

Lectio Divina

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Tuesday, December 1, 2026

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 2, 2026

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 forever.

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 everyday 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 3, 2026

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 4, 2026

First 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 youas the merciful Father of all through our brother and Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 9: 27-31

As Jesus went on his way two blind men followed him shouting, 'Take pity on us, son of David.' And when Jesus reached the house, the blind men came up to him and he saidto them, 'Do you believe I can do this?' They said, 'Lord, we do.' Then he touched theireyes saying, 'According to your faith, let it be done to you.' And their sight returned. Then Jesus sternly warned them, 'Take care that no

one learns about this.' But when they had gone away, they talked about him all over the countryside.

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 the persons 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 like very much the title of Son of David. He criticizes the teaching of theScribes who said that the Messiah should be the Son of David: "David himself calls himLord: 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 the true doctrine in the head, and a very different thing to have the 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 careto be called like 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. In spite of the fact that they did not possess a correctdoctrine, the two blind men had a correct faith. Today many persons are more concerned about a correct doctrine than of a 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 today? A Religious Sister said: "Today thesituation of the world is such that I feel mistrustful even toward the poor!" The situationhas changed very much from then until now!
- Jesus asks not to diffuse the miracle. But the prohibition was not respected very much. Both 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 a correct doctrine or on a correct faith?

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 5, 2026

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 Saviour Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 9: 35 - 10: 1, 5a, 6-8

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 where 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 6, 2026

Second 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 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 so that 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 Father and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading - Mark 1: 1-8

A Key to the Reading:

The literary purpose of Mark 1:1-13, of which our text is a part (Mk 1:1-8), is a short introduction to the proclamation of the Good News of God. There are three main points:

(i) The Good News is prepared by the events of John the Baptist (Mk 1: 2-8),

(ii) it is proclaimed at the baptism of Jesus (Mk 1: 9-11), and

(iii) it is tested at the time of the temptations of Jesus in the desert (Mk 1: 12-13).

In the 70's, the time when Mark was writing his Gospel, the communities were living through difficult times. They were persecuted from outside by the Roman Empire. From inside, they lived with doubts and tensions. Some groups said

that John the Baptist was equal to Jesus (Acts 18:26, 19:3). Others wanted to know how to begin proclaiming the Good News of Jesus. In these few verses, Mark begins to answer them by telling them how the Good News of God that Jesus proclaimed began, and what the place of John the Baptist is in God's plan. As we read, let us try to notice how the Good News penetrates the lives of the people.

A Division of the Text to Help with the Reading:

- Mark 1: 1: Opening and title of Mark's Gospel
- Mark 1: 2-3: Quoting the prophets Malachi and Isaiah
- Mark 1: 4-5: Content of John the Baptist's preaching and its repercussions
- Mark 1: 6-8: Meaning of John the Baptist's preaching

Text:

1 The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 It is written in the prophet Isaiah: Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you to prepare your way before you. 3 A voice of one that cries in the desert: Prepare a way for the Lord, make His paths straight. 4 John the Baptist was in the desert, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 All Judea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptized by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. 6 John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. 7 In the course of his preaching he said, "After me is coming someone who is more powerful than me, and I am not fit to kneel down
and undo the strap of His sandals. 8 I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

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.

- What pleased or struck you most in the text?
- What does the text say of John the Baptist's mission?
- Why does the Gospel quote the two prophets of the Old Testament?
- What does the text tell us concerning the person of Jesus and His mission?
- What does that teach us today?

To Go Deeper into the Theme

The Context of Then and of Today:

Mark's Gospel begins like this: *The beginning of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God!* (Mk 1: 1). Everything has a beginning, even the Good News of God that Jesus communicates to us. The text we propose for our meditation shows us how Mark sought this beginning. He quotes the prophets Isaiah and Malachi and mentions John the Baptist, who prepared the coming of Jesus. Mark thus tells us that the Good News of God, revealed by Jesus, did not suddenly come down from Heaven, but came from long ago, through history. And it has a precursor, someone who prepared the coming of Jesus.
For us too, the Good News comes through people and events that point the way that leads to Jesus. That is why, while meditating Mark's text, it is good not to forget this question: "In the story of my life, who showed me the way to Jesus?" Again, another question: "Have I helped anyone to discover the Good News of God in his or her life? Have I been the precursor for anyone?"

