

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Be with us

Emmanuel,
soon we will celebrate your birth,
the day God came crying and laughing,
a child in our midst.
On this day we celebrate that you are with us,
you have always been with us,
and you want all people to be with you.
Help us entrust our lives to you, to belong
to you alone.

Be with us as we answer your call to be
humble and holy.
Keep us as your brothers and sisters,
as children of your Father,
no matter how often we step away from you.
Stay always by our side
so that we will be with you forever in
your kingdom.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 22, 2019

Fulfillment



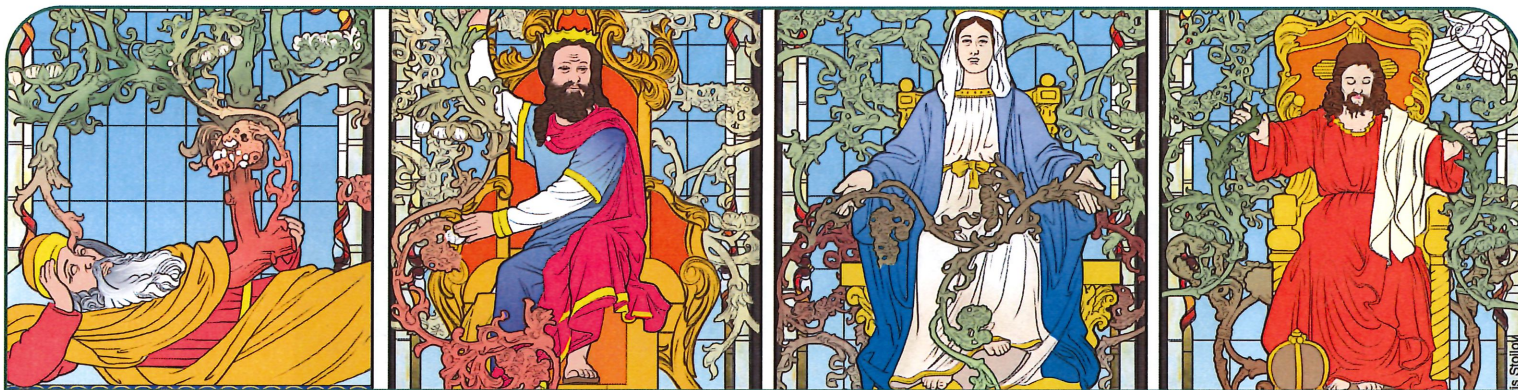
Today's Readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; Psalm 24:1–2, 3–4, 5–6 (7c, 10b); Romans 1:1–7; Matthew 1:18–24. When King Ahaz and the people of southern Israel were under attack, the king sought help from a foreign power. The prophet Isaiah told him to trust in God instead. Isaiah even offered proof of God's protection, but the king refused it. Ahaz probably suspected that if he trusted in God, his life would change in a way he would not like.

Like King Ahaz, Joseph found himself in what looked like an impossible situation. Even if he discreetly divorced Mary, everyone would find out why. Unlike King Ahaz, however, when Joseph is given the chance to entrust himself to God's plan, he takes it. He bravely brings his betrothed into his home. By doing so, Joseph fulfills two prophecies.

He receives the sign promised to an ancient king, and he incorporates the unborn child of the virgin into his family line, the line of King David.

Although Ahaz failed to trust in his Lord, God vowed to remain with his people. God's enduring presence takes a startling turn in the house of Joseph, for the child is more than a son of David; he is also, as St. Paul writes, "Son of God in power." The child is Emmanuel, God living in the midst of his people as one of his people.

Yet this child belongs not only to Jews, but to everyone. And everyone belongs to him. In Jesus, God fulfills his plan of salvation. In Jesus, God calls us to entrust ourselves to him, to become holy, and to belong to him forever.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 23

Elijah Returns

Our Old Testament ends with the prophecy that Elijah will return to prepare people for God's arrival. It would be several centuries, however, before someone would again speak for God. When John the Baptist began his prophetic ministry, people believed that God was at last speaking to them. The unusual elements of John's birth point to the new era that is about to begin. Find or draw an image of John the Baptist and use it to reflect on the ways people of his era might have reacted to him. *Today's Readings: Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Psalm 25:4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14; Luke 1:57-66.*

Tuesday, December 24

Peace

King David united Israel, brought the nation peace, and upheld God's covenant. God's promise that a descendant of David would reign forever is part of God's promise to bring peace to the world. By calling Jesus the "son of David," we acknowledge that Jesus is the "daybreak from on high" who will "guide our feet into the path of peace." Pray for all the nations of the world, especially those that are in the deadly grip of violence. *Today's Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29; Luke 1:67-79.*

Wednesday, December 25

God's Goodness

When God created the world, he saw that it was good. Sin plunged the world back into darkness, but God did not give up on his creation. Instead, he prepared to bring light to the world once again. Today we celebrate God's advent in our world. We celebrate his affirmation of the goodness of creation and his promise that "all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God." Look for the goodness in each moment of this day. Thank God for the goodness that surrounds and fills you. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18.*

Thursday, December 26

St. Stephen, the First of Many

The light has come into the world, but not everyone wants to hear about it. Jesus warned his followers that they would face persecution. Stephen was the first to face persecution: he was brutally killed for proclaiming the Gospel. Thousands have given their lives since then. Their courage shows the unwavering light and truth of the Incarnation. Place the names or images of Christian martyrs you admire by your nativity set. *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.*

Friday, December 27

St. John, Evangelist and Apostle

Although St. John does not include stories about Jesus' birth in his Gospel, he emphasizes that Jesus is God's Son in the flesh. Those who believe that Jesus is the fullest and most perfect revelation of God enter into communion with his Father. Through this fellowship with God, all who believe will enter eternal life. St. John longed for people to believe that Jesus was truly God-in-the-flesh, and he rejoiced when they did. Celebrate the Incarnation by praying the Angelus today. *Today's Readings: 1 John 1:1-4; Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; John 20:1a and 2-8.*

Saturday, December 28

The Holy Innocents

The joyful, uplifting stories surrounding the birth of Jesus come to us mostly from the Gospel according to Luke. St. Matthew's stories foreshadow Jesus' passion and death. We're reminded of the threat that looms over Jesus as we hear how King Herod goes to horrific lengths to eliminate a potential rival. Not only did King Herod walk in darkness, he even tried to destroy the light itself. Confess the ways you still walk in darkness, and ask God to forgive you and bring you back into the light of Christ. *Today's Readings: 1 John 1:5-2:2; Psalm 124:2-3, 4-5, 7b-8; Matthew 2:13-18.*

