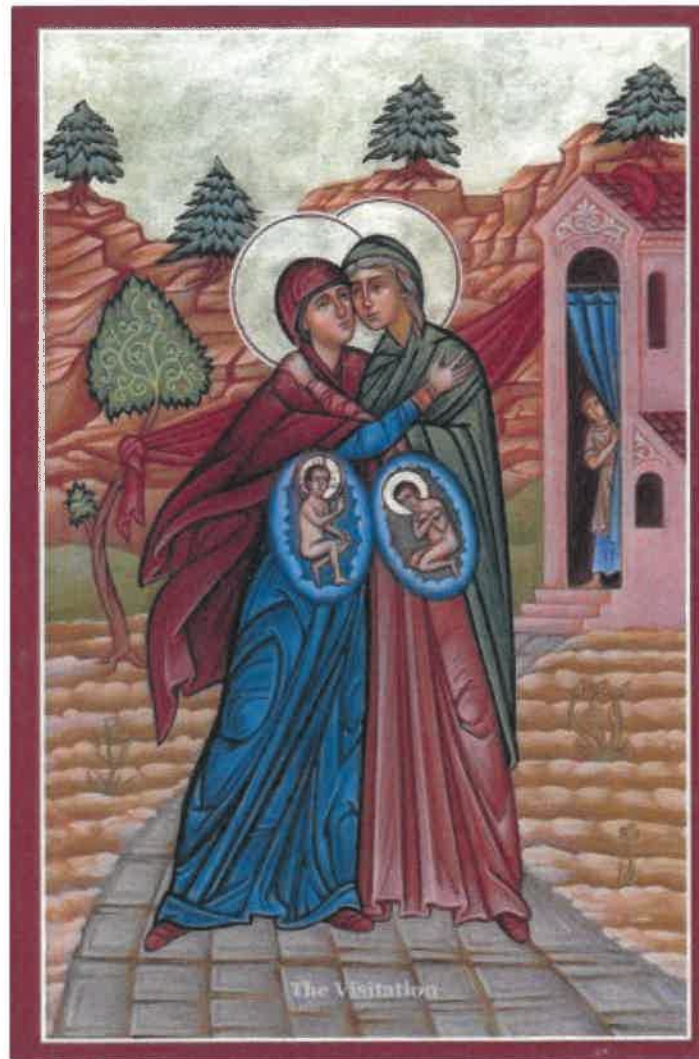


**PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS**  
**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**18 – 19 DECEMBER 2021**



**SUNDAY REFLECTION**

Ever find yourself saying; “I might as well have been talking to the wall.” Tend to say this as an admission or acknowledgement of the fact that we know we have not been listened to. What a gift it is to meet someone who really listens! Perhaps some of the recent scandals in the Church might have been avoided, if there had been better listeners. ‘Hear, O Israel!’ the devout Jew recites every day. “O that today you would listen to his voice!’ the psalmist exclaims (Ps. 95). Obedience to God’s will begins with listening, and this is more important than any ritual sacrifice, according to the psalmist, and the Letter to the Hebrews. Liturgy without listening is empty show.

The voice of God, when received by the ears of the heart, always brings good news. It always calls us to liberty and binds up hearts that are broken. (Lk. 4:18) We must, however, believe what we hear. There is in human life an undercurrent of despair which would always have us disbelieve, have us lose hope, have us doubt the loving designs of which God's word continually speaks. The tragic element is always there; the question is whether or not it will destroy our belief.

The prophet Micah points his people to a positive future and yet points out that there will be a time of waiting, a time of feeling abandoned. Sometimes the 'mills of God' do indeed grind slowly because there is no other way. The struggles to believe in the face of apparent abandonment is something we all have to face at some time or other. Today's Psalm refers in glowing terms to the God who dwells above the cherubim throne of the temple, the God who is the divine Shepherd; and yet the flock is clearly in distress and the vineyard of the Lord has been trampled. A leap of faith is so often needed, a trust that doesn't look for proof. Faced with just such a great leap of faith, Mary believed, and in doing so permitted the divine voice to take flesh. The Good News took flesh in Mary because she listened and believed. The joy of the Holy Spirit will fill us to the extent that we listen and believe.