A Commentary on the Text:

- Mark 1: 1: The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

  In the first sentence of his Gospel, Mark says: The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, Son of God! (Mk 1: 1). At the end of the Gospel, when Jesus is dying, a soldier exclaims: Truly this man was the Son of God (Mk 15: 39). At the beginning and at the end we come across this title, Son of God. Between the beginning and the end, throughout the pages of his Gospel, Mark explains how this central truth of our faith, that Jesus is the Son of God, has to be understood and proclaimed.

- Mark 1: 2-3: The seed of the Good News is hidden in the hope of people.

  To point to the beginning of the Good News, Mark quotes the prophets Malachi and Isaiah. In the texts of these two prophets, we see the hope that dwelt in the hearts of the people in the time of Jesus. The people hoped that the messenger, proclaimed by Malachi, would come to prepare the way of the Lord (Mal 3: 1) as was proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah who said: "A voice cries, 'Prepare in the desert a way for Yahweh. Make a straight path in the wilderness'" (Is 40: 3). For Mark, the seed of the Good News is the hope raised in people by the great promises that Jesus had made in the past through the two prophets. To this day, the hope of the people is the hook on which the Good News of God hangs. In order to know how to begin proclaiming the Good News, it is important to discover the hope that the people hold in their hearts. Hope is the last to die!

- Mark 1: 4-5: The popular movement begun by John the Baptist increases peoples' hope.

  Mark does what we still do today. He uses the Bible to shed light on the facts of life. John the Baptist had started a great popular movement. All Judea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to John! Mark uses the texts from Malachi and Isaiah to shed light on this popular movement begun by John the Baptist. He shows that with the coming of John the Baptist, the hope of the people had begun to find an answer, to be realized. The seed of the Good News begins to sprout and grow.

- Mark 1: 6-8: John the Baptist is the prophet Elijah expected by the people.

  It was said of Elijah that he would come to prepare the way of the Messiah, and that "He will reconcile parents to their children and children to their parents" (Mal 3: 24; cf Lk 1: 17). In other words, they hoped that Elijah would come to rebuild community life. Elijah was known as "a man wearing a hair cloak...and a leather loincloth" (2 Kg 1: 8). Mark says that John wore camel hair. He was saying clearly that John the Baptist had come to fulfill the mission of the Prophet Elijah (Mk 9: 11-13).

  In the 70's, the time when Mark was writing, many people thought that John the Baptist was the Messiah (cf. Acts 19: 1-3). To help them discern, Mark reports John's own words: After me is coming someone who is more powerful than me, and I am not fit to kneel and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit. Mark says that John points the way to Jesus. He tells the community that John was not the Messiah, but his precursor.

Further information:

The wider context of the beginning of Mark's Gospel (Mk 1: 1-13)

- The solemn proclamation of the Good News (Mk 1: 9-11).

  People thought that John's baptism came from God! (Mk 11: 32). Jesus saw that God was manifesting Himself in John's message and left Nazareth, went to the Jordan, and stood in line to be baptized. As He was baptized, Jesus had a deep experience of God. He saw the heavens open and the Holy Spirit descending on him, and the voice of the Father saying: You are my beloved Son, my favor rests on you. These few words include three very important points.

- Jesus experienced God as Father and himself as Son. Herein lies the great novelty that He communicates to us: God is Father. The God who was distant as the Most High Lord, draws near to us as Father, quite close as Abbà, Dad. This is the heart of the Good News that Jesus brings to us.

