Lectio Divina

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[1] *Cover Image:* Nativity Windows Monastery of Mount Carmel, Niagara Falls, ONT Canada.

Monday, December 1, 2025

1st Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord God, Father of all, in Your Son Jesus Christ
you invite everyone and all to know and love You and to live in Your unending peace.
Keep alive in us the zeal to bring the light of Your truth and the riches of Your life and love to all, without any distinction of race, language or culture.
May everyone on earth come to know You as the merciful Father of all through our brother and Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 8: 5-11

When He went into Capernaum a centurion came up and pleaded with Him. “Sir,” he said, “my servant is lying at home paralyzed and in great pain.” Jesus said to him, “I will come myself and cure him.”
The centurion replied, “Sir, I am not worthy to have You under my roof; just give the word and my servant will be cured. For I am under authority myself and have soldiers under me; and I say to one man, ‘Go,’ and he goes; to another, ‘Come here,’ and he comes; to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”
When Jesus heard this, He was astonished and said to those following Him, “In truth I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found faith as great as this. And I tell you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of Heaven."

Reflection

Today’s Gospel is a mirror. It reminds us of the words we say during the Mass at the moment of communion: “Lord, I am not worthy that You should enter my house, only say the word and I will be healed.” Looking at this text more closely it suggests the following:

- The person who seeks Jesus is a pagan, a gentile, a soldier of the Roman army, which dominated and exploited the people. It is not merely religion or the desire for God, but rather the need and the suffering which impels him first to seek Jesus, followed by a faith that Jesus could heal. Jesus has no prejudices. He does not demand anything first, He accepts and listens to the request of the Roman centurion.
- Jesus’ answer surprises the centurion because it is beyond his expectation. The centurion did not expect that Jesus would go to his house. He feels unworthy: “I am not worthy.” This means that he considered Jesus a highly superior person.
- The centurion expresses his faith in Jesus saying “say the word and my servant will be cured.” He believes that the word of Jesus is capable of

healing. From where does he get this great faith? It comes from his professional experience as a centurion! Because when a centurion gives an order, the soldier obeys. He has to obey. Thus, he believes it is enough for Jesus to say one word, and things will happen according to His word. He believes the word of Jesus has authoritative force.

- Jesus praises the faith of the centurion. Faith does not consist in just accepting and repeating doctrine, but in believing and acting on the word of Jesus.

Personal Questions

- Placing myself in the place of Jesus: how do I accept and help people of other religions?
- Placing myself in the place of the centurion: what personal experience leads me to believe in Jesus?

Concluding Prayer

Come near to me with Your saving power, let me share the happiness of Your chosen ones, let me share the joy of Your people. (Ps 106)

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

1st Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
You never give up on people. Again and again You want to make a new beginning with us.
You showed us in Jesus Your Son the kind of people You want us to be.
As your Spirit rested on Him, pour out on us the same Spirit that we may see our mission in life with Your wisdom and insight and that we may have the strength to live as we believe and hope.
Grant us this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Luke 10: 21-24

Just at this time, filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, He said, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased You to do. Everything has been entrusted to Me by My Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.'

Then turning to His disciples, He spoke to them by themselves, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see and never saw it; to hear what you hear and never heard it.'

Reflection

Today's text reveals the depth of the heart of Jesus and the reason for His joy. The disciples had gone on a mission, and when they return, they share with Jesus the joy of their experience (Lk 10: 17: 21)

- Jesus' joy comes from seeing the joy of His friends. Listening to their experience, Jesus feels profound joy.
- It is not a superficial joy. It comes from the Holy Spirit. The disciples have shared in Jesus' mission during their own missionary experience.
- Jesus calls them "little children." Who are the "little children? They are the seventy-two disciples (Lk 10: 1) who return from the mission. They are not doctors. They are simple people without education, but they understand the things of God better than the doctors.
- "Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased You to do!" This is a very serious phrase. It pleases the Father that the little ones understand them. Therefore, if the great of the world want to understand the things of the Kingdom, they should become the disciples of the little ones!
- Jesus looks at them and says, "blessed are you!" And why are they happy? Because they are seeing things which the prophets would have liked to see but did not see. And what will they see? They see the Kingdom in the common things of life such as curing the sick, consoling the afflicted, and expelling evil.

Personal Questions

- If I take the place of the people: Do I consider myself as belonging to the little ones or the doctors?
- If I take the place of Jesus: What is the basis of my joy, superficial or profound?
- Does being a "little one" versus a doctor imply ignorance is good, or does it question where we place our trust - in our knowledge or in God?
- Do I pray to God as a father with spontaneous prayer as Jesus did here, or is my prayer formal and rigid?

Concluding Prayer

"I give You praise, Father, for although You have hidden these things from the wise You have revealed them to the childlike." (cf. Lc 10: 21)

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

1st Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

God of all people,
You know how people hunger and thirst for truth, love and acceptance.
If we accept You and believe in You we see our deepest trust and aspirations being fulfilled by You as we work for the coming of Your kingdom. Help us to let the cup that You pour for us overflow on all Your people, that all may praise You now and for ever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 15: 29-37

Jesus went on from there and reached the shores of the Lake of Galilee, and He went up onto the mountain. He took His seat, and large crowds came to Him bringing the lame, the crippled, the blind, the dumb and many others; these they put down at His feet, and He cured them. The crowds were astonished to see the dumb speaking, the cripples whole again, the lame walking and the blind with their sight, and they praised the God of Israel.
But Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, "I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with Me for three days now and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them off hungry, or they might collapse on the way." The disciples said to Him, "Where in a deserted place could we get sufficient bread for such a large crowd to have enough to eat?" Jesus said to them, "How many loaves have you?" They said, "Seven, and a few small fish." Then He instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground, and He took the seven loaves and the fish, and after giving thanks He broke them and began handing them to the disciples, who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected what was left of the scraps, seven baskets full.

Reflection

Today's Gospel is like the rising sun. It is always the same sun every day which renews life and renders plants fertile. The greatest danger is routine. Routine kills the Gospel and extinguishes the sun of life.

- The elements which form the picture of the Gospel are always the same: Jesus, the mountain, the sea, the crowds, the sick, the needy, the problems of life. However, despite their familiarity they, like the sun, bring a life-giving message.
- Like Moses, Jesus goes up to the mountain and the people gather around Him. They bring their problems with them: sickness, blindness, deafness, etc. They are the new People of God who gather around the new Moses. Jesus cures all of them.

- Jesus calls the disciples. He has compassion for the people who have nothing to eat . According to the disciples, the solution must come from outside: “Where to find bread to feed so many people?” According to Jesus, the solution must come from the people through His help: “How many loaves have you?” They answer “seven and a few small fish.” With these few loaves of bread and fish, Jesus satisfies the hunger of all, and there are even some left over. If today people would share what they have, there would be no hunger in the world. Many things would be left over! Truly, another world is possible!
- The account of the multiplication of the loaves foretells the Eucharist : “Jesus, took the bread in His hands, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to His disciples.”

Personal Questions

- Jesus feels compassion. Is there compassion in me when facing the problems of humanity? Do I do something about it?
- The disciples expect the solution to come from outside. Jesus shows differently. Where do I look for solutions?
- Is every day routine for me, or do I thank God for another day and creatively seek to do His will?

Concluding Prayer

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures He gives me repose. (Ps 23)

Thursday, December 4, 2025

1st Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
to those who trust in You and live the gospel of Your Son, You are a dependable rock.
In the storms and tensions of our times, may our faith never waver, but give us the courage to live as we believe, consistently, radically, that with Your Son we may do Your will and live in Your love now and forever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 7: 21, 24-27

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but only the person who does the will of My Father in heaven.

Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of Mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock.
But everyone who listens to these words of Mine and does not act on them will be like an unwise man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell."

Reflection

Today's Gospel narrates the end of the discourse on the mountain. The discourse on the mountain is a new reading of the Law of God. It begins with the Beatitudes (Mt 5: 1- 12) and ends with the house built on the rock.

- It is a question of acquiring true wisdom. The source of wisdom is the Word of God expressed in the Law of God. True Wisdom consists of listening to, and practicing, the Word of God (Lk 11: 28). It is not sufficient to say "Lord, Lord!" The important thing is not to say beautiful words about God, but rather to do the will of the Father, and therefore, to be a revelation of His love and His presence in the world.
- The one who listens to, and practices, the Word constructs a house on rock. The strength of the house does not come from the house itself, but rather from the foundation, from the rock. What does the rock signify? It is the experience of God's love revealed in Jesus (Rm 8: 31-39). There are some people who practice the Word in order to merit God's love. But love is not bought, nor do we merit it (sg 8: 7). The love of God is received gratuitously. Let us put into practice the Word, not in order to merit love, but to say thank you for the love we have received. This is the good foundation, the rock which gives security to the house. True security comes from the certainty of God's love. It is the rock which sustains us in moments of difficulty and in storms.
- The Evangelist ends the discourse on the Mountain (Mt 7: 27-28) by saying that the crowds admired the teaching of Jesus because "He taught with authority, and not like the Scribes." The teaching of Jesus gave the people a critical awareness concerning religious authority of the time. Admired and grateful, the people appreciated the beautiful and diverse teaching of Jesus.

Personal Questions

- Am I among those who say "Lord, Lord," or among those who put the Word into practice?
- Do I observe the Law in order to merit love and salvation or in order to thank God for His love and His salvation?

Concluding Prayer

O Lord, grant
salvation! O Lord,
grant prosperity!
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (Ps 118)

Friday, December 5, 2025

1st Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord God, Father of all, in Your Son Jesus Christ You invite everyone and all to know and love You and to live in Your unending peace.
Keep alive in us the zeal to bring the light of Your truth and the riches of Your life and love to all, without any distinction of race, language or culture.
May everyone on earth come to know You as the merciful Father of all through our brother and Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 9: 27-31

As Jesus passed by, two blind men followed him, crying out, "Son of David, have pity on us!" When he entered the house, the blind men approached him and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" "Yes, Lord," they said to him. Then he touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." And their eyes were opened. Jesus warned them sternly, "See that no one knows about this." But they went out and spread word of him through all that land.

Reflection

Once again, today's Gospel places before us the encounter of Jesus with human misery. Jesus does not withdraw. He does not hide. He accepts others and in accepting them, full of tenderness, He reveals God's love.

- Two blind men follow Jesus and cry out to Him, "Son of David, have pity on us!" Jesus did not much like the title of Son of David. He criticizes the teaching of the scribes who said that the Messiah should be the Son of David: "David himself calls Him Lord: How then can He be his son?" (Mk 12: 37).
- Reaching home, Jesus asks the blind men, "Do you believe that I can do this?" And they answer: "Yes, Lord!" It is one thing to have true doctrine in the head, and a very different thing to have correct faith in the heart. The doctrine of the two blind men was not too right, because they called Jesus Son of David. But Jesus does not care to be called this. What is important to Him is to have a correct faith.

- He touches the eyes and says, “May it be done to you according to your faith!” Immediately the eyes were opened. Although they did not possess correct doctrine, the two blind men had correct faith. Today many people are more concerned about correct doctrine than about correct faith.
- It is good not to forget a small detail of hospitality. Jesus reaches the house and the two blind men also enter the house, as if this was the most natural thing in the world. They feel at ease in Jesus’ house. And how about today? A religious Sister said, “Today the situation of the world is such that I feel mistrustful even toward the poor!” The situation has changed very much from then to now!
- Jesus asks them not to speak about the miracle. But the prohibition was not respected very much. Both of them went out and spread the Good News. To proclaim the Gospel, that is, the Good News, means to share with others the good which God does in our life.

Personal Questions

- Do I have in my life some Good News from God to share with others?
- On which point do I insist more: on correct doctrine or on correct faith?
- How is it possible to separate doctrine and faith in practice?

Concluding Prayer

The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?
The Lord is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid? (Ps 27)

Saturday, December 6, 2025

1st Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

God of mercy and compassion, in your Son, Jesus Christ, you have revealed Yourself as a God of people.
Turn our empty hearts to You, give us eyes to see the depth of our poverty and our inability to build a better world with our own resources, and then come and build it with us through your Son and our Savior Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 9: 35 - 10: 1, 5-8

Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness. And when He saw the crowds He felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a

shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is rich but the laborers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers to His harvest.'
He summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to drive them out and to cure all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness.
These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them as follows: 'Do not make your way to Gentile territory, and do not enter any Samaritan town; go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from diseases, drive out demons. You received without charge, give without charge.

Reflection

The Gospel today has two parts: (a) A brief summary of the apostolic activity of Jesus (Mt 9: 35-38) and (b) The beginning of the "Sermon of the Mission" (Mt 10:1: 5-8). The Gospel of today's Liturgy omits the names of the Apostles which are found in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 10: 2-4).

- Matthew 9: 35: Summary of the apostolic activity of Jesus. "Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and all kinds of illness." Matthew describes in a few words the central points of the missionary activity of Jesus:
  - (a) to travel through all the towns and villages. Jesus does not wait for people to come to Him, but He goes out to look for the people, travelling Himself through the towns and villages.
  - (b) To teach in the Synagogues, that is, in the communities. Jesus goes to the place where the people are gathered together around the faith in God.

  And it is there that He proclaims the Good News of the Kingdom, that is, the Good News of God. Jesus does not teach doctrine as if the Good News were a new catechism, but in everything He says and does there emerges something of the great Good News which dwells within Him, that is, God, the Kingdom of God. (c) He cures all kinds of diseases and illness. What poor people experienced most was illness, all kinds of diseases, and what distinguishes the activity of Jesus is the consolation given to the people, whom He relieves from their pain.

- Matthew 9: 36: The compassion of Jesus before the situation of the people. "And when He saw the crowds, He felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus accepts persons as they are before Him: sick, exhausted, tired. He behaves like the Servant of Isaiah, whose central message consists of "consoling the people" (cf. Is 40: 1). The attitude of Jesus toward the people was like the attitude of the Servant whose mission was very specific: "He does not cry out or raise his voice, his voice is not heard in the street; he does not break the crushed

reed or snuff the smoldering wick." (Is 42: 2-3). Like the Servant, Jesus feels sorry when He sees the situation of the people who were "tired, exhausted, and dejected like sheep without a shepherd." He becomes their shepherd, identifying Himself with the servant who said: "...be my servant so as to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and so as to convert the dregs of Israel. Behold, I have offered you as a light for the Gentiles, so that you may be my salvation, even to the furthest regions of the earth." (Is 49:6). And from the contact with the Father, Jesus receives the consolation to communicate it to the poor.

- Matthew 9: 37-38: Jesus involves the disciples in the mission. Because of the immensity of the missionary activity, the first thing that Jesus asks the disciples to do is to pray: "The harvest is rich but the laborers are few! So ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers to his harvest." Prayer is the first form of commitment of the disciples for the mission. Because if one believes in the importance of the mission one has to carry out, everything possible is done so that it will not die with us, but rather that it will continue with others, through us and after us.
- Matthew 10: 1: Jesus gave the disciples the power to cure and to cast out demons. "He summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to drive them out and to cure all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness." The second thing that Jesus asks the disciples is that they do not begin to teach doctrine and laws, but rather, to help the people who are overcome by unclean spirits and to help them in the struggle against illness. Today, what often frightens people are certain missionaries who threaten them with the punishment of God and with the danger of demons. Jesus does the contrary. "If it is through the finger of God that I drive demons out, then the Kingdom of God has indeed caught you unaware" (Lk 11: 20). It is unfortunate, but today there are some people who believe they need demons in order to make money by driving them out. It would be worthwhile for them to read what Jesus says against the Pharisees and the doctors of the Law (Mt 23).
- Matthew 10: 5-6: Go first to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. Jesus sends out the twelve with these recommendations: "Do not make your way to Gentile territory, and do not enter any Samaritan town. Go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel." At the beginning, the mission of Jesus was directed to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel." Who were these lost sheep of the House of Israel? Were they the persons who were excluded, for example, the prostitutes, the tax collectors, and the unclean who were considered lost and condemned by the religious authority of the time? Were they those of the directing class, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the elders and the priests who considered themselves the faithful people of Israel? Or were they the crowds, tired and exhausted, as sheep without a shepherd? Probably, here in the context of the Gospel of Matthew, it is these poor and abandoned people who are accepted by Jesus (Mt 9: 36-37). Jesus wanted the disciples to participate with Him in this mission with these people.

But the way in which He takes care of these people, Jesus himself extends the horizon. In the contact with the Canaanite woman, a lost sheep of another race and another religion who wishes to be heard, Jesus repeats to his disciples: “I have been sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Mt 15:24). It is at the insistence of the mother who does not cease to intercede for her daughter that Jesus defends himself saying: “It is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs” (Mt 15:26). But the reaction of the mother changes the attitude of Jesus: “Ah, yes, Lord, but even little dogs eat the scraps that fall from their masters’ table” (Mt 15:27). The answer of the woman counters the argument of Jesus. He takes care of the woman. Jesus listens to the woman: “Woman, you have great faith: Let your desire be granted. And from that moment her daughter was well again” (Mt 15: 28). Through the attention given to the lost sheep of Israel, Jesus shows that throughout the whole world there are lost sheep who want to eat the scraps or crumbs.

- Matthew 10: 7-8: Summary of the activity of Jesus. “Go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, proclaim that the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.

  Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from diseases, drive out demons. You received without charge, give without charge.” How can the closeness of the Kingdom be revealed? The response is simple and concrete: curing the sick, raising the dead, cleaning the lepers, driving out demons and serving gratuitously, without enriching oneself from the service given to the people. Where this takes place, the Kingdom is revealed.

Personal questions

- We all receive the same mission given by Jesus to the disciples. Are you conscious and aware of this mission? How do you live your mission?
- In your life, have you had any contact with the lost sheep, with people who are tired, exhausted and searching? What lesson did you draw out of this?

Concluding prayer

The Lord heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds; He counts out the number of the stars, and gives each one of them a name. (Ps 146: 3-4)

Sunday, December 7, 2025

Second Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit that I may learn to be small like Zaccheus, small in moral stature, but also grant me strength to lift myself a little from the earth, urged by the desire to see You passing during this time of Advent, to know You and to know that You are there for me. Lord Jesus, good master, by the power of Your Spirit, arouse in our hearts the desire to understand Your Word that reveals the saving love of the Father.

Gospel Text – Matthew 3: 1-12

1 In due course John the Baptist appeared; he proclaimed this message in the
desert of Judaea, 2 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.'
3 This was the man spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, 'A voice of one
that cries in the desert, "Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight."'
4 This man John wore a garment made of camel- hair with a leather loin-cloth
round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. 5 Then Jerusalem and
all Judaea and the whole Jordan
district made their way to him, 6 and as they were baptized by him in the river
Jordan they confessed their sins.
7 But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism
he said to them, 'Brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming
retribution? 8 Produce fruit in keeping with repentance, 9 and do not presume
to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father," because, I tell you, God can
raise children for Abraham from these stones. 10 Even now the axe is being laid
to the root of the trees, so that any tree failing to produce good fruit will be cut
down and thrown on the fire.
11 I baptize you in water for repentance, but the one who comes after me is
more powerful than I, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptize you
with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his
threshing-floor and gather his wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a
fire that will never go out.'

