
and the grace to welcome your presence in our daily lives.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the God who came to Joseph in a dream
come to you in moments of uncertainty
and fill your hearts with peace. **Amen.**

May you, like Joseph, walk in obedience and quiet
strength, trusting the God who is always with you. **Amen.**

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 forth in peace, with ears attentive to God's whisper.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

"Joseph stayed—because he trusted the whisper of God.
This week, what might God be whispering to you?"

Advent - 19 DECEMBER

Judg 13:2–7, 24–25a; Lk 1:5–25

When Silence Speaks More Than Words

INTRODUCTION

Many years ago, a teacher noticed one of her students sitting quietly by the classroom window every morning before lessons began. When asked why, the boy said, "I like to listen to the silence. It helps me remember that the world still has music I haven't heard yet."

Dear brothers and sisters, Advent is that kind of silence—not emptiness, but *expectant stillness*.

Today's Gospel leads us into the Temple of Jerusalem, where a faithful priest named Zechariah meets an angel in that sacred stillness. His long prayers are finally answered—yet his doubt silences him. And in that silence, something extraordinary begins: faith is reborn. This Advent day invites us to rediscover holy silence—not the

silence of fear or distance, but of listening, waiting, and trusting that God's promises, though delayed, never fail.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Let us pause and ask the Lord's mercy
for the times we failed to trust His word,
the times we doubted His promises,
and the times we remained silent when called to witness.

- Lord Jesus, like Zechariah, we struggle to believe your Word. Lord, have mercy.
- Christ Jesus, you enter our lives at unexpected moments, and we are slow to recognize your presence. Christ, have mercy.
- Lord Jesus, you silence our noise so we might hear your voice. Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May Almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive our disbelief,
and grant us the grace to listen, trust, and proclaim.

May He who opened Zechariah's heart to faith open ours to His promise, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

Almighty and ever-living God,
you sent your angel to Zechariah with a message of joy,
yet he struggled to believe your promise.
Give us hearts open to your word,
ears attentive to your voice,
and lips ready to praise you
when your grace breaks into our lives.
May we never grow weary of hoping in your faithfulness.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

HOMILY: *When Silence Speaks More Than Words...*

Once, a musician lost his hearing after an accident. For months, he could not play or teach. One evening, he sat at his piano and, though unable to hear, placed his fingers gently on the keys — not to make music, but to *feel* the

vibration of sound. Tears came to his eyes as he whispered, “Even in silence, the music is still here.”

That moment captures today’s Gospel.

Zechariah, the elderly priest, stands before the altar of incense — the holiest place of prayer — when suddenly an angel appears and tells him that his wife, Elizabeth, will bear a son. This is the news he has longed to hear for years! But he hesitates. “How can this be?” he asks.

And the result? Silence.

He is struck mute — not as punishment, but as invitation. In those nine silent months, God was forming not just a child in Elizabeth’s womb, but *faith* in Zechariah’s heart. When at last he speaks, his words are no longer cautious or doubtful — they overflow in the Benedictus, a hymn of praise: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel...”

Sometimes, God must quiet our tongues so our hearts can begin to listen.

There’s a story told of a businessman who attended a week-long silent retreat. He confessed, “I came to find peace, but silence made me restless.” By the end, he

realized why: “I had been speaking so much to God that I never let Him get a word in.”

Advent is God’s gentle invitation: *Be still. Let Me speak.* When you feel that God is silent — remember Zechariah. Silence is often not God’s absence, but His preparation. Faith grows best in the soil of waiting.

And when God finally opens your mouth again, it will not be to complain or doubt — but to sing, as Zechariah did, “Blessed be the Lord.”

A mother once told her little daughter, “Before you speak to Jesus, close your eyes and listen.” The girl asked, “But what if He doesn’t say anything?” The mother smiled, “Then, my dear, He’s probably just smiling.”

May this Advent silence help us to hear that smile — and trust that even when words fail, *God is still speaking.*

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

(adapted to the readings)

Pray, brothers and sisters,

that our offering today — like the incense Zechariah placed

before the Lord — may rise with our silent prayers and hidden hopes, and be made acceptable to God, the Father Almighty.

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

Gracious God, you received the offering of Zechariah's incense even when his heart struggled with doubt.

Accept these gifts we bring before you today, and through them, increase in us the faith to trust your word and await your promises.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE (adapted to the readings for personal meditation)

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

In the fullness of time, you sent your angel to Zechariah, announcing the birth of the one

who would prepare the way for your Son.

Even in Zechariah's silence, your promise worked its wonders.

And in Elizabeth's hidden womb, you formed the prophet of hope.

Through this story of faith and grace, you teach us to wait in silence, to trust beyond what we see, and to praise you when your word is fulfilled.

And so, with the choirs of angels in heaven, we raise our voices in joyful praise:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord...

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we enter this sacred moment, we recall Zechariah standing in silent awe before your altar, his words stilled so that faith might be reborn in his heart. In this same Advent

silence, we too listen for your promise and trust that your Spirit is still at work, quietly shaping hope 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.