  There is a phrase that Jesus heard from the Father and from the prophet Isaiah where the Messiah is proclaimed as the Servant of God and of the people (Is 42:1). The Father was announcing to Jesus His mission as Messiah Servant, and not as glorious King. Jesus took on this mission of service and was faithful to it even to dying, and dying on the cross! (cf. Phil 2: 7-8) He said: "I did not come to be served, but to serve!" (Mk 10: 45).

- Jesus saw the heavens open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending on Him. It is precisely when Jesus is confirmed in His mission as Messiah Savior that He receives the Holy Spirit to enable Him to carry out his mission. The gift of the Spirit had been promised by the prophets (Is 11: 1-9; 61: 1-3; Joel 3: 1). The promise begins to take place solemnly when the Father proclaims Jesus as His beloved son.

The Good News is tried and verified in the desert (Mk 1: 12-13).

After the baptism, the Spirit of God takes possession of Jesus and takes Him into the desert, where He prepares Himself for His mission (Mk 1: 12ff). Mark says that Jesus stayed in the desert for 40 days and was tempted by the devil, Satan. Matthew 4: 1-11 makes the temptations explicit. These were the temptations that assaulted the people in the desert after their exodus from Egypt: the temptation of the bread, the temptation of prestige, the temptation of power (Dt 8: 3; 6: 16; Dt 6: 13). Temptation is anything that assaults someone on the way to God. By allowing the Word of God to guide Him, Jesus meets the temptations and will not allow Himself to be turned aside (Mt 4: 4, 7, 10). In all things He is like us, even in matters of temptation, except for sin (Heb 4: 15). Immersed among the poor and one with the Father through prayer, faithful to the Father and to prayer, He resists and follows the way of the Messiah-Servant, the way of service to God and the people (Mt 20:28).

- The beginning of the Good News of Jesus, today! The seed of the Good News among us.

  Mark begins his Gospel by describing the beginning of the proclamation of the Good News of God. We might have expected a precise date, but what we have is what seems to be a confused answer. Mark quotes Isaiah and Malachi (Mk 1: 2-3), speaks of John the Baptist (Mk 1: 4-5), alludes to the prophet Elijah (Mk 1: 4), refers to the prophecy concerning the Servant of Yahweh (Mk 1: 11), and calls our attention to the temptations of the people in the desert after the exodus from Egypt (Mk 1: 13). We ask: "But, Mark, when was the precise moment of the beginning: at the exodus from Egypt, with Moses, Isaiah, Malachi, John the Baptist? When?" The beginning, the seed, could be all of these at once. What Mark wants to suggest is that we must learn to read our history from a different perspective. The beginning, the seed of the Good News of God, is hidden in our lives, our past, and the history that we live. The people of the Bible were convinced that God is present in our lives and our history. That is why they kept recalling the facts and people of the past. Anyone who loses the memory of his or her identity, does not know where he or she comes from or where he or she is going. The people of the Bible read the history of the past to learn how to read the present and to discover the signs of the presence of God. This is what Mark is doing at the beginning of his Gospel. He tries to discover the facts and focuses on the thread of hope that came from the exodus, from Moses, through the prophets Elijah, Isaiah and Malachi, down to John the Baptist who sees in Jesus the one who fulfills the hope of the people.

- Small as we are, what threads of hope exist today in our history that point to a better and more just future? Here are some possible suggestions:
  - (1) resistance and a general awareness in the world of oppressed ethnic groups seeking life and dignity for all;
  - (2) a new awareness in many men and women that reveals new

opportunities in life that were not perceived before;

- (3) a new ecological sensibility that grows everywhere, above all among the young and children;
- (4) a growing awareness of citizenship that seeks new forms of democracy;
- (5) discussion and debate on social problems that give rise to a greater desire for a transforming participation even among those who, in the midst of their work and study, still find time to dedicate themselves to serve others freely;
- (6) a growing search for new relationships with compassion and respect among peoples and nations;
- (7) a growing indignation towards corruption and violence.