**STEWARDSHIP:** The Gospel today tells of the Virgin Mary, pregnant herself, hurrying off to help her cousin Elizabeth. The model of good stewardship, she who had given herself to bear the Savior gave her time and love to others as well.

## **READINGS FOR CHRISTMAS**

### **Christmas Eve 24 December**

**Is. 9:1-6:** The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. For a Son has been born for us.

**Ti. 2:11-14:** The world has been waiting in hope for blessing through the birth of Jesus.

**Lk. 2:1-14:** The angels announce to the shepherds the birth of Christ.

### **Christmas Day 25 December**

#### **Dawn Mass**

**Is. 62:11-12:** This is the climax of a song assuring the people of Jerusalem that a savior will restore them to their former glory. Once more they will be "The Holy People" of God.

**Ti. 3:4-7:** A passage alive with joy because of the astounding love and kindness and mercy God has shown us by saving us and making us heirs with Christ.

**Lk. 2:15-30:** The visit of the shepherds, outcasts of society in their day, to the new-born child leaves Mary treasuring these things and pondering them in her heart.

#### **Day Mass**

**Is. 52:7-10:** The prophet announces the joyful coming of the messenger announcing peace the messenger of good news who proclaims salvation.

**Heb. 1:1-6:** At many moments in the past, and by many means, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our time God has spoken to us in the person of God's Son.

**Jn. 1:1-18:** The Word, who existed with God in the beginning, came to live among

us and we have seen His glory.

## READINGS FOR FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY

SUNDAY 26 DEC. '21

**1 Sm. 1:20-22, 24-28:** Listen to the account of how Hannah came to the Temple to give thanks for the child Samuel, born by divine intervention, and to dedicate him to the Lord.

**1 Jn. 3:1-2, 21-24:** The commandments are life, because they are given to us that we might live the life of God.

**Lk. 2:41-52:** The hidden life of Christ was not hidden from everyone. Christ needed other people to grow, just as we do. Otherwise He would not be fully human.

## ADVENT DAILY REFLECTIONS

### FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT 20 – 18 DECEMBER

#### 20 Dec Monday

**Is. 7:10-14 Ps. 24:1-4, 5-6, Lk. 1:26-38**

The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) concludes his famous sonnet "God's Grandeur" with these lines:

"Because the Holy Ghost over the bent World  
Broods with warm breast and with ah! Bright wings."

Hopkins' verse expresses a hovering, providential God, brooding over all creation. The challenge for creation is twofold: to be aware and to be open. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is our paradigm. She believed in God's presence and said yes to the Divine invitation.

Jessica Powers (1905-1988), a Carmelite versifier, made the claim that to live with the Spirit is to be both a listener and a lover. The power of the Most High attunes us to the divine plan; more, that same God empowers us to respond in love. Mary was a listener and a lover, par excellence. She aligned her will to God and responded by total self-giving.

The poet George Herbert was conscious of the Holy Spirit breaking into history, his own and the world's. He writes in the last stanza of "Matins":

"Teach me thy love to know;  
That this new light, which now I see.  
May both the work and the workman show:  
Then by a sunbeam I will climb to thee."

God's invading light and love is the Holy Spirit in action. We need but catch a single sunbeam – a deed of kindness, a word of forgiveness, a look of compassion – to know the presence of God in our lives. Mary was taught how to love and see. Daily she climbed into the Lord's presence because the Holy Spirit was upon her.

#### 21 Dec Tuesday

**Sg. 2:8-14 / Zep. 3:14-18 Ps. 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21 Lk. 1:39-43**

One of the joyful mysteries of the Rosary is the Visitation. This blessed moment tells of a double visitation: Mary greeting Elizabeth, Jesus and John encountering one another though still in the wombs of their mothers. The keynote of this mystery is joy: that experiential knowledge that something good is happening to and in us.

Advent is a season of joy. Jesus comes to all of us in word and sacrament, in community and

daily experience. Something should stir within us as we are exposed to God's light and love and life. This visitation is often incarnate through others: a phone call of concern from a friend, an unexpected visit from a long-lost friend, the restoration of health, an invitation to embrace a cross that might well transform our lives. God is on the move and just as Mary journeyed to see her cousin Elizabeth, God journeys into our lives on a daily basis. Elizabeth struggled to receive Mary and to understand the import of the visitation. Her struggle dealt with unworthiness. "But who am I ...?" We are all in that identical situation. None of us is worthy to house our God and yet God has now here else to go. More, regardless of our sins and failures, God longs to be at the center of our lives. Herein is our joy: God's love visiting us today, here and now. No excuses will be accepted. Joy will win out.

## **22 Dec Wednesday**

**1 Sm. 1:24-28 Ps. 1 Sm. 2:1, 4-8 Lk. 1:46-56**

When gifted, the healthy person gives thanks. Hannah was gifted with a son named Samuel; Mary was gifted with a son named Jesus. Both women turned to the Lord in profound gratitude for the gift of life given to them. Both women realized that God had looked upon them in love and both responded with appropriate praise.

Advent is a liturgical season in which the Church tries to remind us, through word and sacrament, that all of us are looked upon with love. Everything that we are and have is ultimately God's grace. Too seldom are we aware of this; too seldom do we turn with our whole being to the living and true God to give thanks and praise. No wonder, then, that we do not experience the blessedness that filled the soul of Hannah and Mary.

The God known by Hannah and Mary was a giving, generous God. No need was too large or too small to be addressed. Here is a God who does great things for us and small as well. This God is faithful to promises and is mindful of his mercy. It is in the mystery of the Incarnation that we come to know the fulfillment of divine promises and to experience the power of divine mercy.

## **23 Dec Thursday**

**Mal. 3:1-4, 23-24 Ps. 25:4-5, 8-10, 14 Lk. 1:57-66**

The refiner's fire and the fuller's lye are dangerous things. Their work of refining and purifying are experienced as painful and even destructive. Yet all of us are in need of cleansing and God sends into the world prophets to do that work. As we near the Christmas mystery we hear about two prophets who helped to prepare the way of the Lord.

One is John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus. The name John signifies "Yahweh has shown favor." Already at his birth powerful things are happening. A woman exercises her power in

naming her child. A father, silenced because of a lack of faith, now begins to speak again and does so by praising God. The neighbors and relatives are astounded at the events and are forced to ask questions about the future of this child and about the working of divine providence.

The refrain from the responsorial psalm instructs us; "Lift up your heads and see; your redemption is near at hand." With the eyes of faith we see in Elijah and John how God prepares the human heart to the workings of grace. But these are human prophets only. In Jesus, we see our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. Herein lies our hope. It is good to store all these things in our Advent hearts.

#### **24 Dec Friday**

**2 Sm. 7:1-3, 8-12, 14, 16 Ps. 89:2-5, 27-29 Lk. 1:67-79**

During these days before Christmas we hear many different people singing the praises of God: Hannah, Mary, Elizabeth, and now Zechariah. Here is a proud father's song flowing out of a deep faith in God's redemptive love. Zechariah knew his history. God made promises in ancient days through the prophets and now those promises were being realized. And it was Zechariah's own son, John, who would be an instrument in preparing the way for Jesus, our Redeemer.

Songs carry our theology. The lyrics tell us who God is and what we are about. In this canticle we learn that God remembers His covenant, that our enemies will be overcome, that we are to live in holiness and righteousness all our days, that salvation comes through the forgiveness of our sins, that God visits us with His mercy and guides our feet into the way of peace. As we hum this hymn we grow in our faith, as we live this hymn we express God's grace.

This God spoken of by Zechariah is the same God spoken of by Nathan, a prophet of old. Nathan informs David, the king of Israel, that God's providential love has been active in his life. For it was God who pastured and cared for him and his people; it was God who gives rest from one's enemies; it is God who is always with us. Our God is a creative, redeeming, and sanctifying God through all the ages.

## **THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT**

**11 – 19 DECEMBER**

**Saturday 18 Dec Advent Weekday 3<sup>rd</sup> Week**

**8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day, Advent Preface I, Eucharistic Prayer II**

**1:00 – 4:30 p.m. Confessions**

**5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**Proper, Creed, Advent Preface II, Eucharistic Prayer II**

**(Intention: James Allen Neary II RIP)**

**Sunday 19 Dec Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**7:00 a.m. Mass Proper, Creed, Advent Preface II, Eucharistic Prayer II**

**(Intention: Parish of St. Stephen, Martyr)**

**8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Creed, Advent Preface II, Eucharistic Prayer II**

(Intention: Joseph Shannon, Jr. RIP)

11:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Creed, Advent Preface II, Eucharistic Prayer II

(Intention: Anthony Dinonno RIP)

2:00 p.m. Mass Brig

Monday 20 Dec Advent Weekday 4<sup>th</sup> Day Off

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day See under 20<sup>th</sup> Dec, Advent Preface II,  
Eucharistic Prayer II

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day See under 20<sup>th</sup> Dec, Advent Preface II,  
Eucharistic Prayer II

(Intentions: Ann Emsley )

Tuesday 21 Dec Advent Weekday 4<sup>th</sup> St. Peter Canisius Priest, Doctor of the Church

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day See under 21<sup>st</sup> Dec, Preface of Advent II,  
Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day See under 21<sup>st</sup> Dec, Preface of Advent II,  
Eucharistic Prayer III

Wednesday 22 Dec Advent Weekday 4<sup>th</sup>

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day See under 22 Dec, Preface of Advent II, Eucharist  
Prayer II

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day See under 22 Dec, Preface of Advent II, Eucharist  
Prayer II

(Intention: Daniel T. Thornton RIP )

Thursday 23 Dec Advent Weekday 4<sup>th</sup> St. John of Kanty Priest

6:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day See under 23 Dec, Preface of Advent II,  
Eucharistic Prayer II

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Proper of the Day See under 23 Dec, Preface of Advent II,  
Eucharistic Prayer II

4:00 – 6:30 p.m. Confessions

6:30 p.m. Mass Proper of the Day See under 23 Dec, Preface of Advent II,  
Eucharistic Prayer II

Friday 24 Dec Christmas Eve

3:00 p.m. Children's Mass

6:00 p.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Nativity I  
Eucharistic Prayer I (prop. Insert

9:00 p.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Nativity II  
Eucharistic Prayer I (prop. Insert

12 Midnight Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of  
Nativity III, Eucharistic Prayer I (prop.

Insert)

**Saturday 25 Dec Christmas Day**

**7:30 a.m. Dawn Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of  
Nativity I, Eucharistic Prayer I (prop.  
Insert)**

**10:00 a.m. Mass of the Day Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of  
Nativity I, Eucharistic Prayer I (prop.  
Insert)**

**2:00 p.m. Mass Brig**

**Sunday 26 Dec Feast of the Holy Family**

**7:00 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Nativity II  
Eucharistic Prayer I (prop. Insert)  
(Intention: Kenny Morris RIP)**

**8:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Nativity II  
Eucharistic Prayer I (prop. Insert)  
(Intention: Donald Reisch RIP)**

**11:30 a.m. Mass Proper, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Nativity II  
Eucharistic Prayer I (prop. Insert)  
(Intention: Parish of St. Stephen, Martyr)**

**2:00 p.m. Mass Brig**

### **'Twas the Night Before Christmas**

'Twas the night before Christmas—and in most of the town,  
Not a sign of Jesus—was anywhere to be found.  
The people were all busy with Christmas time chores—  
Like decorating, and baking, and shopping in stores.  
No one sang, “Away in a manger—no crib for a bed.”  
Instead, they sang of Santa—dressed-up in bright red.  
Mama sipped her hot cocoa while Papa’s beer was on his lap.  
And they’s sip away’ sip away’ with each present they’d wrap.  
Then what from the T.V. did suddenly appear?  
Twas an ad which exploited a sale down at Sears.