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: *In this holy remembrance, we think of Zechariah's silence turned into song, of doubt transformed into praise. As we proclaim the mystery of faith, teach us, Lord, to trust your timing — to let silence deepen our belief until it bursts into thanksgiving. May our lives, like his, become hymns of gratitude for promises fulfilled in your time*).*

Humbly we pray
that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ,
we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.
Remember, Lord, your Church,
spread throughout the world,
and bring her to the fullness of charity,
together with N. our Pope and N. our Bishop,
all the clergy, and all who serve your people.
Remember also our brothers and sisters
who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection,
and all who have died in your mercy:
welcome them into the light of your face.
Have mercy on us all, we pray,
that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God,
with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with the blessed
Apostles, and all the Saints who have pleased you
throughout the ages, we may merit to be coheirs to eternal
life, and may praise and glorify you
through your Son, Jesus Christ.

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

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S PRAYER

Let us pray now as the angel taught Zechariah to hope,
and as Jesus himself taught us to trust:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
you who send your messengers into the silence of our
lives, as you did to Zechariah in the Temple.
From fear that paralyses and doubt that silences, set us
free. Grant us the grace to wait in hope,
to trust in your hidden workings,
and to welcome your promises,
even when they arrive in unexpected ways,
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 entered Zechariah's world with a message of peace
and joy. 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 forever and ever. Amen.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION (adapted to the readings)

Let us remain in silent thanksgiving for a moment...
In this Eucharist, the Word has become flesh among us —
quietly, gently, like the angel's message to Zechariah.
Just as the priest left the sanctuary in silence,
we too are sent forth with a mystery within us.
Christ has entered the temple of our hearts.
May we carry this presence into our week with reverent
silence, listening for the whispers of grace,

and trusting that God is still speaking, even when all
seems quiet.

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

Lord our God, in this holy Communion,
you have spoken your promise again into our lives.
Like Zechariah, we may struggle to believe,
yet your grace continues to work within us.
Strengthen our faith, open our hearts to your unexpected
ways, and help us to wait in hope until your word is fully
fulfilled in us. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the God who visited Zechariah with an angel
visit you with peace.
May He open your ears to His voice
and your heart to His promises.
May He loosen your tongue to sing His praise,
and fill your soul with joy.
And may the blessing of Almighty God,

the Father, the Son, + and the Holy Spirit,
come down upon you and remain with you forever. Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, listening for God's voice,
and speaking only what He has planted in your heart.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT

“Before Zechariah could speak good news, he had to hear it in silence.”

This week, carve out space for silence — not as absence, but as expectation.

Let God surprise you there.

December 20 – Advent Weekday

Isaiah 7:10–14; Luke 1:26–38

Trust, divine intervention, and Mary’s “yes.”

INTRODUCTION

A teacher once asked her class to draw a picture of what *trust* looked like. One child drew a tiny bird resting calmly on a branch in the middle of a storm. When asked why, she said, “Because the bird knows the branch will hold—even when the wind blows.”

Today’s Gospel is about that kind of trust. A young woman in Nazareth hears an angel’s message that seems impossible: she will bear God’s Son. Heaven pauses to listen for her response. And when she says, “*Let it be done to me according to your word,*” the world changes forever. In this Eucharist, we, too, are invited to that same trust—that the branch of God’s promise will hold, even when life’s storms blow fiercely.

PENITENTIAL ACT (adapted to the readings)

Let us pause and acknowledge the times we have failed to trust God's word and follow His will.

Lord Jesus, you are the Key of David, unlocking what is closed—Lord, have mercy.

You shine light in our darkness and bring hope into human despair—Christ, have mercy.

You were born of the Virgin Mary to dwell among us—Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER OF ABSOLUTION (adapted to the readings)

May Almighty God, who entered our world through the trusting heart of Mary, have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, heal our doubts, and lead us with grace to say our own "yes" to His will. And may He bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

COLLECT (adapted for personal meditation)

O God, eternal light and faithful promise, You sent the angel Gabriel to bring the Good News to Mary. Grant that we, who hear Your Word today, may welcome it with open hearts, and, like the Virgin of Nazareth, trust in Your

impossible grace. Through our Lord Jesus Christ...Amen.

HOMILY

A few years ago, a young mother found herself alone and struggling. Her husband had lost his job, the rent was due, and Christmas was coming. One night she prayed, "Lord, how can this be? How can I go on?"

The next morning, she found groceries and gifts left anonymously at her door, with a note that said: "God knows, God cares, God provides." She said later, "I didn't understand how it would all work out, but I knew then that I wasn't forgotten."

Today's Gospel is about that same kind of faith. The angel Gabriel enters the life of an ordinary girl in Nazareth and announces something beyond reason. Mary asks the most human of questions: "How can this be?" But she listens, she trusts, and she says "yes." And that "yes" changes the world.