In a word, there is something new that is growing and that does not allow for indifference before political, social, cultural, class and gender abuses. There is a new hope, a new dream, and a desire for change! The proclamation of the Good News brings this newness that is beginning to grow among people. Helping people to open their eyes to see this newness, committing the community of faith to seek this utopia, means recognizing the liberating and transforming presence of God acting in the daily events of our lives.

Praying Psalm 72 (71)

The Hope of the Messiah in the Heart of the People

God, give Your judgment to the king; Your justice to the king's son;
That he may govern your people with justice, your oppressed with right judgment,
That the mountains may yield their bounty for the people, and the hills great abundance,
That he may defend the oppressed among the people, save the children of the poor and crush the oppressor.
May they fear You with the sun,
and before the moon, through all generations. May he be like rain coming down upon the fields, like showers watering the earth,
That abundance may flourish in his days, great bounty, till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
from the river to the ends of the earth. May his foes kneel before him,
his enemies lick the dust.
May the kings of Tarshish and the islands bring tribute, the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.
May all kings bow before him, all nations serve him.
For he rescues the poor when they cry out, the oppressed who have no one to help.
He shows pity to the needy and the poor
and saves the lives of the poor.

From extortion and violence he redeems
them, for precious is their blood in his sight.

Long may he live, receiving gold from
Sheba, prayed for without cease, blessed
day by day. May wheat abound in the land,
flourish even on the mountain
heights. May his fruit be like that of
Lebanon,

and flourish in the city like the grasses of the land.
May his name be forever;

as long as the sun, may his name endure.

May the tribes of the earth give blessings with his
name; may all the nations regard him as favored.
Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel,
who alone does wonderful deeds.

Blessed be His glorious name forever;
may He fill all the earth with His glory.
Amen and amen.

Author's translation:

God, endow the king with your own fair judgment, the son of the king with your own saving justice, that he may rule your people with justice,
and your poor with fair judgment.
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 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 You for the word that has enabled us to better understand 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.

Monday, December 7, 2026

2nd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
you come among Your people;
to those who are poor and paralyzed You bring them Your forgiveness and Your tender compassion through Your Son Jesus Christ.
God, make us deeply believe that You want to liberate us
from our discouragement and powerlessness.
Give us a sincere, trusting hope
in Your healing, compassionate love, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel Reading - Luke 5: 17-26

Now it happened that He was teaching one day, and Pharisees and teachers of the Law, who had come from every village in Galilee, from Judea and from Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was there so that He should heal.
And now some men appeared, bringing on a bed a paralyzed man whom they were trying to bring in and lay down in front of Him. But as they could find no way of getting the man through the crowd, they went up onto the top of the house and lowered him and his stretcher down through the tiles into the middle of the gathering, in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith He said, “My friend, your sins are forgiven you.” The scribes and the Pharisees began to think this over. “Who is this man, talking blasphemy? Who but God alone can forgive sins?” But Jesus, aware of their thoughts, replied, “What are these thoughts you have in your hearts? Which of these is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins, He said to the paralyzed man ‘I order you: get up and pick up your stretcher and go home.’” And immediately before their very eyes he got up, picked up what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

They were all astounded and praised God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.”