A Moment of Silent Prayer

Each one of us is full of questions in our hearts for anyone who listens to us, but above all we need to listen, knowing that it is Jesus who is speaking to us. Allow yourself to be led to your interior self where the Word echoes in all its weight of truth and love, in all its therapeutic and transforming power. Prayerful silence demands that we remain "inside", that we stand completely at the feet of the Lord and use all our energy to listen to Him alone. Stop and listen.

To Understand the Word

The Manner in Which the Plot of the Passage is Expressed:

In this Sunday of Advent we are presented with the figure of John the Baptist, a challenging personality, as Jesus once said about John the Baptist in describing his personality: "What did you go out to see, a reed blowing in the wind?" (Mt 1: 7). The profile of the Baptist that the liturgy puts before us is in two main sections: 3: 1-6, the figure and activities of John; 3: 7-12, his preaching. Within these two sections we may detect smaller matters that define the expression of this text. In 3: 1-2 John is presented as the one who preaches «repentance» because "the kingdom of heaven is close at hand." This cry is like a thread running through the whole of John's activity and is repeated in 3: 8, 12. The reason for this call to repentance is given as the imminent judgement of God which is compared to the cutting of every dry tree to be thrown into the fire to be burnt (3: 10) and to the winnowing done by farmers on the threshing-floor to separate the wheat from the chaff which is also to be burnt in the fire (3: 12). The image of fire which characterizes the last part of our liturgical passage shows the urgency of preparing oneself for the coming of God's judgement.
The text presents the following:

- **Matthew 3: 1-3:** in this first small part «the voice crying in the desert» of Isaiah 40:2 is identified with the voice of the Baptist who invites all to repentance «in the desert of Judea»;
- **Matthew 3: 4-6:** there follows a brief section which, in a picturesque manner, describes the traditional figure of John: he is a prophet and an ascetic; because of his prophetic identity he is compared to Elijah; indeed he dresses like the Tishbite prophet. A geographical and special detail describes the movement of many people who come to receive the baptism of immersion in the waters of the Jordan, in a penitential atmosphere. The influence of his prophetic activity is not limited to one place but embraces the whole region of Judea including Jerusalem and the area around the Jordan.
- **Matthew 3: 7-10 --** A special group of people comes to John to receive baptism, these are the "Pharisees and Sadducees." John addresses them with harsh words that they may stop their false religiosity and pay attention to «bearing fruit» so that they may avoid a judgement of condemnation.
- **Matthew 3: 11-12 --** Here the meaning of the baptism in relation to repentance is made clear and especially the difference between the two baptisms and the two protagonists: the baptism of John is with water for repentance; the baptism of Jesus "the more powerful who comes after" John, is with the Spirit and fire.

The Message of the Text:

In a typical biblical-narrative style, Matthew presents the figure and activity of John the Baptist in the desert of Judea. The geographical indication is meant to situate the activity of John in the region of Judea, whereas Jesus will carry out

his activity in Galilee. For Matthew, the activity of John is entirely oriented towards and subject to “the one who is to come,” the person of Jesus. Also John is presented as a great and courageous preacher who foretells the imminent judgement of God.
The message of the Baptist consists of a precise imperative, “repent” and an equally clear reason: “for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.” Repentance is foremost in the Baptist’s preaching even though at first its content is not yet clear. In 3:8, however, the fruits of repentance are revealed to give new direction to one’s existence. Such a revelation, on the one hand, is typical of prophets who wanted to make repentance as concrete as possible through a radical detachment from whatever until now was held as valuable; on the other hand, the revelation goes beyond and means to show that repentance is a turning towards “the kingdom of heaven”, towards something new which is imminent, together with its demands and prospects. It is a matter of giving a decisive turn to life in a new direction: the “kingdom of heaven” is the foundation and gives meaning to repentance and not just any human efforts. The expression “kingdom of heaven” says that God will reveal Himself to all and most powerfully. John says that this revelation of God is imminent, not distant.
The prophetic activity of John, with the characteristics of the figure of Elijah, is meant to prepare his contemporaries for the coming of God in Jesus. The motifs and images through which the figure of the Baptist is interpreted are interesting, among them the leather loin-cloth around his waist, sign of recognition of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1: 8); the garment made of camel hair is typical of the prophet according to Zacharias 13: 4. This is a direct identification between the prophet Elijah and John. This interpretation is obviously an answer of the Evangelist to the objection of the Jews of the time: how can Jesus be the Messiah, if Elijah has not yet come?
Through his prophetic activity, John succeeds in moving whole crowds just as Elijah had led back the whole people to faith in God (1 Kings 18). John’s baptism is not important because of the great crowds that come to receive it, but because it is accompanied by precise commitments of repentance. Besides, it is not a baptism that has the power to forgive sins. Only the death of Jesus has this power. However, it presents a new direction to give to one’s life.
Even the «Pharisees and Sadducees» come to receive it, but they come in a hypocritical spirit, with no intention of repenting. Thus they will not be able to flee God’s judgement. John’s invective towards these groups, covered in false religiosity, emphasizes that the role of his baptism, if received sincerely with the decision to change one’s life, protects whoever receives it from the imminent purifying judgement of God.
How will such a decision of repentance become evident? John does not give precise indications as to content, but limits himself to showing the motive: to avoid the punitive judgement of God. We could say that the aim of repentance is God, the radical recognition of God, directing in an entirely new way one’s life to God.
Yet the «Pharisees and Sadducees» are not open to repentance in so far as they place their faith and hope in being descendants of Abraham: because they belong to the chosen people, they are certain that God, by the merits of the

father, will give them salvation. John questions this false certainty of theirs by means of two images: the tree and the fire.
First, the image of the tree that is felled: in the OT this refers to God's judgement. A text from Isaiah describes it thus: «Behold the Lord, God of hosts, who tears the branches with deafening noise, the highest tips are cut off, the peaks are felled». The image of the fire has the function of expressing the "imminent anger" which will be manifested at God's judgement (3: 7). In a word, they show the pressing imminence of God's coming; the listeners must open their eyes to what awaits them.
Finally, John's preaching contrasts the two baptisms and the two persons: John and the one who is to come. The substantial difference is that Jesus baptizes with the Spirit and fire whereas John only with water, a baptism for repentance. This distinction emphasizes that the baptism of John is entirely subordinate to the baptism of Jesus. Matthew notes that the baptism with the Spirit has already taken place, namely in Christian baptism, as told in the scene of Jesus' baptism, whereas baptism with fire must still come and will take place at the judgement that Jesus will perform.
The aim of John's preaching, then, is to present a description of the judgement that awaits the community through the image of the chaff. The action of the farmer on the threshing-floor when he cleans the wheat from the chaff will also be the action of God on the community at the judgement.

A Meditation

Expecting God and Repentance:

In his preaching John reminds us that the coming of God in our lives is always imminent. He also invites us strongly to a repentance that purifies the heart, renders it ready to meet Jesus who comes into the world of men and women and opens it to hope and universal love.
An expression of St. John Henry Newman may help us understand this new direction that the Word of God suggests is urgent: "Here on earth to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed frequently." To change is to be understood from the point of view of repentance: an intimate change of heart. To live is to change. If ever this urge to change grows dim, you would no longer be alive. The book of the Apocalypse confirms this when the Lord says: "You are reputed to be alive yet are dead" (3: 1). Again, "to be perfect is to change frequently." It seems that St. John Henry Newman wanted to say: «Time is measured by my repentance." This time of Advent too is measured through the project that God has for me. I must constantly open myself, be ready to allow myself to be renewed by Him.

Accepting the Gospel:

This is the condition for repentance. The Gospel is not only a collection of messages, but a Person who asks to enter into your life. Accepting the Gospel of this Sunday of Advent means opening the door of one's own life to the one whom John the Baptist defined as more powerful. This idea was expressed well by John Paul II: "Open the doors to Christ..." Accept Christ who comes to me with

His firm word of salvation. We recall the words of St. Augustine, who used to say, “I fear the Lord who passes by.” Such a passing by of the Lord may find us at a time of life when we are distracted or superficial.

Advent – A time for Interior Souls:

A mystical evocation found in the writings of Blessed Elisabeth of the Trinity helps us discover repentance as a time and occasion to immerse ourselves in God, to expose ourselves to the fire of love that transforms and purifies our lives: «Here we are at the sacred time of Advent which more than any other time we could call the time for interior souls, souls who live always and in all things “hidden in God with Christ”, at the center of themselves. While awaiting the great mystery [of Christmas]... let us ask Him to make us true in our love, that is to transform us... it is good to think that the life of a priest, like that of a Carmelite nun, is an advent that prepares the incarnation within souls! David sings in a psalm that the “fire will walk ahead of the Lord.” Is not love that fire? Is it not also our mission to prepare the ways of the Lord by our union with the one whom the Apostle calls a “devouring fire”? On contact with Him our souls will become like a flame of love that spreads to all the members of the body of Christ that is the Church.” (Letter to Rev. Priest Chevignard, in Writings, 387-389).

Psalm 71 (72)

With this psalm, the Church prays during Advent to express the expectation of her king of peace, liberator of the poor and of the oppressed.

Rule your People with Justice

God, endow the king with Your own fair judgement, the son of the king with Your own saving justice, that he may rule Your people with justice, and Your poor with fair judgement. In his days uprightness shall flourish, and peace in plenty till the moon is no more. His empire shall stretch from sea to sea, from the river to the limits of the earth. For he rescues the needy who call to him, and the poor who have no one to help.
He has pity on the weak and the needy and saves the needy from death.
May his name be blessed forever and endure in the sight of the sun.
In him shall be blessed every race in the world, and all nations call him blessed.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, led by the powerful and vigorous word of John the Baptist, Your precursor, we wish to receive Your baptism of Spirit and fire. You know how many fears, spiritual laziness and hypocrisies reside in our hearts. We know that with Your fan, little wheat would be left in our lives and much chaff, ready to be thrown into the unquenchable fire. From the bottom of our hearts we pray, Come to us in the humility of Your incarnation, of Your humanity full of our limitations and sins and grant us the baptism of immersion into the abyss of Your humility. Grant us to be immersed into those waters of the Jordan that

gushed out of Your wounded side on the cross and grant that we may recognize you as true Son of God, our true Savior. During this Advent take us into the desert of nothingness, of repentance, of solitude so that we may experience the love of Spring. May Your voice not remain in the desert but may it echo in our hearts so that our voice, immersed, baptized in Your Presence may become news of love. Amen.

Monday, December 8, 2025

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgen Mary

LECTIO

Initial Prayer:

Rejoice, Oh Virgin Mary,
the star of Jacob is already arising, The Scriptures are fulfilled today;
The Lord is coming like a promising cloud.
Our God is coming; He is not in silence; be attentive to His greeting.
Sweet is the word of His lips, noble the design of His heart.
It shines like the wings of the dove the vestment of His messenger; it descends like the zephyr in summer on you, promising its comfort.
Our God displays His force, in your flesh He finds repose; in you He finds His sanctuary, praise Him and love Him forever.
Behold, His retinue appears, before Him, justice marches.
He will subdue the pride of the powerful, and render vigor to the humble.
He will spread out His mercy on the men who fear His name; humble servant of the Lord, weave the praise of Love.

Gospel Reading -- Luke 1: 26-38

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee
called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House
of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 28 He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice,
you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you.' 29 She was deeply disturbed by
these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, 30 but the angel
said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favor. 31 Look! You are to
conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name Him Jesus. 32 He
will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him
the throne of His ancestor David; 33 He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever
and His reign will have no end.' 34 Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this
come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' 35 The angel answered, 'The
Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you
with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. 36
And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a
son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, 37 for

nothing is impossible for God.' 38 Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

A Moment of Silence:

so that the Word of God may enter into our hearts and enlighten our lives.

MEDITATIO

A Key to the Reading:

Though these themes are also in Matthew and Mark, the Gospel of Luke is an original composition in many ways. The Evangelist inserts into his narrative new material relative to the other Gospel narratives. In the first two chapters which deal with the infancy of Jesus, Luke follows the Jewish tradition, with many direct and indirect references to the Old Testament. The theology, the symbolism, and the whole of the account of the infancy of Jesus have, and find, their roots in the Semitic world, different in many ways from the world and Greek thought. The Evangelist places the beginning of his narrative in the milieu of the *anawim,* the poor of the Lord, who submit to God's will, firm in faith that the Lord will send them salvation at the opportune time. To the *anawim* the Lord promises to send the Messiah, "sent to bring the news to the afflicted, to soothe the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, release to those in prison, to proclaim a year of favor from Yahweh and a day of vengeance for our God, to comfort all who mourn, to give to Zion's mourners…" (Is 61: 1-3). This promise of God is fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth who, entering "into the Synagogue on the Sabbath day as He usually did" (Lk 4: 16), proclaims that the promise of God pronounced by Isaiah "has been fulfilled today" (Lk 4: 21) in Him. Only the *anawim* can accept from the Son of Joseph the carpenter, and of Mary (Lk 4: 22; Mt 13: 53-58; Mk 6: 1-5; Jn 1: 45), the Good News of salvation, while the others are unfortunately scandalized because of Him. The Messiah is humble and sweet, His mouth pronounces "words of grace" (Lk 4: 22), and this is why, in order to accept Him, it is necessary to prepare oneself and enter into oneself to accept the promised One of Israel. This is why the Lord admonishes by means of the Prophet: "Seek Yahweh, all you humble of the earth, who obey the commands. Seek uprightness, seek humility: you may perhaps find shelter, on the Day of Yahweh's anger" (Zp 1: 3).
In this context, "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David, and the virgin's name was Mary" (Lk 1: 26-27). This virgin is one of the *anawim* to whom the Lord reveals His salvation. With her are found two other *anawim "who* were advanced in years" (Lk 1: 7), a priest called "Zechariah" and "Elizabeth who was childless," and therefore had no children (Lk 1: 5-7). The salvation of the Lord is also announced to these two (Gen 30: 33; I Sam 1: 5-8); 2 Sam 6: 23; Ho 9: 11). Unfortunately, in the temple, during the liturgy, which is a place of the revelation of the power and the glory of God, this Good News was not accepted by the priest (Lk 1: 8-23). But the Word of God is not bound, and it cannot be limited. In fact, the Holy One of Israel says "for as

the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before watering the earth, fertilizing it and making it germinate to provide seed for the sower and food to eat, so it is with the word that goes from My mouth: it will not return to Me unfulfilled or before having carried out My good pleasure and having achieved what it was sent to do." (Is 55: 10-11). This is why Elizabeth "in her old age has conceived a son and, she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God" (Lk 1: 36-37). This will be the event offered to Mary as a sign of the "power of the Most High" (Lk 1: 35) which will come down upon her like a shadow to conceive the Son of God through the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1: 34- 35). The Son who will be named Jesus "will be great and will be called Son of the Most High; the Lord God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David; He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and His reign will have no end" (Lk 1: 31-33). These words of the angel echo those addressed to Ahaz : "the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, whom she will call Immanuel" (Is 7: 14).
That is why, after John was conceived (Lk 1: 26), the Good News was received "in a city of Galilee called Nazareth" (Lk 1: 26) by a young girl, a "virgin promised to a spouse" (Lk 1: 27). "Nazareth" and "Mary" are in contrast to "Jerusalem" and "priest"; just as the phrase "he went in" is with the word "temple." The Lord reveals himself in humble places and is accepted by humble people from whom, in the judgment of men, "nothing good can come" (Jn 1: 45). Mary is invited to rejoice: "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you" (Lk 1: 28). The presence of the Lord in the midst of His people is the occasion for joy because the presence of the Lord bears salvation and blessing. The invitation of the angel is addressed to the whole People of God in the person of Mary. That is why the whole People of God are called to rejoice and be glad in the Lord their Savior. It is the Messianic joy which is announced to all: "Cry out and shout for joy, you who live in Zion, for the Holy One of Israel is among you in His greatness" (Is 12: 6); "Rejoice, exult with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem! Yahweh has repealed your sentence; He has turned your enemy away. Yahweh is king among you, Israel, you have nothing more to fear..." (Zp 3: 14-15); "Rejoice, exult daughter of Zion, because, behold, I come to live among you" (Zc 2: 14).
The conception of Jesus is a new event, the primacy of the future new creation brought about by the generating power of God who comes to counter the impossibility of Mary's conceiving because she knows no man (Lk 1: 34). The shadow which the Most High extends on Mary recalls the cloud which accompanied the people in the desert during the day (Ex 13: 22) which overshadowed Mount Sinai revealing the Glory of the Lord during six days (Ex 19: 16; 24: 17). It is also a sign of the protection of God, extended to the just, who invoke the name of the Lord and place themselves in the hands of God during trials (Ps 17: 8; 57: 2; 140: 8). In creation, the Spirit of God blew over the water, the sign of the creating power of the word of God (Gen 1: 2).
God exceeds every human capacity. Nothing is impossible for Him (Lk 1: 37; Gen 18: 14; Jer 32: 27). Before the Lord of joy, life and salvation, Mary accepts His generating and creative word: "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to Your word" (Lk 1: 38).

Questions to Orient the Meditation and Make it Relevant:

- The Lord reveals Himself to the *anawim* of his people. Who do you feel are the contemporary *anawim* among us today?
- Many times we feel that we are in a world hostile to God's revelation. It also seems that He has become silent and no longer reveals His word. Is this true? If He still speaks to us, where can I find His life-giving word? How can I accept it?
- The power of evil seems to envelop our restless world. The many means of oppression seem to oppress the God of joy, freedom, and mercy. How do you feel about this? Do you feel that today's text inspires you while facing a seemingly impossible situation?
- What do you think is Mary's attitude? Does this reveal something of your own life?

ORATIO

Canticle of Mary

> My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;

because He has looked upon the humiliation of His servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me.
Holy is His name, and His faithful love extends age after age to those who fear Him.
He has used the power of His arm, He has routed the arrogant of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly.
He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of His faithful love - according to the promise He made to our ancestors - of His mercy to Abraham and to His descendants forever.

A Moment for a Prayerful Silence

CONTEMPLATIO

For here men of strong will can enter into themselves and remain there as much as they like, diligently cultivating the seeds of virtue and eating the fruits of paradise with joy.
Here they can acquire the eye that wounds the Bridegroom with love, by the limpidity of its gaze, and whose purity allows them to see God himself.
Here they can observe a busy leisure and rest in quiet activity.
Here also God crowns his athletes for their stern struggle with the hoped-for reward: a peace unknown to the world and joy in the Holy Spirit.
Such a way of life is exemplified by Rachel, who was preferred by Jacob for her beauty, even though she bore fewer children than Leah, with her less

penetrating eyes. Contemplation, to be sure has fewer offspring than does action, and yet Joseph and Benjamin were the favorites of their father. This life is the best part chosen by Mary, never to be taken away from her.
(From the Letter of Saint Bruno to Rudolph il Verde).
(The author's translation: [In the contemplation], in fact, to strong men it is granted to recollect themselves when they desire to remain with themselves, to assiduously cultivate the sprouts of virtue and nourish themselves, happily, from the fruits of Paradise. Here the eye of the serene gaze, is acquired, which wounds the Spouse with love, and through its transparency and purity God is seen. Here is practiced a laborious leisure time and the rest in a quiet action. Here, because of the tiredness of the struggle, God gives to his athletes the desired reward, that is, the peace which the world ignores, and the joy in the Holy Spirit. This is that Rachel who is coming, of a beautiful aspect, which Jacob, even though less fertile of children, loved more than Lia, certainly more fecund but of bleary eyes. In fact, the sons of contemplation are less numerous in regard to those of the action; nevertheless, Joseph and Benjamin, more than the other brothers, are loved by the father.
This is that best part which Mary has chosen and which will not be taken from her.)