So away to the mall they all flew like a flash—  
Buying gifts on credit—and others with cash!  
And, as they made their way home from their trip to the mall,  
Did they think about Jesus? Oh, no—not at all.  
Their lives were so busy with their Christmas time things,  
They had no time to remember Christ Jesus, the King of all Kings.  
There were presents to wrap and cookies to bake.  
Not one thought for the One who died for their sake?  
To pray to the Savior—they had no time to stop.  
Because they needed more time to “Shop till they dropped!”  
On Wal-m! art! On K-mart! On Target! On Penney’s!  
On Hallmark! On Zales! A quick lunch at Denny’s!  
From the big stores downtown to the stores at the mall,  
They would dash away, dash away, and visit them all!  
And up on the roof, there arose such a clatter—  
As Papa hung lights—using his brand new step ladder.  
He hung the ones that would flash. He hung lights that would twirl.  
Yet, he never once prayed—to Jesus—the Light of the World.  
Christ was born in a manger and then dwelt among us  
He was forsaken and beaten this I will discuss  
As I raise my children they will know their salvation was won  
For God so loved the world that He gave His own Son  
Christ died on a cross like a sheep to the slaughter  
This is the story I will tell to my daughter  
In 3 days He rose and He now sits with the Father  
So give to Him all the glory if it’s not much of a bother  
And instead of being busy, overworked, and uptight—  
Put Christ in your Christmas for a peaceful good night!  
“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a  
Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11)



## PRAYERS

### **An Advent Prayer**

Lord God, we adore you because you have come to us in the past.  
You have spoken to us in the Law of Israel.  
You have challenged us in the words of the prophets.  
You have shown us in Jesus what you are really like.  
Lord God, we adore you because you still come to us now.  
You come to us through other people and their love and concern for us.  
You come to us through men and women who need our help.  
You come to us as we worship you with your people.  
Lord God, we adore you because you will come to us at the end.  
You will be with us at the hour of death.  
You will still reign supreme when all human institutions fail.  
You will still be God when our history has run its course.  
We welcome you, the God who comes.  
Come to us now in the power of Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Loving Father, help us remember the birth of Jesus, that  
We may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the  
Shepherds, and the worship of the wise men.

"Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over  
The world.

"Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with  
Every greeting.

"Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings,  
And teach us to be merry with clear hearts.

"May the Christmas morning make us happy to be your  
Children, and the Christmas evening bring us to our beds  
With grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Jesus'  
Sake.

Amen!"

(Robert Louis Stevenson)

**THE REAL NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS**  
**(by Parents)**

Through the house  
I searched for the tools  
To hand to my spouse.  
Instructions were studied  
And we were inspired,  
In hopes we could manage  
"Some Assembly Required."  
The children were quiet (not asleep) in their beds,  
While Dad and I faced the evening with dread:  
A kitchen, two bikes, Barbie's townhouse to boot!  
And now, thanks to Grandpa, a train with a toot!  
We opened the boxes,  
My heart skipped a beat –  
Let no parts be missing  
Or parts incomplete!  
Too late for last-minute returns or replacement;  
If we can't get it right, it goes straight to the basement!  
When what to my worrying eyes should appear  
But 50 sheets of directions, concise, but not clear,  
With each part numbered and every slot named,  
So if we fail, only we could be blamed,  
More rapid than eagles the parts then fell out,  
All over the carpet they were scattered about.  
"Now bolt it! Now twist it! Attach it right there!  
Slide on the seats, and staple the stair!  
Hammer the shelves, and nail to the stand."  
"Honey," said hubby, "you just glued my hand."  
And then in a twinkling, I knew for a fact  
That all the toy dealers had indeed made a pact  
To keep parents busy all Christmas Eve night  
With "assembly required" till morning's first light.  
We spoke not a word, but kept bent at our work,  
Till our eyes, they went blurry; our fingers all hurt,  
The coffee went cold and the night, it wore thin  
Before we attached the last rod and last pin.

Then laying the tools away in the chest,  
We fell into bed for a well-deserved rest.  
But I said to my husband just before I passed out,  
“This will be the best Christmas, without any doubt.  
Tomorrow we’ll cheer, let the holiday ring,  
And not run to the store for one single thing!  
We did it! We did it! The toys are all set  
For the perfect, most magical, Christmas, I bet!”  
Then off to dreamland and sweet repose  
I gratefully went, though I suppose  
There’s something to say for those self-deluded –  
I’d forgotten that BATTERIES are never included!