Reflection

- Sitting down, Jesus taught. People liked to listen to Him. What was the theme of Jesus’ teaching? He always spoke about God, His Father, but He spoke in a new way which was attractive and different from that of the Scribes and the Pharisees (Mk 1: 22, 27). Jesus represented God as the great *Good News* for human life; a God who loves and accepts people, and a God who does not threaten and does not condemn.
- A paralyzed man is brought by four men. Jesus is for them their only hope. *Seeing their faith, He tells the paralytic: Your sins are forgiven you!* At that time, people believed that physical defects (paralysis, etc.) were a punishment from God because of some sin committed. For this reason, the paralytics and many other disabled persons felt that they were rejected and excluded by God! Jesus teaches the contrary. The great faith of the paralytic was a sign that those who helped him were accepted by God. This is why Jesus declares: *Your sins are forgiven you!* That is: “God does not reject you!”
- The affirmation of Jesus did not coincide with the idea which the Doctors had of God. For this reason, they react: *He is talking blasphemy!* According to their teaching, only God could forgive sins. And only the priest could declare that a person was forgiven and purified. How could Jesus, in their eyes, a simple lay man, ever declare that the paralytic was forgiven and purified from his sins? And then, if a simple lay person could forgive sins, the doctors and the priests would have lost their function! This is why they react and defend themselves.
- Jesus justifies his action: *Which is easier to say: Your sins are forgiven or to say, Get up and walk?* Evidently, for a man it is easier to say: Your sins are forgiven”, because nobody can verify or prove this fact. But if one says: “Get up and walk”, in this case everybody can see if He has or not this power to cure. For this reason, to show that, in the name of God, He had the power to forgive sins, Jesus says to the paralytic: “*Get up and walk!”* He cures the man! He uses the context of their beliefs, that the physical defect was from sin, to prove He has the power to forgive sins! He also shows that the paralysis is not a punishment from God because of sin and shows that the faith of the poor is proof that God accepts them in His love.

Personal Questions

- Placing myself in the position of those who helped the paralytic: Would I be capable to help a sick person, take him up to the top of the house and do what the four men did? Do I have such a great faith?
- What is the image that I have of God in myself and which radiates to others, that of the doctors or that of Jesus? A God of compassion or of threat?

Concluding Prayer

I will hear what God proclaims;
the Lord – for He proclaims peace to His people. Near indeed is His salvation to those who fear Him, glory dwelling in our land. (Ps 85)

Tuesday, December 8, 2026

Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin 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.

Reading of the Gospel:

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 forever 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.)

Wednesday, December 9, 2026

2nd Week of Advent

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, 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 10, 2026

2nd Week of Advent

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 persons of the Old Testament, there is no one greater than John. John is the greatest of all: greater than 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 doubt concerning 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 threshing floor and throw the dry sticks into the fire (Mt 3: 12). But Jesus, instead of being a severe judge, 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 who is 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 if you 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 11, 2026

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
too often we are deaf to Your voice
and to the presence of Your Son
among us, His people.

Inspire us by Your prophets and Your Spirit
that now is the right moment to change
and to commit ourselves
to the kind of life and to the justice
demanded by the kingdom.

Help us to make people see
that Your Son is alive among us
and that He is our Lord forever.

Gospel Reading - Matthew 11: 16-19

"What comparison can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to each other as they sit in the marketplace:

We played the pipes for you, and you wouldn't
dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn't be
mourners.
"For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He is possessed.' The Son of man came, eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'

Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds."

Reflection

- The leaders and the wise are not always pleased when someone criticizes or challenges them. This happened in the time of Jesus, and happens today as well. John the Baptist criticized people and was not accepted. They said: "He is possessed by the devil!" Jesus also criticized and was not accepted. They said: "He has lost his head!", and "Crazy!" (Mk 3: 21). "He is possessed by the devil!" (Mk 3: 22), "He is a Samaritan!" (Jn 8: 48), "He is not from God!" (Jn 9: 16). The same thing happens today. There are some people who hold on to what has always been taught and they do not accept another way of living the faith. They invent reasons for not accepting something new, saying "It is against God's Law!" They invent some pretext in order to not accept the message

Jesus announced. In fact, it is relatively easy to find arguments to refute those who think in a different way from us in these matters.

- Jesus reacts to the people's resistance to the Gospel. They consider themselves wise, but they are like children who wish to be amused, and they rebel when people do not move according to the music that they play. They only accept those who hold the same ideas that they hold. Because of their rigidity, they are condemned.

Personal Questions

- In what ways am I rigid in my faith?
- Do I have a critical conscience concerning social and ecclesiastical thought which, at times, prevents needed change?