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

2nd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
You are near to us in Jesus Christ Your Son. When we go astray, You look for us until You find us.
Bring us back to You, show us the way to You and to one another
through Him who is our way, Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Lord, who lives with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 18: 12-14

Jesus said to his disciples: "What is your opinion? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, will he not leave the ninety-nine in the hills and go in search of the stray? And if he finds it, amen, I say to you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that did not stray. In just the same way, it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost."

Reflection

- A parable is not a teaching to be received in a passive way or just to be kept in the memory. Rather, it is an invitation to participate in the discovery of truth. Jesus begins by asking, "What do you think?" A parable is a question with a response which is not defined. The response depends on the reaction

and participation of the listeners. Let us then seek the answer to this parable of the lost sheep.

- Jesus tells a very brief story and in a very simple way: a shepherd had 100 sheep, he lost one, and leaves the 99 on the mountain and goes to look for the lost sheep. And Jesus asks, "What do you think?" that is, "Would you do the same?" Which would have been the response of the shepherds and of the other persons who were listening to Jesus tell this story? Would they do the same thing? Which is my answer to Jesus' question? Let us think well before answering. If you had 100 sheep and you lost one, what would you do? We should not forget that mountains are places which are very difficult to climb, with deep precipices, where dangerous animals live and where robbers hide. And you cannot forget that you have lost only one sheep, and therefore, you still have 99! You have lost very little. Would you abandon the other 99 on those mountains? Perhaps, would not only a person with little common sense do what the shepherd of the parable of Jesus did? Think about it!
- The shepherds who heard Jesus' story perhaps thought and commented, "Only a shepherd without judgment would act that way!" Surely, they would have asked Jesus, "Jesus, excuse us, but who is that shepherd whom You are speaking about? To do what he did is foolish!"
- Jesus answers, "This Shepherd is God, our Father, and the lost sheep is you!" In other words, the one who does this action is God moved by great love for the little ones, for the poor, the excluded! Only a very great love is able to do something so foolish. The love with which God loves us exceeds prudence and good human sense. The love of God commits foolish things. Thank God! If it were not like this, we would be lost!

Personal Questions

- Place yourself in the place of the little lost sheep and enliven your faith and your hope. You are that sheep!
- Take the place of the shepherd and consider whether your love for the little ones is true.
- How can we be instruments in God's effort to return the lost sheep? In this season of harvest celebrations, thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas, with family all around, do we leave to try to help and welcome those that are lost, poor, and without, as this shepherd would?

Concluding Prayer

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all you lands. Sing to the Lord; bless His name; announce His salvation, day after day. (Ps 96)

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

Opening Prayer

God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome.
Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy, so that we may share His wisdom
and become one with Him when He comes in glory, for He lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 11: 28-30

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.
Take my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy and my burden light."

Reflection

- Certain texts of the Gospel reveal their significance to us when we place them in the background of the Old Testament. This is how the very brief and very beautiful text of the Gospel of today is. In this text there are echoes of two themes greatly loved and recalled by the Old Testament, one from Isaiah and the other one from the so called Wisdom Books.
- Isaiah speaks of the Messiah, the Servant, and represents him as a disciple who is always looking for a word of comfort so as to be able to encourage those who are discouraged: "The Lord has given me a learned tongue, for me to know how to give a word of comfort to the weary. Morning by morning, he awakens my ear that I may hear him as a master" (Is 50: 4). And the Messiah Servant launches an invitation: "Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty; though you have no money come! Buy and eat; come buy wine and milk without money, free" (Is 55: 1). These texts were present in the memory of the people. They were like the songs of our childhood. When people listened to them, there is nostalgia. The same with the words of Jesus: "Come to me!" revived the memory of the nostalgic echo of those beautiful texts of Isaiah.
- The Books of Wisdom represent the divine wisdom as a woman, a mother who transmits to her sons her wisdom and tells them: "Buy her without money, put your necks under her yoke, let your souls receive instruction. She is near, within your reach. See for yourselves; how slight my efforts have been to win so much peace" (Si 51:25- 27). Jesus repeats this same phrase: "You will find rest!"
- Because of His way of speaking to people, Jesus awakens their memory and thus their hearts rejoiced and said: "The Messiah, so greatly awaited for, has come!" Jesus transformed the nostalgia into hope. He made people advance a step forward. Instead of fixing themselves on the image of a glorious

Messiah, king and dominator, taught by the scribes, the people changed their opinion and accepted Jesus, Messiah Servant. A humble and meek Messiah, welcoming and full of tenderness, who made them feel at ease: the poor together with Jesus.

Personal Questions

- Is the Law of God a light yoke which encourages me, or is it a weight which gets me tired?
- Have I felt sometimes the lightness and the joy of the yoke of the Law of God which Jesus has revealed to us?

Concluding Prayer

Bless Yahweh, my soul, from the depths of my being, His holy name; bless Yahweh, my soul, never forget all his acts of kindness. (Ps 103)

Thursday, December 11, 2025

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
You do not abandon those who rely on You. Take us by the hand when we are afraid, help us when we call out to You, for we experience that we are powerless to establish Your kingdom of justice and love.
Send Your Son again among us today to be our Lord and Savior now and forever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 11: 11-15

“In truth I tell you, of all the children born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. Since John the Baptist came, up to the present time, the kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm.
Because it was towards John that all the prophecies of the prophets and of the Law were leading; and he, if you will believe Me, is the Elijah who was to return. Anyone who has ears should listen!”

Reflection

In today’s Gospel, Jesus gives an opinion on John the Baptist. Compared to the personsof the Old Testament, there is no one greater than John. John is the greatest of all: greaterthan Jeremiah, greater than Abraham, greater than Isaiah! But, compared to the New Testament, John is inferior to all. The smallest in the

Kingdom is greater than John! How can we understand this apparently contradictory qualification that Jesus makes about John?

- A short time before, John had sent messengers to ask Jesus: “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?” (Mt 11: 3). John seemed to have some doubtconcerning Jesus. Jesus, in fact, did not correspond to the idea that he, John, had of the Messiah: a severe judge who had to come to carry out the judgment of condemnation and anger (Mt 3: 7). He was to cut the trees from their roots (Mt 3: 10), clear the threshingfloor and throw the dry sticks into the fire (Mt 3: 12). But Jesus, instead of being a severejudge, is the friend of all, “meek and humble of heart” (Mt 11: 29), who receives the sinners and eats with them (Mt 2: 16).
- Jesus responds to John by quoting the prophet Isaiah: “Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, the lame walk, those suffering from diseases are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor, and blessed is anyone who does not find me a cause of stumbling!” (Mt 11: 5-6, cf. Is 33: 5-6, 29: 18). A hard response ... Jesus asks John to analyze the scripture better in order to change the erroneous vision he had of the Messiah.
- John was great! The greatest of all! And the smallest in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than John. John is the greatest because he was the last echo of the Old Testament.It was John who, because of his fidelity, was finally able to indicate the Messiah to the people: “Behold, here is the Lamb of God!” (Jn 1: 36), and the long history that began with Abraham gains its meaning. But John was not capable by himself of understanding the importance of the kingdom of God in Jesus. He had a doubt: “Are You the one whois to come, or are we to expect someone else?” The ancient history alone does not communicate sufficient light to understand all of the Good News of God which Jesus brings to us. The new was hidden in the old. Saint Augustine said: “*Novum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet,*” which means: “The New is hidden in the Old, but the Old reveals its full meaning in the New.” The one who is with Jesus and lives with Him receives from Him a light which helps to discover a more profound meaning in the Old. And what is this meaning?
- Jesus offers a key: “The Law and all the prophets have prophesized up to John, and ifyou would accept it, he is the Elijah who has to come. He who has ears, let him hear!” Jesus does not explain, but says: “He who has ears, let him hear.” Elijah had to come to prepare for the coming of the Messiah and to reconstruct the community, “To reconcile parents to their children and children to their parents” (Mal 3: 24). John announced the Messiah and sought to reconstruct the community (Lk 1: 17). But the most profound mystery escaped him, that of the life of the community. Only Jesus communicated it, announcing that God is Father and therefore, we are all brothers and sisters. This announcement makes us capable of overcoming differences and creating community.

- These are the violent who succeed in conquering the kingdom. The kingdom is not a doctrine, but a new way of living like brothers and sisters, beginning with the announcement that Jesus makes: God is Father of all.

Personal Questions

- The kingdom belongs to those who, like Jesus, have the courage to create community. Do you also have this courage?
- Jesus helped John to better understand the facts by means of the bible. Does the bible help me to better understand the events of my life?

Concluding Prayer

I will extol You, O my God and King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all His works. (Ps 145)

Friday, December 12, 2025

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Opening Prayer

God of the poor and the humble, we thank You today for choosing Mary as the Virgin Mother of Jesus, your Son.
Her faith and willing service opened the way to Your new world.
Dispose us to seek Your will and to cooperate with Your plans, that we too, like Mary, may give to the world its Savior, Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Luke 1: 26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.
He went in and said to her, “Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you.” She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, “Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favor. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David; He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and His reign will have no end.”
Mary said to the angel, “But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin

Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God."
Mary said, "You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said." And the angel left her.

Reflection

- The visit of the Angel to Mary reminds us of the visit of God to different women of the Old Testament: Sarah, mother of Isaac (Gen 18: 9-15), Anne, mother of Samuel (1 Sam 1: 9-18), the mother of Samson (Jg 13: 2-5). To all of them was announced the birth of a son with an important mission in the realization of God's plan.
- The account begins with the expression *"in the sixth month."* It is the sixth month of the pregnancy of Elizabeth. The need of Elizabeth, a woman advanced in age who is expecting her first son with the risk of delivery, is the background of this episode. Elizabeth is mentioned at the beginning (Lk 1: 26) and at the end of the visit of the angel (Lk 1: 36-39).
- The angel says: "Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor, the Lord is with you!" Similar words were also said to Moses (Ex 3: 12), to Jeremiah (Jer 1: 8), to Gideon (Jg 6: 12) and to other people with an important mission in God's plan. Mary is surprised at the greeting and tries to understand the significance of these words. She is realistic and wants to understand. She does not accept just any invitation.
- The angel answers: "Do not be afraid!" Just as it happened in the visit of the angel to Zechariah, the first greeting of God is always: "**Do not be afraid!**" The angel recalls the promises of the past which will be fulfilled thanks to the son who will be born and who is to receive the name of Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High and in Him will be realized the Kingdom of God. This is the explanation of the angel in such a way that Mary is not afraid.
- Mary is aware of the mission which she is about to receive, but she continues to be realistic. She does not allow herself to be drawn by the greatness of the offer and observes her condition. She analyses the offer according to certain criteria which she has available. Humanly speaking, it was not possible: "But how can this come about, I have no knowledge of man?"
- The angel explains that the Holy Spirit, present in God's Word since the creation (Genesis 1: 2), is capable of things which seem impossible. This is why, the Holy One who will be born of Mary will be called *Son of God*. The miracle repeats itself up until today. When the Word of God is accepted by the poor, something new happens, thanks to the will of the Holy Spirit! Something new and surprising, such as a son born of a virgin or a son born to a woman of advanced age, like Elizabeth, whom everyone said was barren and could not have children! And the angel adds: "See, your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God."

- The response of the angel clarifies everything for Mary, and she surrenders: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word.” Mary uses for herself the title of Servant, Handmaid of the Lord. This title of Isaiah, which represents the mission of the people not as a privilege, but rather as a *service* to the other people (Is 42: 1-9, 49: 3-6). Later Jesus will define his mission as a service: “I have not come to be served, but to serve!” (Mt 20: 28). He learned this from His mother!

Personal Questions

- What struck you the most in the visit of the Angel Gabriel to Mary?
- Jesus praises his mother when He says: “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it” (Lk 11: 28). How does Mary relate to the Word of God during the visit of the Angel?

Concluding Prayer

To Yahweh belong the earth and all it contains, the world and all who live there; it is He who laid its foundations on the seas, on the flowing waters fixed it firm. (Ps 24: 1-2)

Saturday, December 13, 2025

2nd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
let us never become indifferentto the ardent message which your Son speaks to us in the gospel
When we have become inattentive and uninvolved, send us again prophets to wake us up and to make us attentive again to make your kingdom among us a reality of love of you and of people, of justice and serving love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 17: 9a, 10-13

And the disciples put this question to him, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?'
He replied, 'Elijah is indeed coming, and he will set everything right again; however, Itell you that Elijah has come already, and they did not recognize him but treated him as they pleased; and the Son of man will suffer similarly at their hands.'
Then the disciples understood that he was speaking of John the Baptist.

Reflection

The disciples have just seen Moses and Elijah before Jesus in the Transfiguration on the mountain (Mt 17: 3). In general, people believed that Elijah had to return to preparethe coming of the Kingdom. Prophet Malachi said: “Look, I shall send you the prophetElijah before the great and awesome Day of Yahweh comes. He will reconcile parents to their children and children to their parents, to forestall my putting the country underthe curse of destruction!” (Mal 3: 23-24; cf. Eccl. 48: 10). The disciples want to know:What does the teaching of the Doctors of the Law mean, when they say that Elijah hasto come before?” Because Jesus, the Messiah, was already there, had already arrived, and Elijah had not come as yet. Which is the value of this teaching of the return of Elijah?
Jesus answers: “Elijah has already come and they have not recognized him; rather, they have treated him as they have wanted. In the same way, they will also make the Son of Man suffer.” Then the Disciples understood that Jesus was speaking of John theBaptist.
In that situation of Roman domination which disintegrated the clan and the familiar living together, people expected that Elijah would return to reconstruct the community: to reconcile the parents to their children and the children to their parents. This was the great hope of the people. Today also, the neo-liberal system of communism disintegrates the families and promotes the masses which destroy life.
To reconstruct and remake the social fabric and the community living of the familiesis dangerous because it undermines the basis of the system of domination. This is why John the Baptist was killed. He had a project to reform human living together (cf. Lk 3: 7-14). He carried out the mission of Elijah (Lk 1: 17). This is why he was killed.
Jesus continues the same mission of John: to reconstruct the life in community. Because God is Father, we are all brothers and sisters. Jesus joins together two loves: love toward God and love toward neighbor and makes them visible in the form of living together. This is why, like John, he was put to death. This is why Jesus, the Son of Man, will be condemned to death.

Personal Questions

- Placing myself in the position of the disciples: does the ideology of consumerism havepower over me?
- Placing myself in the position of Jesus: Do I have the force to react and to create anew human way of living together?

Concluding Prayer

May your help be with the man of your right hand, with the son of man whom you yourself made strong.Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name. (Ps 80)

Sunday, December 14, 2025

Third Sunday of Advent

Invoke the Holy

Spirit of God,
who at the beginning of creation hovered over the abyss of the universe and transformed the great yawn of things into a smile of beauty, come down again on earth and grant it the thrill of its beginnings.
This world that is growing old, touch it with the wing of Your glory, Restore to us the primordial joy.
Pour Yourself without measure on all our afflictions. Hover once more over our old world in danger.
And, finally, the desert will once more be a garden and in the garden the tree of justice will flower and the fruit of justice will be peace.
Spirit of God, who by the banks of the Jordan descended in Your fullness on Jesus' head and proclaimed Him Messiah, overshadow this portion of the mystical Body gathered before You.
Adorn it with a robe of grace.
Consecrate it with unction and invite it to bring the good news to the poor, to bandage the wounds of broken hearts, to proclaim freedom to slaves, release to prisoners and announce the year of mercy of the Lord. Free us from the fear of not coping.
May our eyes radiate superhuman transparency.
May our hearts emit courage blended with tenderness.
May our hands pour out the blessing of the Father on all that we touch.
Grant that our bodies may be resplendent with joy. Clothe us with nuptial robes. Gird us with girdles of light, because, for us and for all, the Bridegroom will not delay in coming.

T. Bello

The Gospel Text – Matthew 11: 2-11

2 Now John had heard in prison what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask Him, 3 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?' 4 Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; 5 the blind see again, and the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin-diseases are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor; 6 and blessed is anyone who does not find Me a cause of falling.' 7 As the men were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John, 'What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? 8 Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Look, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. 9 Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: 10 he is the one of whom scripture says, Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you to prepare your way before you. 11 'In truth I tell you, of all the children born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.

Let Us Pause and Read the Gospel Text Again

Let us whisper quietly the words of the Gospel and let them slowly pass from our tongue to our mind and from our mind to our heart.
Let us quietly savor some of these words …

- We are gathered around Jesus and we are listening to what the disciples are asking of Him concerning John: this is a serious question from those who have the power to change history.
- Jesus' answer takes on a staid tone, but it wounds our heart as with a spear: it is clear that the awaited Messiah is Himself!
- Let the questions, doubts, desires and hopes run freely around the Word of Jesus. Let them confront and engage with it.

Gradually an answer will come, even though it may be partial: not in the arguments, but when looking squarely at "He who is to come" and who is speaking to you now. Do not weary of repeating his Word in a soft voice and of keeping it in your heart, above and within all the doubts and problems of your day.

Let Us Take a Closer Look at Matthew's Text

= Our passage comes at the beginning of a new section of the Gospel (11: 2–12, 50). This is a series of tales concerning Jesus' activity after His discourse on the apostolate. There are not many miracles, but the Evangelist stresses the polemic between Jesus and His adversaries in growing intensity for the whole of the rest of the Gospel.

- In all probability, the text reflects the early theological debates between the Christians and the disciples of John concerning the nature of Jesus' mission.

  = *John in his prison…:* It is a long time since Matthew has made reference to the Baptizer (the last mention is in 4: 12) and now he tells us he is in prison and it is only later that he will tell us the circumstances of his imprisonment (14: 3-12).

- John's prison, as it was for all, is a place apart, a kind of "world apart" which makes him almost a stranger to normal life and twists the perception of news received from outside. Thus, the question of the Baptizer is not surprising even though he was the first to recognize Jesus as "more powerful" (3: 11) and as the eschatological judge whose "winnowing-fan is in his hand" (3: 12), bowing before Him humbly and in fear (cf. 3: 11).

  = *[When he] had heard what Christ was doing…*: the expression "Christ was doing", used here to recall what Jesus was doing, anticipates the answer He will give to John's question.

- John the Baptist, while in prison, hears news of Jesus: we too every day, while we are in our "prisons" of solitude and distance from God or of suffering, hear "something" that comes from various sources and we feel troubled.
- It is often difficult to distinguish between the good news of the Gospel and so many other matters that take place in our daily lives!
- And yet, what Jesus does are the things that "the Christ does", even if we are not always aware of this, just as in the case of John.

  = Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else? When John was baptizing whole crowds in the Jordan, he had described a strong Messiah who would punish severely the sins of all: *"The one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in His hand. He will clear his threshing-floor and gather His wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out"* (*Mt* 3: 11- 12). In that severity that cracked like a whip in view of conversion and, thus, of salvation, John had read the seal of the mercy of YHWH. Suffering in prison, made fragile by a sense of failure and powerlessness, victim of the injustice and arrogance against which he had fought all his life, it seemed to John that evil was winning and he is upset. Immersed irreversibly in that fog, he is no longer capable of seeing clearly the power of God in action in the works of Jesus.

- It is lawful to speculate: Jesus was revealing Himself gradually as the Messiah, but He did so by breaking the canons of the Jewish ideal and the usual interpretations of Sacred Scripture: He was not "doing justice", he was not separating the good from the bad like the sieve separates the good wheat from the chaff; He preached conversion energetically but pardoned sinners; He showed Himself to be *"meek and humble of heart"* (*Mt* 11: 29), open and available to all, a stranger to all vulgar ways of contesting the system. It is, therefore, possible to think that John was in crisis because Jesus did not correspond to the Messiah whom he expected and whom he had constantly preached; so, he sends a delegation to Jesus to ask Him some questions and for them to report to him a word that might enlighten this mystery of contradictions: "Who are You, Jesus? What do You say of Yourself? How can we believe in You when before arrogance and injustice You show Yourself as a patient, merciful and non- violent Messiah?"
- Who of us has not tried to form a more precise idea of the One in whom we believe and His ways of acting, when life has made us meet so many contradictions and injustices, even in the Church? Who of us has not struggled to see and interpret correctly the signs of the active presence of the Lord in our own history? It is difficult to welcome a God who is "different" from our designs and so we must not accuse the Baptist, because we too are subject to the temptation of wanting God to have our feelings and tendencies and who might even be a little vindictive in carrying out "justice." Often we would like to have a God made in our image and likeness, but *"My thoughts are not your thoughts, your ways are not My ways…"* (*Isa* 55: 8).

= Jesus answered, Go back and tell John what you hear and see: Jesus does not answer quickly and directly, but shows clearly the facts that result from His actions that are changing history and realizing the old prophecy concerning the Messiah. Thus, He does not give an answer "for immediate use", but the disciples must go back to John and refer to him what they themselves have heard and seen, because the healings, resurrections and liberations are unequivocal signs of the messianic nature of Jesus of Nazareth.

- Every day we must learn to proclaim the good news beginning from what we feel and see. Fraternal witness is indispensable to communicate the Gospel.
- Christ submits humbly to the questioning and answers showing the disciples of John a true and personal method of understanding and of proclaiming: *"Go back and tell John what you hear and see."* The fourth Evangelist recalls the same method in his first letter: *"Something which has existed since the beginning that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands: the Word, who is life – this is our subject. That life was made invisible: we saw it and we are giving our testimony, telling you of the eternal life which was with the Father and has been made visible to us. What we have seen and heard we are telling you so that you too may be in union with us"* (*1 Jn* 1: 1-3). This was the missionary method used by the early Church: the method learned from the incarnation of the Word.
- A true and efficient proclamation must pass through a simple and modest communication of personal experience: words without fanfare of a life woven by faith.

  = The blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor: In these words, a collection of various quotations from Isaiah (28: 18-19; 35: 5-6; 42: 18; 61: 1), we find the core of Jesus' answer and of our passage. The Lord presents His own works not as judgement and power, but as divine blessing for those of the people in need.

- It is significant that the prophetic passages quoted make no reference to leprosy and death that the Evangelist puts into Jesus' mouth. This emphasizes the newness that Jesus brings to His manner of fulfilling the prophecies concerning the Messiah awaited by Israel
- The works of Jesus are great, but He is one of the "little ones" who are His chosen ones, He is one of "the poor of JHWH" who already sees the cross at the end of His journey as man. This is unbearable for anyone expecting a triumphant Messiah. Blessed are they who hear and see with a heart full of faith.
- Indirectly Jesus invited John himself to hear and see what He teaches and does. Thus the last of the prophets might recall and now recognize that what Jesus says and does corresponds to the great messianic prophecies so richly contained in the Old Testament. This is the mechanism of the "religious

memory" without which faith will never be enkindled and, especially, may never survive the blows of scandal that life brings with it: the works of God in the past are the signs of His fidelity to the promises and the pledge of His future works.

- Committing ourselves to recall every day the "great things" that God worked for us and in us (cf. *Lk* 1: 49) does not mean falling into sterile reiteration but gradually bringing the seed of the active grace of God to the very depths of our being, so that it may grow and bear fruit. The Eucharist too is a memorial: it is "the memorial of the Pasch of the Lord", a living and actual memorial of the salvation offered to each one of us.

  = *Happy is the man who does not lose faith [is not scandalized]in Me*: The word "scandal" comes from the Greek: the "stumbling stone" prepared to strike a person by surprise. Notwithstanding the meaning that we usually attribute to this word, in the Bible "scandal" may be either negative or positive.

- Jesus is one who "scandalizes" His fellow citizens by His poor origins not well suited to a glorious Messiah; He scandalizes the Pharisees with His cutting words; He scandalizes the disciples of John with His way of doing things not according to foreseen plans and He scandalizes His own disciples with His infamous death.
- Jesus, however, does not praise those who scandalize the little ones or those who are an occasion of scandal (cf. *Mt* 5:29) to the faith or morals thus leading others into wrong ways.
- The kind of scandal we need is the one that comes from living the Gospel in a radical manner that shakes us from our habits of life and from our mind-set.
- We too are called to "scandalize" the world with the scandal of the Gospel showing by our lives that we must not submit to uses and customs that are at variance with the Christian faith, by refusing compromises that could provoke injustices, by looking after the poor and the least.

  = *What did you go out into the wilderness to see?:* Notwithstanding the weakness shown by the questions put by John, Jesus describes His precursor with enthusiasm as a prophet who by his burning words unites the living and incontestable signs of his privileged connection with God in whose name he speaks to the People. Rather, with this pressing series of six rhetorical questions and three positive statements, Jesus says that John is more than a prophet: he is the one of whom the ancient Scriptures of the fathers speak, the messenger who prepares the way of the Lord (*Mt* 3:3) as the old prophets had said (*Mal* 3:1; *Ex* 23:20). Nevertheless, the Lord quickly explains the reasons for His affirmation: these may even be too evident to His listeners.

  = Of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen: John is not only an eminent prophet and precursor of the Messiah (because it is now clear that Jesus considers Himself as such), but he is also great as a man, greater than his contemporaries and those of past ages. This

is an entirely personal kind of praise that Jesus addresses to Herod's prisoner and not merely a hyperbole. With these words, Jesus anticipates the comparison between John the Baptist and Elijah, which He will make explicit in verse 14: *"he, if you will believe me, is the Elijah who was to return."*

- The expression *"of all the children born of women"* has a typically Semitic flavor, but it also alludes to the mystery of Jesus' origin: He too is "born of woman", but only in what concerns the flesh, because His human-divine genesis goes well beyond His simple humanity.
- Our birth as "children of God" in faith is also wrapped in mystery: *"who were born not out of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man but of God himself"* (Jn 1: 13). We are "born of woman" but we are not meant for this earth, rather for the Kingdom of heaven where we shall be judged according to our faith and the works of faith, fruits of the welcome we give to our baptismal grace.

  = Yet the least ...: this part of the sentence (perhaps an early gloss) seems to put a limit on the enthusiastic presentation of the Baptist. Although he is great among men, yet John is small in the Kingdom, because there everything is measured according to criteria quite different from those on earth: the measure of the new times that are coming and have begun with the human coming of the Son of God. Those who belong to this completely new generation are greater than any of those who lived in preceding times, even than John the Baptist.

- The contrast between "great" and "small" is created precisely to make it clear to all believers that to be great one has to become ever smaller. In his human "greatness", John is presented by Jesus as the least in the Kingdom and thus even for John it is necessary for him to "become small" in the hands of God. It is the same requirement every day for each of us who are tempted to be like the "great" and "powerful", at least in our desire!

Let Us Pray the Word and Thank the Lord

God of our joy, giver of every salvation *(Psalm 146)*
Yahweh keeps faith for ever,
gives justice to the oppressed, gives food to the hungry; Yahweh sets prisoners free.
Yahweh gives sight to the blind, lifts up those who are bowed down.
Yahweh protects the stranger,
He sustains the orphan and the widow. Yahweh loves the upright,
but He frustrates the wicked.
Yahweh reigns for ever,
Your God, Zion, from age to age.

From the Word to Contemplation

Lord Jesus

who “are about to
come”, do not delay any
more
and listen to the cry of the
poor who look to You for
salvation, justice and joy.
Grant us clear eyes and a pure heart
so that we may be able to discern Your active and fruitful presence also in the events
of our “today”
that looks so grey
and empty of rays of hope!
Come, Lord Jesus!

"The Spirit and the bride say:
'Come!' And those who listen
repeat: 'Come!' Let those who
thirst, come;
those who wish may draw the water of life
freely. He who bears witness to these things
says:
'Yes, I shall come soon!'
Amen.
Come, Lord Jesus.” (Rev 22: 17, 20)

Monday, December 15, 2025

3rd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
in a world of injustice, war, and exploitation, in which more and more people have the means to live but not many reasons to live for, you promise us a star to follow, Jesus, your Son.
God, keep in us the hope alive that he will come today and that, if we are willing to take the demands of the Gospel seriously, we can become indeed a new people completely renewed in Christ, our Savior for ever and ever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 21: 23-27

Jesus had gone into the Temple and was teaching, when the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him and said, 'What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?'
In reply Jesus said to them, 'And I will ask you a question, just one; if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my authority for acting like this.

John's baptism: what was its origin, heavenly or human?' And they argued this way among themselves, 'If we say heavenly, he will retort to us, "Then why did you refuse to believe him?"; but if we say human, we have the people to fear, for they all hold that John was a prophet.'
So their reply to Jesus was, 'We do not know.' And he retorted to them, 'Nor will I tell you my authority for acting like this.'

Reflection

The Gospel today describes the conflict that Jesus had with the religious authority of the time, after that he drove out the merchants from the Temple. The priests and the elders of the people wanted to know with which authority Jesus was doing those things:to go into the Temple and drive out the merchants (cf. Mt 21: 12-13). The authority considered itself the master of all and thought that nobody could do anything without their permission. This is why they persecuted Jesus and tried to kill him. Something similar was also happening in the Christian communities of the years seventy-eighty, the time in which the Gospel of Jesus was written. Those who resisted the authority of the Empire were persecuted. There were others, so as not to be persecuted, tried to reconcile Jesus' project, with the project of the Roman Empire (cf. Ga 6: 12). The description of the conflict of Jesus with the authority of his time was a help for the Christians, so that they could continue fearless in the persecutions and would not allow themselves to be manipulated by the ideology of the Empire. Today, also, some who exercise power, whether in society or in the Church and the family, want to control everything as if they were the masters of all the aspects of the life of the people. They even persecuted those who thought in a different way. Keeping in mind these thoughts and problems, let us read and meditate on today's Gospel.

- Matthew 21: 23: The question of the religious authority to Jesus. "What authority haveyou for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered: "And I will ask you a question, just one, if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my authority for acting like this. John's baptism, what was its origin, heavenly or human? Jesus went back to the Temple. When he taught, the chief priests and the elders of the people went close to him and asked: With what authority do you do these things? Whohas given you this authority?" Jesus again goes around the great square of the Temple.Then appear some priests and elders to question him. After everything that Jesus had done the day before, they want to know with which authority he does these things. They did not ask which was the true reason which urged Jesus to drive out the merchants from the Temple (cf. Mt 21: 12-13). They only ask with which authority he does thosethings. They think that they have the right to control everything. They do not want to lose control of things.
- Matthew 21: 24-25[a]: The question of Jesus to the authority. Jesus does not refuse answering, but he shows his independence and liberty and says: "I also, will ask you a question, if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my authority for acting likethis. John's baptism, what was its origin, heavenly or human?" This was an intelligent question, simple as a dove and cunning as a

serpent! (cf. Mt 10: 16). The question showsthe lack of honesty of his enemies. For Jesus, the baptism of John came from heaven, came from God. He himself had been baptized by John (Mt 3: 13-17). The men who had power, on the contrary, had plotted or planned the death of John (Mt 14: 3-12). Andin this way they showed that they did not accept the message of John and that they considered his baptism like something from men and not from God.

- Matthew 21: 25b-26: Reasoning of the authority. The priests and the elders were awareof the importance or significance of the question and reasoned in the following way: "Ifwe say heavenly, he will retort to us. Then why did you refuse to believe him? If we answer human, then we have the people to fear, for they all hold that John was a prophet." And therefore, so as not to expose themselves they answered: "We do not know!" This is an opportunist response, a pretence and interested one. Their only interest was not to lose their power over the people. Within themselves they had already decided everything: Jesus should be condemned to death (Mt 12: 14).
- Matthew 21: 27: Final conclusion of Jesus. And Jesus says to them: "Nor will I tell you my authority for acting like this." Their total lack of honesty makes them unworthyto receive an answer from Jesus.

Personal Questions

- Have you ever felt that you are being controlled without any right, by the authority of the house, in work, in the Church? Which was your reaction?
- We all have some authority. Even in a conversation between two persons, each one has certain power, a certain authority. How do I use the power, how do I exercise authority: to serve and to liberate or to dominate and control?

Concluding Prayer

Direct me in your ways, Yahweh,and teach me your paths.
Encourage me to walk in your truth and teach me since you are the God who saves me. (Ps 25: 4-5)

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

3rd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
you are close to the poor and the repentant. Do not allow us to be proud, that we may not trust in ourselves but teach us to be humble and lowly, that we may recognize our limitations and be open to you and to your comingthrough Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 21: 28-32

Jesus asked to the chief priests and the elders of the people: 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, go and work in the vineyardtoday." He answered, "I will not go," but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus saidto them, 'In truth I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into thekingdom of God before you. For John came to you, showing the way of uprightness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.

Reflection

The Gospel today presents a parable. Like always, Jesus tells a story taken from the daily life of the family; a common story which speaks for itself and does not need much explanation. Immediately, by means of a very simple question, Jesus tries to involve those who are listening and to communicate a message. He involves them in the story without, at the first moment, explaining the objective which Jesus has in mind. After they answer the question, Jesus applies the story to the listeners, and these become aware that alone they condemned themselves.

- Matthew 21, 28-30: The story of the two sons. Jesus asks an initial question: “What is your opinion?” He does this to call the attention of the persons in order that they are attentive to the story which follows. And this is the story: “A man had two sons; he went and said to the first one: My son, go and work in the vineyard today. He answered:I will not go, but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, ‘Certainly, sir, but he did not go.” It is a question of a story of the life of a family in daily life. The persons who listen to Jesus understand what he is speaking about, because they have lived this same thing many times in their own house. But as yet we do not understand what Jesus is thinking. Which is the objective that he wants to attain with this story?
- Matthew 21: 31[a]: The involvement of authority in the story of the two sons. Jesus tellsthe story in the form of a question. At the beginning he says: “What is your opinion?” And at the end he asks: “Which of the two did the father’s will?” Those who listen are parents and respond according to what has happened several times with their own sons: The chief priests and the elders will answer: “the first one.” This is the response that Jesus wanted to hear from them and from where he takes the evidence to communicatehis message.
- Matthew 21: 31b-32: The conclusion drawn by Jesus. “And Jesus says to them: In truth I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the Kingdom of God before you. John came to you, showing the way of uprightness but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. Even after seeing that yourefused to think better of it and believe in him.”

The conclusion of Jesus is evident and very hard. According to the opinion of the priests and the elders, the tax collectors and the prostitutes were sinners and unclean who did not do the will of the Father. According to the opinion of Jesus, the tax collectors and the prostitutes in fact, said, "I do not want to," but ended by doing the will of the Father, because they repent in listening to the preaching of John the Baptist. While they, the priests and the publicans who officially always say "Yes, Sir, I will go", ended by not observing the will of the Father, because they did not want to believe in John the Baptist.

Personal Questions

- With which of these two sons do I identify myself?
- Today, who are the prostitutes and the publicans who say: "I do not want to," but who end by doing the will of the Father?

Concluding Prayer

I will praise Yahweh from my heart;let the humble hear and rejoice.
Proclaim with me the greatness of Yahweh, let us acclaim his name together.
(Sal 34: 2-3)

Wednesday, December 17, 2025

3rd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Your Son, came among us as one of us, a human being among other people, simple, accessible, yet Your human face and the measure of what a human person is. Lord, make us discover ourselves in His mirror:
that we are born to be free, to be unselfish, available, committed. Free us from our selfishness, our cowardice and attitudes of conformism, that we may become what You want us to be, like Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 1: 1-17

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Abraham became the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers. Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar. Perez became the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab. Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab. Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth. Obed became the father of Jesse, Jesse the father of David the king. David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah.

Solomon became the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asaph. Asaph became the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Uzziah. Uzziah became the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah. Hezekiah became the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amos, Amos the father of Josiah. Josiah became the father of Jechoniah and his brothers at the time of the Babylonian exile. After the Babylonian exile, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel the father of Abiud. Abiud became the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor the father of Zadok. Zadok became the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud the father of Eleazar. Eleazar became the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary. Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ. Thus the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Christ, fourteen generations.

Reflection

The genealogy defines the identity of Jesus. He is the “Son of David and the son of Abraham” (Mt 1: 1; cf 1: 17). Son of David, is the response to the expectation of the Jews (2 Sam 7: 12-16). Son of Abraham, is a source of blessings for all nations (Gn 12: 13). Both Jews and Pagans see their hope realized in Jesus.

- In the patriarchal society of the Jews, the genealogies indicated only names of men. It is surprising that Matthew indicates also the names of five women among the ancestors of Jesus: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba (the wife of Uriah) and Mary. Why does Matthew choose precisely these four women as companions of Mary? No queen, no matriarch, none of the fighting women of the Exodus: Why? This is the question which the Gospel of Matthew leaves for us to answer.
- In the life of the four women, companions of Mary, there is something abnormal. The four of them are foreigners, they conceived their sons outside the normal canons and do not respond to the requirements of the Laws of purity of the time of Jesus. Tamar, a Canaanite widow, disguised herself as a prostitute to oblige the Patriarch Judah to be faithful to the law, to do his duty and give her a son (Gen 28: 1-30). Rahab, a Canaanite from Jericho, was a prostitute who helped the Israelites enter into the Promised Land (Josh 2:1-21). Ruth, a poor Moabite widow, chose to remain with Naomi and to adhere to the People of God (Ruth 1:16-18). She took the initiative to imitate Tamar and to go and spend the night beside the pile of barley, together with Boaz, obliging him to observe the Law and to give her a son. From the relation between the two, Obed was born, the ancestor of King David (Ruth 3: 1-15; 4: 13-17). Bathsheba, a Hittite, the wife of Uriah, was seduced, violated and she conceived and became pregnant from King David, who in addition to this ordered that the husband of the woman be killed (2 Sam 11: 1-27). The way of acting of these four women did not correspond to the traditional norms. In

the meantime, these were the initiatives, which were not really conventional, which gave continuity to the lineage of Jesus and led all the people to the salvation of God. All this makes us think and challenges us when we attribute too much value to the rigidity of norms.