Her greatness wasn't in understanding everything—it was

in trusting completely. She believed before she saw the miracle. And her faith made the impossible possible. We all have our own Nazareth moments—when life brings confusion, when the future feels uncertain, when we hear God’s call but it seems too much. Like Zechariah, we sometimes want proof before we trust. But God patiently waits for our “yes.” He still works through hesitant hearts, as long as they are open.

Trust isn’t about having the plan; it’s about having the relationship. God doesn’t promise clarity—He promises *presence*.

There’s an old story of a child on a ship during a storm. Everyone was terrified, except the boy. When asked why he wasn’t afraid, he said, “Because my father is the captain.”

That’s trust. And that’s Mary’s faith: calm in the storm, certain of the branch that holds.

May our “yes” echo hers—so that Christ may once again be born in us.

INVITATION TO THE PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Pray, brothers and sisters,
that this sacrifice—fruit of our hands and sign of our hearts—may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

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

Receive, O Lord, the offerings of your people,
and grant that we, who celebrate the mystery of the Incarnation, may imitate the humility and trust of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and become worthy to share in your divine life. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE – The Mystery of the Annunciation and Trust in God’s Promise (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 chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to receive your Word in faith and to bear Him in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. In her “yes,” you found a dwelling place on earth for your eternal Son, and through her obedience,

your promise to Israel was fulfilled.

Even now, you look with favour upon all who trust in your Word, inviting them to share the joy of her faith and the fruitfulness of her surrender.

And so, with the angels and saints, we join in their unending hymn of praise, saying:

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

EUCARISTIC PRAYER II

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

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

Make holy, therefore, these gifts, we pray, by sending

down your Spirit upon them like the dewfall, so that they may become for us the Body and + Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the time he was betrayed and entered willingly into his Passion, he took bread and, giving thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND EAT OF IT,
FOR THIS IS MY BODY, WHICH WILL BE GIVEN UP
FOR YOU.**

In a similar way, when supper was ended, he took the chalice and, once more giving thanks, he gave it to his disciples, saying:

**TAKE THIS, ALL OF YOU, AND DRINK FROM IT,
FOR THIS IS THE CHALICE OF MY BLOOD,
THE BLOOD OF THE NEW AND ETERNAL COVENANT,
WHICH WILL BE POURED OUT FOR YOU AND FOR
MANY FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS.
DO THIS IN MEMORY OF ME.**

The mystery of faith.

Therefore, as we celebrate the memorial of his Death and Resurrection, we offer you, Lord, the Bread of life and the Chalice of salvation, giving thanks that you have held us worthy to be in your presence and minister to you.

(Optional thematic insertion based on the readings of the day: As we remember Mary's trust and Your saving promise fulfilled in her, we bring before You our own "yes," fragile yet sincere. May this memorial strengthen our faith in divine intervention, and teach us, like her, to believe before we see—to let Your Word dwell in us and shape the course of our lives.

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

Humbly we pray that, partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ, we may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit.

Remember, Lord, your Church, spread throughout the world,

and bring her to the fullness of charity, together with N. our Pope and N. our Bishop, all the clergy, and all who serve your people.

Remember also our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all who have died in your mercy: welcome them into the light of your face.

Have mercy on us all, we pray, that with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, with blessed Joseph, her Spouse, with the blessed Apostles, and all the Saints who have pleased you throughout the ages, we may merit to be coheirs to eternal life, and may praise and glorify you through your Son, Jesus Christ.

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

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

At the Saviour's command,
and following the trustful spirit of Mary,
let us say the prayer Jesus, her Son, taught us:

EMBOLISM (adapted to the readings)

Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil,
you who sent your angel to a humble home in Nazareth
and whose Word became flesh in the womb of Mary.

Dispel our fears, calm our confusion,
and strengthen our trust in your promises,
so that, like the Virgin,
we may welcome your plans even when we do not
understand them, 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 are the Prince of Peace, born of Mary,
who said "yes" to your peace-bringing mission.

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 forever and ever. Amen.

MEDITATION AFTER COMMUNION

In this Eucharist, the Word has once again become flesh—
within us. Like Mary, we have received God into our very
being. She carried Christ in her womb; we carry Him in our
hearts. Let us go now and let our lives echo her trust:
"Let it be done to me according to your word."

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

Lord God, You chose the Virgin Mary to bear your eternal
Word and made her trusting heart the gateway of
salvation. Nourished by this holy mystery,
may we, too, learn to say "yes" to your will—
in joy and in struggle, in clarity and in confusion—
so that Christ may live in us and be revealed through us.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

“Let it be done to me according to your word.”
You may discover—God is nearer than you think.

FINAL BLESSING (adapted to the readings)

May the God who chose Mary and brought us salvation
through her Son bless you with deep trust, steadfast hope,
and open hearts. Amen.

May you find God at work in your home, your labour, and
your doubts. 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, proclaiming with your life
that nothing is impossible for God.

TAKE-HOME THOUGHT (adapted to the readings)

Mary said “yes” not because she understood everything,
but because she trusted God.

When life feels uncertain, whisper her words: