

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Find Us Ready

Good and gracious God,
who sent the angel Gabriel to announce the
gift of your Son,
your love for us has no limits and
endures forever.

As we prepare for the coming of Christ,
eliminate within us all sin and fear,
giving us pure hearts to receive him.
May the Holy Spirit fill us with your grace,

just as Mary was so filled,
and find us ready to stand in your presence
to serve you.

Keep us faithful to the covenant you made
with our ancestors.

May your joy saturate our beings as we go
forth proclaiming your salvation,
so that, on that final day, we will forever sing
your goodness.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 24, 2017

Mystery Revealed

Today's Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27, 29; Romans 16:25–27; Luke 1:26–38. The readings proclaimed at the liturgy today invite us to ponder the mystery revealed in the birth of Christ. David wishes to build a proper house for the ark of God. The prophet Nathan reveals that God has a much bigger plan: to establish a house for him. God will build up the nation to prosper until the end of time. Because of the Incarnation, we are heirs to this promise and are members of God's household. As the psalm states, God has made a covenant with his people and we continue the song of praise and thanksgiving.

This promise cannot be fulfilled without Mary's yes. Since the time of the fall, all creation has waited for Mary. God chose her to bear his Son, the Messiah who establishes

the Reign of God. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to give up everything (die to self) for another, especially for God's will? Here is a young woman whose whole life changes when she humbly says, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Tomorrow, the Christian world celebrates the birth of Jesus. The season of Christmas, challenges us to grow deeper in faith. Jesus reveals the Father's love and mercy. At every liturgy, the Church celebrates this mystery and receives the presence of God's own Son. We are to become what we receive—the Body of Christ. Take time today to reflect on your yes and see in what ways God has revealed himself to you.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 25

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

Today's psalm captures the importance of this solemnity in the life of the world. The psalmist sings a song of praise for the mighty deeds God has done. As Christians, we celebrate God's gift of the Incarnation, which has made salvation known; all creation blesses God's holy name. During dinner tonight, read and reflect on the story of Christ's birth. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18.*

Tuesday, December 26

Feast of St. Stephen

Have you ever thought about what it would be like to be a martyr? In his martyrdom, Stephen teaches us to remain fervent and faithful in our commitment to Christ. Although it is not always easy to keep our baptismal promises, we must trust, as Jesus says, that the Spirit will speak through us. Practicing a regular prayer life will help us remain faithful. Take time today to pray for those who continue to be persecuted for their faith; research one modern martyr. *Today's Readings: Acts of the Apostles 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Psalm 31:3cd-4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17; Matthew 10:17-22.*

Wednesday, December 27

St. John

The word *witness* is a good summary for the readings today. Because of the encounter that the disciples and Mary Magdalene had with Christ, they were compelled to share the Word of life. John is willing to give his life for Christ. In Baptism, each of us is intimately woven into the life of God and therefore, we, like the early disciples, must witness to our encounter with the Risen Christ. Everything we are and do must proclaim Christ, who is life. Like John, take time today to write your "gospel," the story of your encounter with Christ. *Today's Readings: 1 John 1:1-4; Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; John 20:1a and 2-8.*

Thursday, December 28

Feast of the Holy Innocents

Today the Church commemorates the life of those children who were executed by Herod. During this short Christmas cycle, martyrdom is highlighted, as the feasts of Sts. Stephen and John are also celebrated. In the Middle Ages, these early martyrs were known as companions of Christ. Their stories invite us to reflect on the effect of the Incarnation. Christ is the one who frees us from all bondage and saves us from death. Martyrdom is a profession of deep faith in Christ. Let your prayer today be for all who have been executed for the sake of Christ. *Today's Readings: 1 John 1:5-2:2; Psalm 124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd and 8; Matthew 2:13-18.*

Friday, December 29

Light

The birth of Christ revealed God's greatest gift to the universe. He truly is the Light of the World, the one who brings us out of darkness. John tells us that those who love and remain in love will have the light. Simeon, in the Gospel, tells us that Jesus is the light that will reveal God's love and mercy to the world. At Baptism, each of us received a lighted candle to remind us that Christ's light is in us, and that we are called to share that light in acts of love. Light your baptismal candle today. *Today's Readings: 1 John 2:3-11; Psalm 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6; Luke 2:22-35.*

Saturday, December 30

God's Will

"Do not love the world or the things in the world" is a key message in today's First Reading. John reminds us that we know God and God is within us. Yet we are often enticed by the ideals of this world, and we can easily be misdirected. We must listen to the voice of love within us. God calls us to share the Good News and live according to his will. Listening in prayer helps us remain confident in our vocation. Make a list of those times you have ignored God and then offer them in prayer. *Today's Readings: 1 John 2:12-17; Psalm 96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10; Luke 2:36-40.*