- The calculation of 3 X 14 generations (Mt 1: 17) has symbolic significance. Three is the number of the divinity. Fourteen is the double of seven. Seven is the perfect number. By means of this symbolism Matthew expresses the conviction of the first Christians according to which Jesus appears in the time established by God. With his coming history reaches its plenitude, its fullness.

Personal Questions

- What is the message to be discovered in the genealogy of Jesus? Have you found a response to what Matthew leaves for us ?
- The companions of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are very different from how we imagined them. What is the conclusion you can draw regarding your devotion to the Blessed Virgin?

Concluding Prayer

May His name be blessed forever and endure in the sight of the sun.
In Him shall be blessed every race in the world, and all nations call Him blessed.
(Ps 72: 17)

Thursday, December 18, 2025

3rd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that you read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, writtenin the Bible, you helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope becamefor them the source of life and of resurrection. Create in us silence so that we may listen to your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May your word guide us sothat we too, like the two disciples from Emmaus, may experience the force of your resurrection and witness to others that you are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice, and peace. We ask this of you, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Fatherand sent us your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 1: 18-25

Key for reading:

The majority of the members of the Christian Communities in Palestine and in Syria, for whom Matthew wrote his Gospel, were converted Jews. They accepted Jesus as Messiah and believed in Him. They were persecuted because of their faith. Their brother Jews said to them: “You Christians are deceived! Jesus is not, nor can he be the Messiah!” In the text which we are meditating on this Sunday, the concern of Matthewis evident, he wants to confirm the faith of the communities. It is as if he wished to tellus: “You do not live deceived! Jesus is truly the Messiah! “
The intention of Matthew inchapters one and two of his Gospel is to inform the readers concerning Jesus, whose activity will be described beginning in chapter three. In the first two chapters, Matthewpresents the credentials of Jesus, the new Legislator, the new Moses. In the genealogy (Mt 1: 1-17), he had already shown that Jesus belongs to the race of David and of Abraham (Mt 1: 1). In these verses (Mt 1: 18-25) Matthew continues to present Jesus tous describing his birth. He says how Joseph received the news that Mary was with childand, the prophecies which will be realized with the birth of Jesus, showing that he is the expected Messiah. During the reading, it is well to pay attention to what the text tells uson the person of Jesus, especially in what concerns the significance of the two names that he receives.

A Division of the Text to Help the Reading:

- Matthew 1: 18: A legal irregularity in Mary
- Matthew 1: 19: The justice of Joseph
- Matthew 1: 20-21: The explanation or elucidation by the Angel
- Matthew 1: 21-23: The melody in Matthew’s Gospel
- Matthew 1: 24-25: The obedience of Joseph.

The Text:

18 This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to
Joseph;but before they came to live together, she was found to be with child
through the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and
wanting to spare her disgrace,decided to divorce her informally. 20 He had made
up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a
dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do notbe afraid to take Mary home as your
wife, because she has conceived what is in her bythe Holy Spirit. 21 She will give
birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to
save his people from their sins.'
22 Now all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the
prophet: 23 Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will
call Immanuel,a name which means 'God-is-with-us.' 24 When Joseph woke up
he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his
home; 25 he had not had intercourse with her when she gave birth to a son; and
he named him Jesus.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection.

- Which point of this text struck you the most? Why?
- According to the words of the Angel, who is the Son who will be born of Mary?
- According to the words of Matthew, which prophecy of the Old Testament is fulfilled in Jesus?
- Which are the two names which the Child receives, and which is God's projecthidden in these names?
- How is Joseph's attitude to be understood? What does this attitude teach us?
- In what exactly does Joseph's "justice" consist?
- Which is our justice, compared with that of Joseph?

Deepening the Theme

Context of the Evangelic Text:

The genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1: 1-17) leaves us with a question. Next to the names of theforty-two paternal ancestors of Jesus (Mt 1: 17), Matthew gives the names of four maternal ancestors only: Tamar (Mt 1: 3), Rahab, Ruth (Mt 1: 4) and the wife of Uriah(Mt 1: 6). The four women conceived their sons outside the parameters of purity or of the legal justice of that time. Therefore, the state of these four women is irregular beforethe Law. The irregularity of these four ancestors is evident. It is sufficient to read the texts of the Old Testament where their story is described. And thus, at the end of the genealogy arises a question: "And Mary, the spouse of Joseph, from whom Jesus is born (Mt 1: 16), does she also incur in some irregularity of a legal type? The text on which we are meditating this Sunday speaks about this.

Commentary on the Text:

- **Matthew 1: 18: A legal irregularity in Mary**

  Mary is with child before going to live with Joseph, her promised spouse. The one who looks at things from outside is aware of an irregularity and will say: "Mary, how horrible!" According to the law of Moses, these errors merited a death penalty (Dt 22: 20). To avoid this mistaken interpretation of facts, Matthew helps the reader to see the other aspect of Mary's pregnancy: "She conceived by the Holy Spirit." To human eyesthis may seem a transgression of the Law, but in God's eyes this was exactly the contrary!

- **Matthew 1: 19: The Justice of Joseph**

  The pregnancy of Mary takes place before she went to live with Joseph, not

because of a human deviation, but because of the divine will. God himself made fun of the law of legal purity in such a way as to make the Messiah be born among us! If Joseph had acted according to the requirements of the law of that time, he would have had to denounce Mary and possibly she would have been stoned. Pregnancy before marriage is irregular and according to the law of legal purity, she should be punished with the death penalty (Dt 22: 20). But Joseph, because he is **just**, does not obey the requirements of the law of purity. His **justice** is greater. Instead of denouncing, he prefers to respectthe mystery which he does not understand and decides to abandon Mary in secret. Thegreatest justice of Joseph saves both the life of Mary and that of Jesus.

Thus, Matthew sends an important message to the communities of Palestine and Syria. It is as if said: "Behold, what would happen if the rigorous observance would be followed, which certain Pharisees demand from you! They would put the Messiah to death!" Later Jesus will say: "If your justice is not greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5: 20).

- **Matthew 1: 20-21: The explanation or elucidation of the Angel and the two names of the Son of Mary: Jesus and Immanuel.**

  The Angel of the Lord" helps to discover the deepest dimension of life and of events.He helps to make an X-Ray of events and to perceive God's call which with our humaneyes alone we cannot perceive. The Angel makes Joseph understand that Mary's pregnancy is the fruit of the action of the Holy Spirit. God himself, the day of creation,blew over the waters and filled with force the creating Word of God (Gen 1: 2). The new creation takes place in Mary. It is the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth, announced by Isaiah (Is 65: 17). The Son of Mary receives two names: Jesus andImmanuel. **Jesus** means "Yahweh saves." Salvation does not come from what we do but from God, rather from what God does for us. **Immanuel** means "God with us." In the Exodus, when getting out of Egypt, God goes down to be with the oppressed people(Ex 3: 8) and tells Moses: "**I will be with you"** (Ex 3: 12) and from that moment on he never abandons his people. The two names, Jesus and Immanuel, render concrete, and even go beyond the hope of the people.

- **Matthew 1: 22-23: The Melody of Matthew's Gospel**

  "All this took place in order that what had been said of the Lord by the prophet could be fulfilled." This phrase or other similar ones are like a melody, words which are repeated many times in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 1: 23; 2: 5, 15, 17, 23; 4: 14; 8: 17; 12: 17; 13: 14, 35; etc.). This reveals the purpose which the author had in mind: to confirm for his readers of Jewish origin the fact that Jesus is truly the promised Messiah. In him the promises of the prophets are fulfilled.

  Here Matthew quotes the text of Isaiah: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, whom she will call Immanuel" (Is 7: 14). The title **Immanuel** more than a name reveals the meaning of Jesus for us. Jesus is the proof that God continues to be with us.The name itself of the Child is **Jesus** (Mt 1: 25).

- **Matthew 1: 24-25: The Obedience of Joseph**

  Waking up from sleep, Joseph does what the Angel told him and took Mary to his house. And he continues to say that he had no relation with Mary, to confirm that Jesus is bornfrom the Holy Spirit.

Extending the Information:

A key for the Gospel of Matthew - The Gospel of Matthew is addressed to a community of converted Jews, who live a deep crisis of identity in relation to their Jewish past. When in the year 65 AC the revolt broke out against Rome, the Jewish- Christians did not participate and they abandoned Jerusalem. The Pharisees did the same thing. After the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70, the Pharisees reorganized the people who had remained and they lined up, always in a more decisive way, against the Christians, who at the end were excommunicated. This excommunication made the problem of identity even worse. Now, officially excommunicated, they could no longer go to their Synagogue, to their rabbi. And the question arose among them: To whom dothe promises belong: to the Synagogue or to the Church? Who is the true People of God, they or we? Is Jesus truly the Messiah? Matthew writes his Gospel for this community. The Gospel of Matthew can be defined by the three following words:

- The Gospel of **consolation** for those excommunicated and persecuted by their brother Jews who do not accept Jesus as the Messiah (Christ); it helps to overcome the traumaor shock of the breaking.
- The Gospel of **revelation:** It shows Jesus as the true Messiah, the new Messiah, in whom is the summit of all the history of the Old Testament with its promises.
- The Gospel of the **new practice**: which describes the practice of Jesus, and shows how to attain a new justice, greater than that of the Pharisees.

This happened in order that it could be realized - by means of this phrase repeated many times in his Gospel, Matthew touches on the point of greatest tension between Christians and Jews. Starting from the Bible, they said: “Jesus is not and cannot be the Messiah!” Starting from the Bible itself, Matthew responds and affirms: “Jesus is truly the Messiah!”
The pregnancy of Mary - Matthew as well as Luke quote the text of Isaiah “A virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, whom she will call Immanuel” (Is 7, 14). But there is a difference. Luke places Mary in the center and gives more importance to the sign of virginity (Lk 1, 31). Matthew places Joseph in the center and gives more importance to the significance of the name Immanuel.
Joseph’s dream - the Angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep and helps him to understand. With the help of the Angel, Joseph succeeded in discovering God’s actionin this event, which according to the opinion of the time, seemed to be only the fruit ofdeviation and of sin. Angel means messenger. He brings a message and a help to perceive God’s action in life. Today there are many Angels who guide us in life. Sometimes they act while we sleep, in our dreams,

other times in our meetings, in conversations and in Biblical encounters, in facts, etc. So many Angels, so many Angels!

Prayer

Psalm 72 (71): His Name Endures Forever!

God, endow the king with your own fair judgement,the son of the king with your own saving justice, that he may rule your people with justice, and your poor with fair judgement.Mountains and hills, bring peace to the people! With justicehe will judge the poor of the people, he will save the children of the needy and crush their oppressors.In the sight of the sun and the moon he will endure, age after age.
He will come down like rain on mown grass,like showers moistening the land.
In his days uprightness shall flourish, and peace in plenty till the moon is no more.His empire shall stretch from sea to sea, from the river to the limits of the earth.The Beast will cower before him, his enemies lick the dust; the kings of Tarshish and the islands will pay him tribute.The kings of Sheba and Saba will offer gifts; all kings will do him homage, all nations become his servants.
For he rescues the needy who calls to him,and the poor who has no one to help.
He has pity on the weak and the needy and saves the needy from death.
From oppression and violence, he redeems their lives,their blood is precious in his sight.
Long may he live; may the gold of Sheba be given him! Prayer will be offered for him constantly, and blessings invoked on him all day.
May wheat abound in the land, waving on the heights of the hills, like Lebanon with its fruits and flowers at their best,like the grasses of the earth.
May his name be blessed forever and endure in the sight of the sun.
In him shall be blessed every race in the world, and all nations call him blessed.
Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who alone works wonders; blessed forever his glorious name.
May the whole world be filled with his glory! Amen! Amen!

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Friday, December 19, 2025

3rd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord, mighty God,
no angel announced our
birth, but we know that You
loved us even before we were
born,
and that You call us to prepare
the fuller coming of Your Son among
people. Reveal Your strength in our
weakness,
keep us hoping in Your future,
that we may overcome all obstacles to establish the kingdom of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Luke 1: 5-25

In the days of King Herod of Judaea there lived a priest called Zechariah who belonged to the Abijah section of the priesthood, and he had a wife, Elizabeth by name, who was a descendant of Aaron. Both were upright in the sight of God and blamelessly carried out all the commandments and observances of the Lord. But they were childless, because Elizabeth was barren and they were both advanced in years.
Now it happened that it was his turn to serve in the temple, and he was exercising his priestly office before God when it fell to him by lot, as the priestly custom was, to enter the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense there. And at the hour of incense all the people were outside, praying. Then there appeared to him the angel of the Lord, standing on the right of the altar of incense. The sight disturbed Zechariah and he was overcome with fear. But the angel said to him, “Zechariah, do not be afraid, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son and you shall name him John. He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord; he must drink no wine, no strong drink; even from his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring back many of the Israelites to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah, he will go before him to reconcile fathers to their children and the disobedient to the good sense of the upright, preparing for the Lord a people fit for him.” Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I know this? I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years.” The angel replied, “I am Gabriel, who stands in God's presence, and I have been sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. Look! Since you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time, you will be silenced and have no power of speech until this has happened.”
Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and were surprised that he stayed in the sanctuary so long. When he came out he could not speak to them, and they realised that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. But he could only make signs to them and remained dumb. When his time of service came to an end he returned home.
Some time later his wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months she kept to herself, saying, “The Lord has done this for me, now that it has pleased Him to take away the humiliation I suffered in public.”

Reflection

Today's Gospel speaks to us about the visit of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah (Lk 1: 5- 25). The tomorrow's Gospel will speak about the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary (Lk 1: 26-38). Luke places both of these visits side by side with each other in such a way that as we read both texts, we perceive the small and significant difference between one visit and the other, between the Old and the New Testaments. Look for the differences between the visits of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah and to Mary through the following questions: Where does the angel appear? To whom does he appear? What is his message and what does he announce? What is the response? What is the reaction of the person after receiving the visit? Etc.

- The first message of the angel of God to Zechariah is: "Do not be afraid!" Up until now, God still causes fear to many people and the message continues to be valid, "Do not be afraid!" Immediately the angel adds: "Your prayer has been heard!" In our life, everything is the fruit of prayer!
- Zechariah represents the Old Testament. He believes, but his faith is weak. After the visit, he remains mute, incapable to communicate with people.
- The announcement of the angel expresses the importance of the mission of the child who will be born and who will be called John: "he must drink no wine, no strong drink, even from his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit." John will be a person who is totally consecrated to God and to his mission. "He will bring back many of the Israelites to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him to reconcile fathers to their children and the disobedient to the good sense of the upright, preparing for the Lord a people fit for him." John will take the place of the expected return of the prophet Elijah who will have to come to carry out the reconstruction of community life: to reconcile the heart of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.
- In reality, the mission of John was very important. According to the people, he was a prophet (Mk 11: 32). Many years later, in Ephesus, Paul continued to find persons who had been baptized with the Baptism of John (Acts 19: 3).
- When Elizabeth, being old, conceived and remained pregnant, she hid herself for five months. While Mary, instead of hiding, gets out of her house and goes to serve her.

Personal Questions

- What struck you the most about this visit of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah?
- To reconcile the heart of the parents toward their sons, to reconstruct the fabric of human relationships and to build up life in community. This was the mission of John. This was also the mission of Jesus and continues to be the most important mission today. How do I contribute to this mission?

Concluding Prayer

For You are my hope, Lord,
my trust, Yahweh, since boyhood. On You I have relied since my birth,
since my mother's womb You have been my portion. (Ps 71: 5-6)

Saturday, December 20, 2025

3rd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

God of the poor and the humble, we thank You today for choosing Mary as the Virgin Mother of Jesus, Your Son.
Her faith and willing service opened the way to Your new world.
Dispose us to seek Your will and to cooperate with Your plans that we too, like Mary, may give to the world its Savior Jesus Christ, Your Son and our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Luke 1: 26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.
He went in and said to her, “Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you.” She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, “Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favor. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David; He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and His reign will have no end.”
Mary said to the angel, “But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?”[1] The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.”
Mary said, “You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.” And the angel left her.

Reflection

- The visit of the angel to Mary reminds us of the visit of God to different women of the Old Testament: Sarah, mother of Isaac (Gen 18: 9-15), Anne, mother of

Samuel (1 Sam 1: 9-18), the mother of Samson (Judg 13: 2-5). All of them announced the birth of a son with an important mission in God's plan.

- The account begins with the expression *"in the sixth month."* It is the sixth month of the pregnancy of Elizabeth. The need of Elizabeth, a woman advanced in age who is expecting her first son with the risk of delivery, is the background of this entire story. Elizabeth is mentioned at the beginning (Lk 1:26) and at the end of the visit of the angel (Lk 1: 36, 39).
- The angel says, "Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor, the Lord is with you!" Similar words were said also to Moses (Ex 3: 12), to Jeremiah (Jer 1: 8), to Gideon (Judg 6: 12) and to others with an important mission in God's plan. Mary is surprised at the greeting and tries to understand the significance of these words. She is practical. She wants to understand. She does not accept just any invitation.
- The angel answers: "Do not be afraid!" Just as it happened in the visit of the angel to Zechariah, the first greeting of God is always: "**Do not be afraid!"** Immediately the angel recalls the promises of the past which will be fulfilled thanks to the son who will be born and who is to receive the name of Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High and in Him the Kingdom of God will be realized. This is the explanation of the angel in such a way that Mary is not afraid.
- Mary is aware of the mission which she is about to receive, but she continues to be practical. She does not allow herself to be drawn by the greatness of the offer and knows her condition. She examines the offer through criteria which she has available. Humanly speaking, it was not possible: "But how can this come about? I have no knowledge of man."
- The angel explains that the Holy Spirit, present in God's Word since the creation (Gen 1: 2), is able to realize things which seem impossible. This is why the Holy One who will be born of Mary will be called *Son of God*. The miracle repeats itself right up to today. When the Word of God is accepted by us, something new happens, thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit! Something new and surprising such as a son born of a virgin or a son born to a woman of advanced age, like Elizabeth, whom all said was barren, that she could not have children! And the angel adds, "See, your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible with God."
- The response of the angel clarifies everything for Mary, and she surrenders: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, may it be done to me according to your word." Mary uses for herself the title of a servant, Handmaid of the Lord. This title from Isaiah represents the mission of the people not as a privilege, but rather as a *service* to other people (Is 42:1-9; 49:3-6). Later Jesus will define His mission as a service: "I have not come to be served, but to serve!" (Mt 20: 28). He learned from his Mother!

Reflection

- What struck you the most in the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary?
- Jesus praises his Mother when He says: “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and keep it.” (Lk 11: 28). How does Mary relate to the Word of God during the visit of the angel?

Concluding Prayer

To Yahweh belong the earth and all it contains, the world and all who live there; it is He who laid its foundations on the seas, on the flowing waters fixed it firm. (Ps 24: 1-2)

Sunday, December 21, 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us to read the Scriptures with the same mind that You read them to the disciples on the way to Emmaus. In the light of the Word, written in the Bible, You helped them to discover the presence of God in the disturbing events of Your sentence and death. Thus, the cross that seemed to be the end of all hope became for them the source of life and of resurrection. Create silence in us so that we may listen to Your voice in Creation and in the Scriptures, in events and in people, above all in the poor and suffering. May Your word guide us so that we too, like the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, may experience the force of Your resurrection and witness to others that You are alive in our midst as source of fraternity, justice and peace. We ask this of You, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed the Father to us and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 1: 18-24

Key for Reading:

The majority of the members of the Christian communities in Palestine and in Syria, for whom Matthew wrote his Gospel, were converted Jews. They accepted Jesus as Messiah and believed in Him. They were persecuted because of their faith. Their brother Jews said to them, “You Christians are deceived! Jesus is not, nor can He be the Messiah!” In the text which we are meditating on this Sunday, Matthew’s concern is evident. He wants to confirm the faith of the communities. It is as if he wished to tell us, “You do not live deceived! Jesus is truly the Messiah! “The intention of Matthew in chapters one and two of his Gospel is to inform the
readers concerning Jesus, whose activity will be described beginning in chapter three. In the first two chapters, Matthew presents the credentials of Jesus, the new Legislator, the new Moses. In the genealogy (Mt 1: 1-17), he had already shown that Jesus belongs to the race of David and of Abraham (Mt 1: 1). In these

verses (Mt 1: 18-25) Matthew continues to present Jesus to us describing His birth. He says how Joseph received the news that Mary was with child and, the prophecies which will be realized with the birth of Jesus, showing that He is the expected Messiah. During the reading, it is well to pay attention to what the text tells us on the person of Jesus, especially in what concerns the significance of the two names that He receives.

A Division of the Text to Help the Reading:

- Matthew 1: 18: A legal irregularity in Mary
- Matthew 1: 19: The justice of Joseph
- Matthew 1: 20-21: The explanation or elucidation by the Angel
- Matthew 1: 21-23: The melody in Matthew's Gospel
- Matthew 1: 24-25: The obedience of Joseph.

The Text:

18 This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. 19 Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. 20 He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because He is the one who is to save His people from their sins.'
22 Now all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: 23 Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us.' 24 When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home; 25 he had not had intercourse with her when she gave birth to a son; and he named Him Jesus.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

so that the Word of God may penetrate and enlighten our life.

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection

- Which point of this text struck you the most? Why?
- According to the words of the Angel, who is the Son who will be born of Mary?
- According to the words of Matthew, which prophecy of the Old Testament is fulfilled in Jesus?

- What are the two names which the Child receives and what is God's plan hidden in these names?
- How is Joseph's attitude to be understood? What does this attitude teach us?
- In what exactly does Joseph's "justice" consist?
- What is our justice, compared with that of Joseph?

To Go Deeper into the Theme

Context of the evangelic text:

The genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1: 1-17) leaves us with a question. Next to the names of the forty-two paternal ancestors of Jesus (Mt 1: 17), Matthew gives the names of four maternal ancestors only: Tamar (Mt 1: 3), Rahab, Ruth (Mt 1: 4) and the wife of Uriah (Mt 1:6). The four women conceived their sons outside the parameters of purity or of the legal justice of that time. Therefore, the state of these four women is irregular before the Law. The irregularity of these four ancestors is evident. It is sufficient to read the texts of the Old Testament where their story is described. And thus, at the end of the genealogy a question arises: "And Mary, the spouse of Joseph, from whom Jesus is born (Mt 1: 16), does she also incur some irregularity of a legal type? The text on which we are meditating this Sunday speaks about this.

Commentary on the text:

- Matthew 1: 18: A legal irregularity in Mary

  Mary is with child before going to live with Joseph, her promised spouse. The one who looks at things from outside is aware of an irregularity and will say, "Mary, how horrible!" According to the law of Moses, these errors merited a death penalty (Deut 22: 20). To avoid this mistaken interpretation of facts, Matthew helps the reader to see the other aspect of Mary's pregnancy: "She conceived by the Holy Spirit." To human eyes this may seem a transgression of the Law, but in God's eyes this was exactly the contrary!

- Matthew 1: 19: The justice of Joseph

  The pregnancy of Mary takes place before she went to live with Joseph, not because of a human deviation, but because of the divine will. God himself made fun of the law of legal purity in such a way as to make the Messiah be born among us! If Joseph had acted according to the requirements of the law of that time, he would have had to denounce Mary and possibly she would have been stoned. Pregnancy before marriage is irregular and according to the law of legal purity, she should be punished with the death penalty (Deut 22: 20). But Joseph, because he is **just**, does not obey the requirements of the law of purity. His **justice** is greater. Instead of denouncing, he prefers to respect the mystery which he does not understand and decides to abandon Mary in secret. The greatest justice of Joseph saves both the life of Mary and that of Jesus.

Thus, Matthew sends an important message to the communities of Palestine and Syria. It is as if he said, "Behold, what would happen if the rigorous observance were followed, which certain Pharisees demand from you! They would put the Messiah to death!" Later Jesus will say, "If your justice is not greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5: 20).

- Matthew 1: 20-21: The explanation or elucidation of the Angel and the two names of the Son of Mary: Jesus and Immanuel

  "The Angel of the Lord" helps to discover the deepest dimension of life and of events. He helps to make an X-Ray of events and to perceive God's call which with our human eyes alone we cannot perceive. The Angel makes Joseph understand that Mary's pregnancy is the fruit of the action of the Holy Spirit. God Himself, the day of creation, blew over the waters and filled with force the creating Word of God (Gen 1: 2). The new creation takes place in Mary. It is the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth, announced by Isaiah (Isa 65: 17). The Son of Mary receives two names: Jesus and Immanuel. **Jesus** means "Yahweh saves." Salvation does not come from what we do but from God, rather from what God does for us. **Immanuel** means "God with us." In the Exodus, when getting out of Egypt, God goes down to be with the oppressed people (Ex 3: 8) and tells Moses: "**I will be with you"** (Ex 3: 12) and from that moment on God never abandons His people. The two names, Jesus and Immanuel, render concrete and even go beyond the hope of the people.

- Matthew 1: 22-23: The melody of Matthew's Gospel

  "All this took place in order that what had been said of the Lord by the prophet could be fulfilled." This sentence or other similar ones are like a melody, words which are repeated many times in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 1: 23; 2: 5, 15, 17, 23; 4: 14; 8: 17; 12: 17; 13: 14, 35; etc.). This reveals the purpose which the author had in mind: to confirm for his readers of Jewish origin the fact that Jesus is truly the promised Messiah. In Him the promises of the prophets are fulfilled.

  Here Matthew quotes the text of Isaiah: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, whom she will call Immanuel" (Isa 7: 14). The title **Immanuel** more than a name reveals the meaning of Jesus for us. Jesus is the proof that God continues to be with us. The name itself of the Child is **Jesus** (Mt 1: 25).

- Matthew 1: 24-25: The obedience of Joseph

  Waking up from sleep, Joseph does what the Angel told him and took Mary to his house. And he continues to say that he had no relation with Mary, to confirm that Jesus is born from the Holy Spirit.

Extending the Information:

- **A key for the Gospel of Matthew -** The Gospel of Matthew is addressed to a community of converted Jews, who live a deep crisis of identity in relation to their Jewish past. When in the year 65 AD the revolt broke out against Rome, the Jewish-

- Christians did not participate and they abandoned Jerusalem. The Pharisees did the same thing. After the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70, the Pharisees reorganized the people who had remained and they lined up, always in a more decisive way, against the Christians, who at the end were excommunicated. This excommunication made the problem of identity even worse. Now, officially excommunicated, they could no longer go to their Synagogue, to their rabbi. And the question arose among them: To whom do the promises belong: to the Synagogue or to the Church? Who is the true People of God, they or we? Is Jesus truly the Messiah? Matthew writes his Gospel for this community. The Gospel of Matthew can be defined by the following three words:
- The Gospel of **consolation** for those excommunicated and persecuted by their brother Jews who do not accept Jesus as the Messiah (Christ); it helps to overcome the trauma or shock of the breaking.
- The Gospel of **revelation:** It shows Jesus as the true Messiah, the new Messiah, in Whom is the summit of all the history of the Old Testament with its promises.
- The Gospel of the **new practice**: It describes the practice of Jesus, and shows how to attain a new justice, greater than that of the Pharisees.
- **This happened in order that it could be realized -** by means of this phrase repeated many times in his Gospel, Matthew touches on the point of greatest tension between Christians and Jews. Starting from the Bible, they said, "Jesus is not and cannot be the Messiah!" Starting from the Bible itself, Matthew responds and affirms, "Jesus is truly the Messiah!"
- **The pregnancy of Mary -** Matthew as well as Luke quote the text of Isaiah "A virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, whom she will call Immanuel" (Isa 7: 14). But there is a difference. Luke places Mary in the center and gives more importance to the sign of virginity (Lk 1: 31). Matthew places Joseph in the center and gives more importance to the significance of the name Immanuel.
- **Joseph's dream -** the Angel appeared to Joseph in his sleep and helps him to understand. With the help of the Angel, Joseph succeeded in discovering God's action in this event, which according to the opinion of the time, seemed to be only the fruit of deviation and of sin. Angel means messenger. He brings a message and a help to perceive God's action in life. Today there are many Angels who guide us in life. Sometimes they act while we sleep, in our dreams, other times in our meetings, in conversations and in Biblical encounters, in facts, etc. So many Angels, so many Angels!

Prayer: Psalm 72 (71)

His Name endures for ever!

God, endow the king with Your own fair judgement, the son of the king with Your own saving justice, that he may rule Your people with justice, and Your poor with fair judgement.
Mountains and hills, bring peace to the people! With justice he will judge the poor of the people, he will save the children of the needy and crush their oppressors. In the sight of the sun and the moon he will endure, age after age.
He will come down like rain on mown grass, like showers moistening the land.
In his days uprightness shall flourish, and peace in plenty till the moon is no more. His empire shall stretch from sea to sea, from the river to the limits of the earth.
The Beast will cower before him, his enemies lick the dust; the kings of Tarshish and the islands will pay him tribute. The kings of Sheba and Saba will offer gifts; all kings will do him homage, all nations become his servants.
For he rescues the needy who call to him, and the poor who have no one to help.
He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the needy from death.
From oppression and violence he redeems their lives, their blood is precious in his sight.
Long may he live; may the gold of Sheba be given him! Prayer will be offered for him constantly, and blessings invoked on him all day.
May wheat abound in the land, waving on the heights of the hills, like Lebanon with its fruits and flowers at their best, like the grasses of the earth.
May his name be blessed for ever, and endure in the sight of the sun.
In him shall be blessed every race in the world, and all nations call him blessed.
Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who alone works wonders; blessed for ever His glorious name.
May the whole world be filled with His glory! Amen! Amen!

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank You for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice what Your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, Your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Monday, December 22, 2025

4th Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

God of the little ones,
with Mary we rejoice and give you thanks that you let Jesus Christ become one of us and let him bring us the dignity of your sons and daughters. May we live up to that dignity and to the joy that says that we are deeply loved by you. Like

you, may we also learn to care for all that is little and brittle and bring your justice to the poor through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Luke 1: 46-56

And Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;
because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed,
for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him.
He has used the power of his arm; he has routed the arrogant of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly.He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty.
He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his faithful love according to the promise he made to our ancestors - of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants forever.
Mary stayed with her some three months and then went home.

Reflection

The canticle of Mary was one of the canticles of the community of the first Christians. It reveals the level of awareness or consciousness and the firmness of the faith which animated her interiorly. Sung in the community, this canticle of Mary teaches us to pray and to sing.

- Luke 1: 46-50: Mary begins by proclaiming the change which is taking place in her life under the loving look of God, full of mercy. Because of this, she sings joyfully: “I rejoice in God, my Savior.”
- Luke 1: 51-53: Afterwards she sings the fidelity of God toward his people and proclaims the change which the arm of the Lord was realizing on behalf of the poor and the hungry. The expression “arm of God” reminds us of the liberation of the Exodus. This is the force of salvation and of liberation of Yahweh which bring about the changes: he has routed the arrogant of heart (Lk 1: 51), he has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly (Lk 1: 52), he has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty (Lk 1: 53).
- Luke 1: 54-55: At the end Mary recalls that all this is the expression of God’s mercy toward his people and expression of his fidelity to the promises made to Abraham. The Good News seen not as a reward because of the observance of the Law, but rather as an expression of the goodness and of the fidelity of God to his promises. This is what Paul taught the Galatians and the Romans.

Personal Questions

- The canticles are the thermometer of the life of the community. They reveal the degree of consciousness and of commitment. Examine the canticles of your community.

- Analyze the social conscience which comes from Mary's canticle. In the 20th century after Christ, this canticle was censured by the military of Latin America because it was considered subversive.

Concluding Prayer

The Lord raises the poor from the dust, he lifts the needy from the dunghill to give them a place with princes, to assign them a seat of honor. (1 Sam 2: 8)

Tuesday, December 23, 2025

4th Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord, loving and mighty God,
you fulfilled your promise to save us when Jesus, your Son, became one of us. We are no longer in the dark, for you let your light shine on us. Bring us your salvation now, set us really free from our sins, let us become fully human with Jesus and go with him in your way of peace and love. Let him be our strength, our constant companion on the road, that through him and growing in his humanity, we may be your beloved sons and daughters. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Luke 1: 57-66

The time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son; and when her neighbors and relations heard that the Lord had lavished on her his faithful love, they shared her joy.
Now it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother spoke up. "No," she said, "he is to be called John." They said to her, "But no one in your family has that name," and made signs to his father to find out what he wanted him called. The father asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And they were all astonished. At that instant his power of speech returned, and he spoke and praised God.
All their neighbors were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judaea. All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. "What will this child turn out to be?" they wondered. And indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

Reflection

In chapters 1 and 2 of his Gospel, Luke describes the announcement of the birth of two little ones, John and Jesus, who will occupy a very important place in the realization of God's project. What God begins in the Old Testament, begins to be realized throughthem. This is why, in these two chapters, Luke presents or

recalls many facts and persons of the Old Testament and even succeeds in imitating the style of the Old Testament. And all this in order to suggest that with the birth of these two little boys, history completes a turn of 180 degrees and the time of the fulfilment of the promises of God begins through John and Jesus, and with the collaboration of their parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah and Mary and Joseph.
There is a certain parallelism between the announcement and the birth of both children:

- The announcement of the birth of John (Lk 1: 5-25) and of Jesus (Lk 1,: 26-38)
- The two mothers who are pregnant meet and experience the presence of God (Lk 1: 27-56)
- The birth of John (Lk 1: 57-58) and of Jesus (Lk 2: 1-20)
- The circumcision in the community of John (Lk 1: 59-66) and of Jesus (Lk 2: 21-28)
- The canticle of Zechariah (Lk 1: 67-79) and the canticle of Simeon with the prophecy of Anna (Lk 2: 29-32)
- The hidden life of John (Lk 1: 80) and of Jesus (Lk 2: 39-52)

- Luke 1: 57-58: Birth of John the Baptist. “The time came for Elizabeth to have her child and she gave birth to a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had lavished on her his faithful love, they shared her joy.” Like so many women of the Old Testament Elizabeth was sterile: Just like God had pity on Sarah (Gn 16: 1; 17: 17; 18: 12), on Rachel (Gn 29: 31) and on Anna (1 Sm 1: 2, 6, 11) transforming the sterility into fecundity, in the same way he had pity on Elizabeth and she conceived a son. Elizabeth hid herself during five months. When after, the five months, people could see in her body God’s goodness toward Elizabeth, all rejoiced with her. This community environment, in which all got involved in the life of others, both in joy as in sorrow, is the environment in which John and Jesus are born, grew and received their formation. Such an environment marks the personality of a person for the whole life; and it is precisely this community environment that we lack most today.
- Luke 1: 59: To give the name on the eighth day. “On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child and they wanted to call him Zechariah as his father.” The involvement of the community in the life of the family of Zechariah, Elizabeth and John is such that the relatives and neighbors even want to interfere in the choice of the nameof the child. They want to give the child the name of his father: Zechariah!” Zechariah means: God has remembered. Perhaps they wanted to express their gratitude to God for having remembered Elizabeth and Zechariah and for having given them a son in their old age.
- Luke 1: 60-63: His name is John! Elizabeth intervenes and she does not permit the relatives to take care of the question of the name. Recalling the announcement of the name made by the angel to Zechariah (Lk 1: 13),

Elizabeth says: "No! He will be called John." In a very small place such as *Ain Karem*, in Judah, the social control is very strong. And when a person gets out of the normal usage of the place, she is criticized. Elizabeth does not follow the usage of the place and chooses a name outside the normal models. This is why the relatives and neighbors complain saying: "No one in your family has that name!" The relatives do not easily give in and make signs to the father to know from him what name he wants for his son. Zechariah asks for a writing tablet and writes: "His name is John." All remained astonished because they must have perceived something of the mystery of God which surrounds the birth of the little child.

- And this perception which people have of the mystery of God present in the common facts of life, Luke wants to communicate it to us, his readers. In his way of describing the events, Luke is not like a photographer who only registers what the eyes can see. Heis like a person who uses the X-ray which registers what the human eye cannot see. Luke reads the facts with the X-rays of faith which reveals what the human eye cannotperceive.
- Luke 1: 64-66: The news of the child is diffused. "All their neighbors were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judah. All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts: What will this child turn out to be? They wondered. And indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him." The way in which Luke describes the facts recalls the circumstances of the birth of the persons who in the Old Testament had an important role in the realization of God's project and whose childhood seemed already to be marked by the privileged destiny which they would have: Moses (Ex 2: 1-10), Samson (Jg 13: 1-4 and 13: 24-25), Samuel (1 Sm 1: 13-28 and 2: 11).
- In the writings of Luke, we find many references to the Old Testament. In fact, the first two chapters of his Gospel are not stories in the sense which we, today, give to the story. They are rather, a mirror to help the readers to discover that John and Jesus came to fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament. Luke wants to show that God, through the two children, came to respond to the most profound aspirations of the human heart. On the one side, Luke shows that the New Testament realizes what the Old Testament prefigured. On the other, it shows that the New one exceeds the Old one and does not correspond in everything to what the people of the Old Testament imagined and expected. In the attitude of Elizabeth and Zechariah, of Mary and Joseph, Luke represents a model of how to convert oneself to believe in the New one which is being reached.

Personal Questions

- What has struck you most in the way in which Luke describes the facts of life?
- How do I read the facts of my life? Like a photo or like an X-Ray?

Concluding Prayer

Kindness unfailing and constancy mark all Yahweh's paths, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.
Only those who fear Yahweh have his secret and his covenant, for their understanding. (Sal 25: 10: 14)

Wednesday, December 24, 2025

4th Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord, loving and mighty God,
you fulfilled your promise to save us when Jesus, your Son, became one of us. We are no longer in the dark, for you let your light shine on us. Bring us your salvation now, set us really free from our sins, let us become fully human with Jesus and go with him in your way of peace and love.
Let him be our strength, our constant companion on the road, that through him and growing in his humanity, we may be your beloved sons and daughters. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Luke 1: 67-79

Zechariah, father of John, was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:
Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited his people, he has set them free, and he has established for us a saving power in the House of his servant David, just as he proclaimed, by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times, that he would save us from our enemies and from the hands of all those who hate us, and show faithful love to our ancestors, and so keep in mind his holy covenant.
This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant us, free from fear, to be delivered from the hands of our enemies, to serve him in holiness and uprightness in his presence, all our days.
And you, little child, you shall be called Prophet of the Most High, for you will gobefore the Lord to prepare a way for him, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the faithful love of our God in which the rising Sun has come from on highto visit us, to give light to those who live in darkness and the shadow dark as death, and to guideour feet into the way of peace.

Reflection

- The Canticle of Zechariah is one of the many canticles of the community of the first Christians which we find dispersed in the writings of the New Testament: in the Gospels (Lk 1: 46-55; Lk 2: 14; 2: 29-32), in the Letters of Saint Paul (1 Co 13: 1-13; Eph 1: 3-14; 2: 14-18; Phil 2: 6-11; Col 1: 15-20) and in the Book of Revelation (1: 7; 4: 8; 11: 17-18; 12: 10-12; 15: 3-4; 18: 1 up to 19: 8). These Canticles

give us an idea of how faith and the weekly liturgy were lived during those first times. They make us guess that the liturgy was, at the same, a celebration of the mystery, profession of faith, animation of hope and catechesis.

- Here in the Canticle of Zechariah, the members of those first Christian communities, almost all of them Jewish, sang the joy of having been visited by the goodness of God which, in Jesus, the promises are fulfilled. The Canticle has a beautiful structure, well elaborated. It seems like a slow climbing which leads the faithful toward the height of the mountain, from where they observe the road that they have travelled since the time of Abraham (Lk 1: 68-73), they experience the beginning of the fulfilment of the promises (Lk 1: 74-75) and from there they look ahead, they foresee the road that the child John will have to travel up to the time of the birth of Jesus: the sun of Justice who comes to prepare, for all, the way of Peace (Lk 76-79).
- Zechariah begins praising God because he has visited and redeemed his people (Lk 1: 68) he has established for us a saving power in the House of his servant David (Lk 1: 69), just as he promised by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times (Lk 1: 70). And he describes in what this powerful salvation consists: that he would save us from our enemies and from the hands of those who hate us (Lk 1: 71). This salvation is the result, not of our own effort, but rather of the merciful goodness of God who remembered his holy Covenant and the oath he swore to Abraham, our father (Lk 1: 72). God is faithful. This is the foundation of our security.
- Continuing Zechariah describes in what the oath of God sworn to Abraham consists: it is the hope that "freed from the hands of the enemies we can serve him, without fear, in holiness and uprightness, in his presence, all our days." This is the great desire of all the people of all times: to live in peace, without fear, serving God and neighbor, in holiness and uprightness, all our days of our life. This is the height of the mountain, the point of arrival, which rose up in the horizon with the birth of John (Lk 1: 73-75).
- Now the attention of the Canticle is addressed toward John, the new born child. He will be a prophet of the Most High, because he will go before the Lord to prepare him the way, to give to his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins (Lk 1: 76-77). Here we have a clear reference to the messianic prophecy which said: "There will be no further need for everyone to teach neighbor or brother, saying, 'Learn to know Yahweh. No, they will all know me, from the least to the greatest, Yahweh declares, since I will forgive their guilt and never more call their sin to mind" (Jer 31: 34). In the Bible "to know" is synonymous of "to experience." Forgiveness and reconciliation make us experience the presence of God.
- All this will be the fruit of the merciful action of the heart of God and will be realizedfully with the coming of Jesus: The rising Sun has come from on high to give light to those who live in darkness and the dark shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of Peace (Lk 1: 78-79).

- Sometimes it is good to read the Canticle as if it were the first time, in such a way asto be able to discover in it all the novelty of the Good News of God.
- Have you experienced, sometimes, the goodness of God? Have you experienced sometimes, the pardon of God?

Concluding Prayer

I shall sing the faithful love of Yahweh forever, from age to age my lips shall declare your constancy,for you have said: love is built to last forever, you have fixed your constancy firm in the heavens. (Ps 89: 1-2)

Thursday, December 25, 2025

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Opening Prayer

In the darkness of a starless night, a night of no sense, you, the Word of life, like lightning in the storm of forgetfulness, entered within the bounds of doubt under cover of the limits of precariousnessto hide the light.
Words made of silence and of the ordinary, your human words, heralds of the secrets of the Most High: like hooks cast into the waters of death to find man once more, immersed in his anxious follies, and reclaim him, plundered, through the attractive radiance of forgiveness.
To you, Ocean of Peace and shadow of eternal Glory,I render thanks:
Calm waters on my shore that awaits the wave, I wish to seek you!
And may the friendship of the brothers protect me when night falls on my desire for you. Amen.

Gospel Reading – John 1: 1-18

The Text:

1 In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things came into being, not
one thing came into being except through him. 4 What has come into being in
him was life, life that was the light of men; 5 and light shines in darkness, and
darkness could not overpower it. 6 A man came, sent by God. His name was
John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness to the light, so that everyone
might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, he was to bear witness to the
light. 9 The Word was the real light that gives light to everyone; he was coming
into the world. 10 He was in the world that had come into being through him,
and the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to his own and his own people
did not accept him. 12 But to those who did accept him he gave power to
become children of God, to those who believed in his name 13 who were bornnot
from human stock or human desire, or human will but from God himself. 14 The

Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. [15] John witnesses to him. He proclaims: 'This is the one of whom I said: He who comes after me has passed ahead of me because he existed before me.' [16] Indeed, from his fullness we have, all of us, received -- one gift replacing another, [17] for the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. [18] No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

A Moment of Silence:

Allow the voice of the Word echo within us.

Meditation

Some question for reflection:

- God who is light has chosen to dispel the darkness of man by making himself darkness. Man is born blind (cfr Jn 9: 1-41): blindness is his condition of creature. The symbolical gesture of Jesus in gathering mud to spread over the eyes of the man born blind in John, signifies the newness of the incarnation: it is a gesture of new creation. The blind man whose eyes are still covered with the mud of creation is asked to make not an act of faith but one of obedience: to go to the pool of Siloe, which means "sent." The one "sent" is Jesus. Are *we able to obey the Word, which comes to us every day?*
- The blind man in the Gospel of John is poor: he has no pretense and asks for nothing. We often live in daily blindness, resigned that we do not deserve better horizons. *Can we see ourselves as having nothing so that the gift of God may be ours too, a gift of the redemption of the flesh, but above all a gift of light and faith?*
- *"The law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known"* (Jn 1: 17-18). The knowledge of what happens in the story of our lives leads us to get out of the blindness of presumption and to contemplate the light that shines on the face of the Son of God. *Our eyes, flooded with light, become open* to events. *When shall we be able to see God in our midst?*

A Key to the Reading:

John was someone who was able to see the light shining, who saw, heard, and touched the light. In the beginning was the Word: constantly turned towards the love of the Father, the Word became the Father's true explanation, his only exegesis (Jn 1: 18), the revelation of his love. In the *logos* was life and life was light, but the darkness did not welcome the light. In the OT the revelation of the Word is the revelation of light: to this corresponds the fullness of grace, the grace of grace, given to us in Jesus, the revelation of God's unlimited love (Jn 1:

4-5, 16). The whole witness of the OT is a witness of light: from Abraham to John the Baptist, God sends witnesses to his light. John the Baptist is the last of these: he announces the light that is to come into the world and recognizes in Jesus the long-awaited light (Jn 1: 6-8; 15).
Dabar IHWH is God's communication with man, which took place with all those whom God has called and to whom the word of the Lord came (cfr Is 55: 10-11). As Augustine says: *The Word of God is the true light*.
The word comes from the mouth of God, but it keeps its full force, and it is a person who creates and sustains the world. This word that creates and saves is identified with the Torah, which for Israel is the divine revelation in its totality, with Wisdom: *The* law will go *out from Zion, and the oracle of Yahweh from Jerusalem* (Is 2: 3).
The *memra* (aramaic) is the concept used by John to go from the *dabar* to the *logos*: inthe targum the *memra* has a creating function, but above all a revealing function that is expressed particularly through the image of light. In the Targum *Neophiti*, the famous poem of the four nights on Ex 12:42 it is written: "*The first night was when IHWH revealed himself above the world to create it: the world was desert and empty and darkness covered the face of the abyss. And the memra of IHWH was the light that shone.*" In the Targum *Jerushalaim* manuscript 110 says: *"With his word IHWH* shone and *shed light."*
The midrash stresses that the law was before the world, it was life, it was light: *"The words of the Torah are light for the world"* (Midrash Dt Rabba 7: 3). Only daughter of God, the Torah was written with black fire in the white flame and sits on God's knees while God sits on his throne of glory (cfr Midrash on Psalm 90: 3).
The logos-light becomes present in the world. All is life in him: the Word takes the place of the Torah. The signs are transcendent, and more than a substitution we see a fulfilment. If for the Jew the Torah is God's daughter, John shows that she is the *logos* that from the beginning is with God, is God. This logos becomes flesh: man, frail, limited, finite, placing his glory in the flesh. He put down his tent, *skené*, among us, he became the *shekinah* of God among us, and he showed his glory, the overwhelming presence of God to men. The glory that dwelt in the tent of the exodus (Ex 40: 34-38), that dwelt in the temple (1 Kings 8: 10), now dwells in the flesh of the Son of God. Thisis indeed an epiphany. The *shekinah* is made visible, because the *shekinah* is Christ, place of the presence and of the divine glory. There is one who has seen the glory of God: the only Son full of grace and truth; he comes to reveal to us the face of the Father, the only one who can do this because he has his existence in the bosom of the Father. From this fullness of life comes the new creation. Moses gave the law. Christ gives grace and truth, love and fidelity. In the Son we can contemplate God without dying because whoever sees the Son sees also the Father: Jesus is the exegesis, the narration of the divine life.
And the place of revelation is his flesh. This is why John says at the time of fulfilment:"*We have seen his glory*" (Jn 1: 14), when at the "time of glorification" there is only darkness. The light is hidden when it gives its life for love of men, love to the very end, without restriction, respecting the freedom of man to crucify the Author of life. God is glorified at the moment of the passion: a love completed, definitive, unlimited, a love shown even to its extremist

consequences. This is the mystery of the light that becomes a way in the darkness, because love likes the darkness of the night when life becomes more intimate and one's words die to live in the breath of the words of the person loved,the light is in the love that gives light to that hour of expropriation, the hour when one loses oneself to find oneself again in the embrace of life.

Prayer

Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and distress, put on the beauty of God's glory for evermore, wrap the cloak of God's saving justice around you, put the diadem of the Eternal One's glory on your head, for God means to show your splendor to every nation under heaven, and the name God gives you for evermore will be, 'Peace-through-Justice, and Glory-through-Devotion.' Arise, Jerusalem, stand on the heights and turn your eyes to the east: see your children reassembled from westand east at the Holy One's command, rejoicing because God has remembered.
Though they left you on foot driven by enemies, now God brings them back to you, carried gloriously, like a royal throne.
For God has decreed the flattening of each high mountain,of the everlasting hills, the filling of the valleys to make the ground level so that Israel can walk safely in God's glory.
And the forests and every fragrant tree will provide shade for Israel, at God's command; for God will guide Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with the mercy and saving justice which come from him. *Baruc 5: 1-9*

Contemplation

Father of light, I come to you with my whole being. After going through times of goodness and times of slipping into evil I finally understand, because of my experience, that alone I only exist in shadow and darkness. Without your light I cannot see anything. Indeed, you are the source of life; you, Sun of justice, who opens my eyes, you the way that leads to the Father. Today you have come among us, eternal Word, as light that goes on crossing the pages of history to offer humankind the gifts of grace and joy in the desert of famine and emptiness: the bread and wine of your holy Name, which at the hour of the cross will become visible signs of consummated love, give us birth with you from that fertile side that is the Church, the cradle of your life for us. Like Mary, we wish to stay by your side to learn to be like her, full of grace from the Most High. And when our tents will welcome the cloud of the Spirit in the radiance of one more word, we shall understand the Glory of your Face and we shall bless in an adoring silence without any further hesitation the Beauty of being one with you, living Word of God.

Friday, December 26, 2025

Feast of Saint Stephen

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
we honor today St Stephen, the first martyr of Your young Church. Make us good witnesses like him,
people filled with faith and with the Holy Spirit, men and women who are full of fortitude, as we try to live the life of Jesus.
Give us a great trust that we may live and die in Your hands and make us pray for those who harm us, that You may forgive them and us.
We ask you this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 10: 17-22

"Be prepared for people to hand you over to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, as evidence to them and to the Gentiles. But when you are handed over, do not worry about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will be given to you when the time comes, because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you.
Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will come forward against their parents and have them put to death.
You will be universally hated on account of my name; but anyone who stands firm to the end will be saved."

Reflection

- This contrast is enormous. Yesterday, Christmas Day, we had the crib of the newly born child, with the singing of the angels and the visit of the shepherds. Today here is the blood of Stephen, stoned to death, because he had the courage to believe in the promise expressed in the simplicity of the crib. Stephen criticized the fundamentalist interpretation of the Law of God and the monopoly of the Temple. This is why he was killed (Acts 6: 13-14).
- Today, which is the feast of Stephen, the first martyr, the liturgy presents us a passage from the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 10: 17-22), taken from the *Sermon of the Mission* (Mt 10: 5-42). In it, Jesus advises the disciples that fidelity to the Gospel implies difficulties and persecutions: "They will hand you over to the Sanhedrin and scourge you in their synagogues." But for Jesus, what is important in persecution is not the painful side of suffering, but rather the positive side of witnessing: "You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as evidence to them and to the Gentiles." Persecution offers the occasion of giving witness of the Good News which God brings to us.
- This is what happened to Stephen. He gave witness to his faith in Jesus to the last moment of his life. At the hour of his death he says: "I can see Heaven thrown open, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7: 56). And in falling dead under the stones, he imitated Jesus crying out: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (Acts 7: 60; Lk 23: 34).

- Jesus had said: “When they will hand you over to them, do not worry about how or what you have to say, because it will be given to you at that moment what you have to say: in fact, it is not you who will speak, but the Spirit of your Father who will speak in you.” This prophecy is also fulfilled in Stephen. His enemies did not succeed in resisting the inspired wisdom with which he spoke” (Acts 6: 10). “The members of the Sanhedrin all looked intently on Stephen, and his face appeared to them as the face of an angel” (Acts 6: 15). Stephen spoke “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 7: 55). This is why the anger of the others was so great that they killed him.

Personal Questions

- Placing oneself in Stephen’s place, have you suffered, sometimes, because of your fidelity to the Gospel?
- The simplicity of the crib and the harshness of martyrdom go hand in hand in the life of the saints and in the life of so many people who are persecuted up to the point of death because of their fidelity to the Gospel. Do you know any people in this situation?

Concluding Prayer

Lord, be for me a rock-fastness, a fortified citadel to save me.
You are my rock, my rampart; true to your name, lead me and guide me! (Ps 31: 2-3)

Saturday, December 27, 2025

Feast of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

Opening Prayer

Lord God, you are love itself. We know that you loved us first before we could ever love you. Let this unforgettable experience of your “beloved apostle” John become also our deep and lasting experience.
May the love you have shown us in your Son Jesus Christ move us to love you very deeply in returnand overflow on all those we meet in life. We ask you this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – John 20: 1a, 2-8

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,” she said, “and we don't know where they have put him.”

So, Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in.
Simon Peter, following him, also came up, went into the tomb, saw the linen cloths lying on the ground and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself.
Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed.

Reflection

- Today's Gospel presents to us the passage of the Gospel of John which speaks about the Beloved Disciple. Probably, this text was chosen to read and to meditate on it today,feast of Saint John the Evangelist, for the immediate identification that we all make of the beloved disciple with the apostle John. But the strange thing is that in no passage ofthe Gospel of John it is said that the beloved disciple is John. But then, from the most remote times of the Church, it has always be insisted upon in identifying both of these.This is why, in insisting on the similarity between the two, we run the risk of losing a very important aspect of the message of the Gospel in regard to the beloved disciple.
- In the Gospel of John, the beloved disciple represents the new community which is born around Jesus. We find the Beloved Disciple at the foot of the Cross, together with Mary, the mother of Jesus (Jn 19: 26). Mary represents the People of the Old Covenant. At the end of the first century, the time in which the final redaction of the Gospel of John was compiled, there was a growing conflict between the Synagogue and the Church. Some Christians wanted to abandon the Old Testament and remain or keep only the New Testament. At the foot of the Cross, Jesus says: "Woman, behold your son!" and to the Beloved Disciple: "Son, behold your mother!" And both must remain together as mother and son. To separate the Old Testament from the New one, in that time was what we would call today separation between faith (NT) and life (OT).
- In the Gospel today, Peter and the Beloved Disciple, informed by the witness of Mary Magdalene, ran together toward the Holy Sepulchre. The *young one runs faster* than the elderly *one* and reaches the tomb first. He looks inside the tomb, observes everything, but does not enter. He allows Peter to enter first. Here is indicated the way in which the Gospel describes the reaction of the two men before what both of them see: "He entered and saw the linen clothes lying on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen clothes but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, he saw and he believed." Both of them saw the same thing, but this is said only of the *Beloved Disciple* that he believed:"Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, he saw and he believed." Why? Is it that Peter did not believe?

- The Beloved Disciple looks, sees in a different way, he perceives more than the others. He has a loving look which perceives the presence of the novelty of Jesus. The morning after that night of working, looking for fish and, then the miraculous catch of fish, it is he, the beloved disciple who perceives the presence of Jesus and says: “It is the Lord!” (Jn 21: 7). On that occasion, Peter informed by the affirmation of the Beloved Disciple, also recognizes, and begins to understand. Peter learns from the Beloved Disciple. Then Jesus asks three times: “Peter, do you love me?” (Jn 21: 15, 16, 17). Three times Peter answers: “You know that I love you!” After the third time, Jesus entrusts the flock to the care of Peter, and in that moment, Peter also becomes a “Beloved Disciple.”

Personal Questions

- All of us who believe in Jesus are today Beloved Disciples. Do I have the same loving look to perceive the presence of God and to believe in his Resurrection?
- To separate the Old Testament from the New one is the same thing as to separate Faith and Life. How do I do and live this today?

Concluding Prayer

The mountains melt like wax, before the Lord of all the earth. The heavens proclaim **his saving justice, all nations** see his glory. (Ps 97: 5-6)

Sunday, December 28, 2025

Feast of the Holy Family

LECTIO

Opening Prayer:

God, our Creator and Father, You decreed that Your Son, generated before the dawn of the world, should be like us in all things through His incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary by the working of the Holy Spirit. Send that same life-giving Spirit upon us, so that we may become ever more docile to Your sanctifying action, allowing ourselves to be gently transformed by the same Spirit into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ Your Son, our brother, savior and redeemer.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 2: 13-15, 19-23

13 After they had left, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and His mother with
you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with Him.' 14 So Joseph got up and, taking the child and His mother with him, left that night for Egypt, 15 where he

stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I called my son out of Egypt. 16 Herod was furious on realizing that he had been fooled by the wise men, and in Bethlehem and its surrounding district he had all the male children killed who were two years old or less, reckoning by the date he had been careful to ask the wise men. 17 Then were fulfilled the words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: 18 A voice is heard in Ramah, lamenting and weeping bitterly: it is Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they are no more. 19 After Herod's death, suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt 20 and said, 'Get up, take the child and His mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead.' 21 So Joseph got up and, taking the child and His mother with him, went back to the land of Israel. 22 But when he learned that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of Judaea he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the region of Galilee. 23 There he settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way the words spoken through the prophets were to be fulfilled: He will be called a Nazarene.

A Moment of Silence:

so that the Word of God may penetrated into our hearts and enlighten our life

MEDITATIO

A Key to the Reading:

Matthew's Gospel has been called "the Gospel of the Kingdom." Matthew invites us to reflect on the coming of the kingdom of heaven. Some have seen in the structure of his Gospel narration a drama in seven acts that deal with the coming of this Kingdom. The drama begins with the preparation for the coming of the Kingdom in the person of the boy Messiah and ends with the coming of the Kingdom in the suffering and triumph of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Son of God.
The Gospel passage presented to us for reflection is part of the so-called first act where Matthew introduces to us the person of Jesus as the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Matthew's is the Gospel that often quotes the Old Testament to show that in Christ the law and the prophets are fulfilled. Jesus, the fulfillment and perfection of the Scriptures, came into the world to re-establish the kingdom of heaven already proclaimed in the covenant made by God with His people. With the coming of Christ, this covenant is no longer reserved for the Jewish people alone but is extended to all peoples. Matthew addresses himself to a community of Christian Jews, persecuted by the synagogue, and invites it to be open to the gentiles. He is the wise scribe who knows how to draw from his treasury that which is old and new. His Gospel was first written in Aramaic and then translated into Greek.
Matthew 2: 13-23 is part of the section that deals with the birth and childhood of "Jesus Christ son of David, son of Abraham" (Mt 1: 1). Jesus is the son of His people, but He is also son of the whole of humanity. In His genealogy we find foreign influences (Mt 1: 3-6). After Mary His mother, the first called to pay

homage to the newborn Messiah are the Magi (Mt 2: 11). With His light, the Messiah draws the wise to Himself and offers them salvation (Mt 2: 1-12). The Magi receive this salvation, unlike Herod and the troubled citizens of Jerusalem (Mt 2: 3).
From the very time of His birth, Jesus relives the painful experience of His people in exile, humbled again and again. The Gospel shows us this by telling us of the flight into Egypt and the murder of the innocents. The drama of these events unfolds before us in the following details:

- The angel who appears in a dream to Joseph after the Magi leave, and the flight into Egypt (Mt 2: 13-15).
- Herod who becomes aware of the deceit of the Magi and kills all the male children in Bethlehem (Mt 2: 16-18).
- The death of Herod and the "clandestine" return of the Holy Family, not to Bethlehem but to Galilee (Mt 2: 19-23).

The theme of kings killing those whom they fear is common in the history of every royal dynasty. Apart from this scene of Herod seeking out the child Jesus to kill Him, in Bible literature in the Old Testament we find similar stories. In the first book of Samuel, Saul who has been rejected by the Lord feared David and sought to kill him (1 Sam 15; 18; 19; 20). Michal and Jonathan help David to flee (1 Sam 19; 20). Again in the first book of Kings, King Solomon in his old age, unfaithful to the God of his fathers and with a perverted heart, commits what is evil in the sight of the Lord (1 Kings 11:3- 13). For this, the Lord raises up an adversary against Solomon (1 Kings 11: 14), Hadad the Edomite, who during David's reign flees and takes refuge in Egypt (1 Kings 11: 17). Another of Solomon's adversaries is Jeroboam who takes refuge in Egypt to get away from the king who wanted to kill him (1 Kings 11: 40). Such were the dangers of a degenerate kingdom. In the second book of Kings, this time in the context of the siege of Jerusalem, "In the ninth year of his [Nebuchadnezzar's] reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month" (2 Kings 25: 1) of the year 589, we read of the sacking of Jerusalem and of the second deportation of the people in the year 587 (2 Kings 25: 8- 21). The people who "remained in the land of Judah" (2 Kings 25: 22) submit to Gedaliah who was appointed governor by Nebuchadnezzar. "Ishmael [...] and ten men with him [...] murdered Gedaliah, as well as the Judeans and the Chaldeans who were with him." Then from fear of the Chaldeans, they fled into Egypt (2 Kings 25-26). In the book of the prophet Jeremiah, we also find the story of Uriah "another man, too, who used to prophesy in the name of Yahweh" (Jer 26: 20). Uriah flees into Egypt because king Jehoiakim sought to kill him. The king in fact did find him in Egypt and killed him (Jer 25: 20-24).
With these events as background to the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt, Matthew shows us Jesus, from His very childhood, as partaking of the fate of His people. Egypt, for Jesus, becomes the place of refuge, as it was for the patriarchs:

- Abraham who "went down into Egypt to stay there for the time, since the land was hard pressed by the famine" (Gen 12: 10).
- Joseph was threatened by his brothers who sought to kill him out of envy

and was then sold to merchants who led him into Egypt and sold him to Potiphar (Gen 37: 12-36).

- Israel (Jacob) who goes to Egypt called by his son Joseph (Gen 46: 1-7).
- The family of Israel (Jacob) that goes to Egypt to establish themselves there (Gen 46– 50; Ex 1: 1-6).

Matthew turns the citation from Hosea 11:1 upside down: "I called my son out of Egypt," and interprets it as if God called his son Jesus to flee into Egypt (Mt 2: 15). The original meaning of Hosea was that the Lord called his son Israel to leave Egypt in order to start a nation. Jesus' flight into Egypt and the killing of the innocents of Bethlehem remind us of the oppression of Israel in Egypt and the killing of all the new-born males (Ex 1: 8-22).
The prophecy applied to the murder of the innocents is taken from the book of consolation made up of chapters 30 and 31 of the book of Jeremiah. The lamentation is connected to the promise of the Lord who consoles Rachel, Jacob's (Israel's) spouse, mother of Joseph, who according to tradition was buried close to Bethlehem, and promises her that she will be rewarded for her sorrow, her children who are no longer will come back (Jer 31: 15–18).
When they come back from Egypt after the death of Herod, Joseph decides to live in Galilee in a city called Nazareth. Jesus will be called the Nazarene. Later also, His disciples will be known as Nazarenes (Acts 24: 5). Apart from indicating the name of a city, this name may also refer to the "shoot", that is the «neçer» of Isaiah 11: 1. Or it may refer to the rest of Israel, the «naçur» (see Isa 42: 6).

Questions for Personal Reflection:

- What strikes you most in this passage from Matthew?
- What does the kingdom of heaven mean for you?
- How does the kingdom of heaven differ from earthly kingdoms?
- Matthew introduces us to the person of Jesus as one who becomes one with the fate of His people. Read the passages cited in the key to the reading so as to reflect and pray on the events of the people of God, with which Jesus identified Himself. What are similar situations in our world? Ask yourself what you can do to better the conditions where you live and work, especially if they are at variance with the kingdom of heaven.

ORATIO

Personal Prayer in Silence.

Conclude the *lectio divina* with this prayer:

Merciful Father, grant that we may follow the examples of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, so that we may always be strong in the trials of life until the day when we may share in Your glory in heaven. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

CONTEMPLATIO

May the peace of Christ reign in your hearts. (Col 3: 15)

Monday, December 29, 2025

Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

Opening Prayer

God, Father of light,
the old man Simeon recognized your Son as the light that would shine on all.
May we too recognize Jesus, even if he comes to us in a humble way, in the shape and person of children, of old people, of the poor and the little ones.
Make us receive him too as the light not only of our lives but as the bright dawn for all nations.
For you are the Father of all and Jesus belongs to all as their Saviour and Lord, now and for ever.

Gospel Reading – Luke 2: 22-35

And when the day came for them to be purified in keeping with the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord - observing what is written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord - and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is prescribed in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.
Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to the restoration of Israel and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised; for my eyes have seen the salvation which you have made ready in the sight of the nations; a light of revelation for the gentiles and glory for your people Israel.
As the child's father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed - and a sword will pierce your soul too - so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

Reflection

- The first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke are not a history according to the meaning that we give to history. They rather serve more than everything else,

as a mirror in which the converted Christians from Paganism, discover that Christ had come to fulfil the prophecies of the Old Testament and to respond to the more profound aspirations of the human heart. They are then, symbol and mirror of what was happening among the Christians at the time of Luke. The communities coming from Paganism were born from the communities of converted Jews, but they were diverse. The New did not correspond to what the Old imagined and expected. It was a "sign of contradiction" (Lk 2: 34), it caused tension and it was a source of great suffering, of pain. In the attitude of Mary the image of the People of God, Luke represents a model of how to persevere in the New, without being unfaithful to the Old.

- In these two chapters of the Gospel of Luke, everything turns around the birth of the two children: John and Jesus. The two chapters make us feel the perfume of the Gospel of Luke. In them, the environment is one of tenderness and of praise. From the beginning to the end, there is praise and singing, because, finally, the mercy of God has been revealed in Jesus; he fulfils the promises made to the Fathers. And God fulfils them in behalf of the poor, of the *anawim*, like Elizabeth and Zechariah, Mary and Joseph, Anne and Simeon, the shepherds. All of them knew how to wait for his coming.
- The insistence of Luke in saying that Mary and Joseph fulfilled everything which the Law prescribes, recalls what Paul writes in the Letter to the Galatians: "When the completion of the time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born a subject of the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law so that we could receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4: 4-5).
- The story of the old Simeon teaches that hope, even if not immediately, will be realized someday. It is not frustrated, it is realized. But the way does not always correspond to what we imagine. Simeon was waiting for the glorious Messiah of Israel. Going to the Temple in the midst of many couples who were taking their child, he sees the realization of his hope and of the hope of the People: "My eyes have seen the salvation, which you have made ready in the sight of the nations, a light of revelation for the Gentiles and glory for your People Israel."
- In the text of today's Gospel, we have the preferred themes of Luke, that is, a strong insistence on the action of the Holy Spirit, on prayer and on the prayer environment, a continuous attention to the action and participation of the women and a constant concern for the poor and of the message for the poor.

Personal Questions

- Would you be capable to perceive in a poor child the light to enlighten the nations?
- Would you be capable of waiting your whole life for the realization of your hope?

Concluding Prayer

Sing a new song to Yahweh! Sing to Yahweh, all the earth! Sing to Yahweh, bless his name!
Proclaim his salvation day after day. (Ps 96: 1-2)

Tuesday, December 30, 2025

Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

Opening Prayer

Almighty Father,
You let humble, faithful people recognize Your Son and welcome Him as the Savior
who brought freedom and life to His people.
May we too recognize and welcome Jesus in all that is little and humble and with Him grow up in wisdom and grace to the maturity of Your sons and daughters, so that we attain the full image of Jesus.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Luke 2: 36-40

There was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came up just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.
When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And as the child grew to maturity, He was filled with wisdom; and God's favor was with him.

Reflection

- In the first two chapters of Luke's Gospel, everything revolves around the birth of two people: John and Jesus. The two chapters make us feel the sense of the Gospel of Luke. In it, the environment is one of tenderness and praise. From the beginning until the end, the mercy of God is sung and praised: The canticles of Mary (Lk 1: 46-55), of Zechariah (Lk 1: 68-79), of the Angels (Lk 2: 14), of Simeon (Lk 2: 29-32). Finally, God comes to fulfill his promises, and He fulfills them on behalf of the poor, [1] the *anawim*, those who knew how to persevere and hope in his coming: Elizabeth, Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, Anna, the shepherds.
- Chapters 1 and 2 of Luke's Gospel are very well known, but do not go far enough. Luke writes by imitating the writings of the Old Testament. It is as if the first two chapters of his Gospel were the last chapter of the Old

Testament, which opens the door for the coming of the New. These two chapters are the foundation or bridge between the New and the Old Testaments. Luke wants to show that the prophecies are being realized. John and Jesus fulfill the Old and begin the New.

- Luke 2: 36-37: The life of the Prophetess Anna. "There was a prophetess, Anna, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. She had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer." Like Judith (Jdt 8: 1-6), Anna was also a widow. Like Deborah (Judge 4: 4), she also was a prophetess, i.e., a person who communicates something of God and who has a special ability in matters of faith to the point of being able to communicate them to others. Anna got married when she was young, and lived seven years married, then she became a widow and continued to dedicate herself to God up to the age of eighty-four years. Today, in almost all of our communities throughout the world, we find groups of older women, many of them widows, whose life is consumed in prayer and in giving service to their neighbors.
- Luke 2: 38: Anna and the Child Jesus. "She came up just at that moment and began to praise God, and she spoke of the child to all who looked toward to the deliverance of Jerusalem." She went to the Temple at the moment when Simeon embraces the child and speaks with Mary concerning the future of her son (Lk 2: 25-35). Luke suggests that Anna takes part in this activity. The vision of Anna is one of faith. She sees a child in the arms of His mother and discovers in Him the Savior of the world.
- Luke 2: 39-40: The life of Jesus in Nazareth. "When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And as the child grew to maturity, He was filled with wisdom and God's favor was with Him." In these few words, Luke communicates something of the mystery of the Incarnation. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1: 14). The Son of God becomes equal to us in all things and assumes the condition of Servant (Ph 2: 7). He was obedient even unto death and death on the cross (Phil 2: 8). He lived thirty-three years among us, and of these, He lived thirty in Nazareth.

  If we want to know how the life of the Son of God was during the years that He lived in Nazareth, we have to learn about the life of the average Nazarene of that time, change his name, give him the name of Jesus and then we will have an idea about the life of the Son of God in these first thirty years, being in everything like us except sin (Heb 4: 15). During these years of His life, "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him." In another passage, Luke affirms the same thing using other words. He says that the child "grew in wisdom, age and grace before God and men" (Lk 2: 52).

  To grow in wisdom means to assimilate knowledge of what is true or right, just judgement and discernment, as well as prayer, customs, etc. This is

learned through living and living together in the natural community of the people. To grow in age means to be born small and to grow and become an adult. This is the process of every human being, with its joys and sadness, its discoveries and frustrations, anger, and love. This is learned by living and by living together in the family, with parents, brothers and sisters, and relatives. To grow in grace means to discover the presence of God in life, His action in everything that happens, and His call. The Letter to the Hebrews says that: "Although He was the Son, He learned obedience through His sufferings" (Heb 5: 8).

Personal Questions

- · Do you know any people like Anna who look on things in life with eyes of faith?
- · To grow in wisdom, age, and grace - how does this take place in my life?

Concluding Prayer

Sing to Yahweh, bless His name! Proclaim His salvation day after day, declare His glory among the nations, His marvels to every people! (Ps 96: 2-3)

Wednesday, December 31, 2025

Seventh Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

Opening Prayer

Loving Father,
You gave us your Son Jesus Christand let him share our poverty.
He brought us grace upon grace, for all that comes from you is a free gift.
Accept our thanks for the moments when we accepted your gifts and shared them with one another.
Accept our thanks for the times we listened attentively to your Son's words and put them into practice.
Help us go forward with hope and joywith joy and mutual encouragement with the companion in life you have given us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – John 1: 1-18

In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came into being, not one thing came into being except through him. What has come into being in him was life, life thatwas the light of men; and light shines in darkness, and darkness could not overpower it.A man came, sent by God. His name was John.

He came as a witness, to bear witness to the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light; he was to bear witness to the light. The Word was the real light that gives light to everyone; hewas coming into the world. He was in the world that had come into being through him,and the world did not recognize him. He came to his own and his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believed in his name who were born not from human stock, or human desire, or human will but from God himself.
The Word became flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that he has from the Father as only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. John witnesses to him. He proclaims: 'This is the one of whom I said: He who comes after me has passed ahead of me because he existed before me.' Indeed, from his fullness we have, all of us, received -- one gift replacing another, for the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Reflection

The Prologue is the first thing which one sees in opening the Gospel of John. But it was the *last one* to be written. It is the final summary, placed at the beginning. In it, John describes the way of the Word of God. It was at the side of God, before the creation, and through him all things were created; everything which exists is an expression of the Word of God. As it happens with the Wisdom of God, (Prov 8: 22-31), in the same way also the Word wishes to get closer to us and becomes flesh in Jesus. Itcomes in our midst and carries out its mission and returned to God. Jesus is this Wordof God. Everything that it says and does is communication which reveals the Father to us.
In saying: "*In the beginning was the Word",* John recalls the first phrase of the Biblewhich says: *"In the beginning God created heaven and earth"* (Gen 1: 1). God createdall things by means of his Word. "*He speaks* and everything is made" (Ps 33: 9; 148: 5). All creatures are an expression of the Word of God. This living Word of God, present in all things, shines in darkness. Darkness tries to overpower it, but it could not succeed.The search for God which is always new, is reborn in the human heart. Nobody succeeds in covering it. We cannot bear to live without God for a long time!
John the Baptist comes to help people to discover and to relish this luminous and consoling presence of the Word of God in life. The witness of John the Baptism has been very important, so much so that many people thought that he was the Christ (Messiah) (Acts 19: 3; Jn 1: 20). This is why *the Prologue* clarifies saying: "John was not the light! He has come to bear witness to the light!"
Thus, as the Word of God manifests itself in nature, in creation, so also it is manifested in the "world," that is in the history of humanity, particularly, in the history of the Peopleof God. But the "world" does not recognize, does not receive the Word. "*He came to his own and his own people did not accept him."* Here when he says *people* , John wants to indicate the system of the empire as well as that of the religion of the time, both of them closed up in themselves and,

because of this, incapable to recognize the Good News (Gospel), the luminous presence of the Word of God.
But the persons who open themselves to accept the Word, become sons and daughtersof God. The person becomes son or daughter of God not because of his/her own merits,neither because of belonging to the race of Israel, but because of the simple fact of having trust and believing that God in His goodness, accepts and receives us. The Wordof God penetrates within the person and makes the person feel accepted as a son, as a daughter of God. This is the power of the grace of God.
God does not want to remain far away from us. Because of this, His Word, gets closerand becomes present in our midst in the Person of Jesus. The *Prologue* literally says: "And the Word became flesh and *lived among us.*" In ancient times, at the time of Exodus, in the desert, God lived in a tent among the people (Ex 25: 8). Now, the tent inwhich God dwells with us is Jesus, "filled with grace and truth." Jesus comes to revealwho is this our God, present in everything, from the beginning of creation.

Personal Questions

- Everything that exists is an expression of the Word of God, a revelation of his presence. Am I sufficiently contemplative to be able to receive and experience this universal presence of the Word of God?
- What does it mean for me to be called son of God?

Concluding Prayer

The Lord comes, he is coming to judge the earth; he will judge the world with saving justice, and the nations with constancy. (Ps 96: 13)