Concluding Prayer

Blessed is the man who follows not the counsel of the wicked
nor walks in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the company of the insolent, but delights in the law of the Lord
and meditates on His law day and night. (Ps 1)

Saturday, December 12, 2026

2nd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord our God,
let us never become indifferent to 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 make us attentive again, so that Your kingdom of love and justice becomes a reality.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

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

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, I tell 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 with Jesus during His Transfiguration (Mt 17: 3). In general, people believed Elijah had to return in order to prepare for the coming of the Kingdom. The prophet Malachi said "Look, I shall send you the prophet Elijah before the great and awesome Day of the Lord. He will reconcile parents to their children and children to their parents, to forestall my putting the country under the curse of destruction!" (Mal 3: 23-24, cf. Eccl. 48: 10). The disciples want to know what do the doctors of the Law mean when they say that Elijah has to come before. Because Jesus, the Messiah, had already arrived seemingly before the expected 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 the Baptist.
- Under Roman domination family and clan life disintegrated. People expected that Elijah would return and reconstruct the community reconciling parents to children and children to parents. This was the great hope of the people. Today, the communism is a system that disintegrates families and destroys life.
- To reconstruct and remake the social fabric can often be dangerous when it undermines an oppressive political system. This is why John the Baptist was killed. He had a mission to reform the way humans lived together (cf. Lk 3: 7-14). He carried out the mission of Elijah (Lk 1: 17). As a result, he was killed.
- Jesus continues the mission of John to reconstruct 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, making both visible in the way people live together. This is why, like John, He was put to death.

Personal Questions

- Placing myself in the position of the disciples: does consumerism have power over me?
- Placing myself in the position of Jesus: Do I have the desire and determination to create a new 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 longer withdraw from You;
give us new life, and we will call upon Your name. (Ps 80)

Sunday, December 13, 2026

Third Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, send Your Spirit to help us 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 arrest 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 in us silence so that we may listen to Your voice in Creation in scripture and in the events of our lives. Above all, help us hear Your voice in people, especially those who are poor and suffering. May Your word guide us so that we, like the two disciples journeying to Emmaus, may experience the force of Your resurrection by bringing peace and justice to others. We ask this of You, Jesus, son of Mary, who revealed to us the Father and sent us Your Spirit. Amen.

Gospel Reading - John 1: 6-8, 19-28

A Key to Guide the Reading:

The liturgy of the third Sunday in Advent presents the figure of John the Baptist and describes his place in God's plan. Thus, it helps us to find our place and prepares us for Christmas. John the Baptist was a great man. He was a prophet who had many disciples. Jesus described him as the greatest among those born of woman. Nevertheless, according to Jesus, the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist (Mt 11: 11). John knew this as well. He was praised by others but did not praise himself. When Jesus began to proclaim the kingdom of God, John gave way to Him. His disciples, however, did not have this spirit of generosity. They were envious. John helped them to overcome their resentment. It is not easy to cede one's place of leadership to others and collaborate with them for the sake of the mission.

A Division of the Text to Assist a Careful Reading:

- John 1: 6-8: John's place in God's plan: to give witness to the light.
- John 1: 19-21: John's negative witness concerning himself: he is not the one people think he is.
- John 1: 22-24: John's positive witness regarding himself: he prepares the way for the Lord.
- John 1: 25-28: The meaning of John's baptism: he prepares for one greater than he. The one who is coming after him.

The Text:

6-8: 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.
19-21: This was the witness of John: when the Jews sent to him priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He declared, "I am not the Christ." So they asked, "Then are you Elijah?" He replied, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No."
22-24: So they said to him, "Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?" So he said, "I am [as Isaiah prophesied] a voice of one that cries in the desert: 'prepare a way for the Lord. Make his paths straight!'"
25-28: Now those who had been sent were Pharisees, and they put this question to him:
"Why are you baptizing if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but standing among you –unknown to you— is one who is coming after me, and I am not fit to undo the straps of his sandals." This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

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

- What aspect of John the Baptist's attitude drew my attention and pleased me?
- Three times John defines himself negatively: I am not the Messiah, I am not Elijah, I am not the Prophet. What do these three denials tell us about the person of John?
- Using a phrase from the Old Testament, John draws attention away from himself and towards Jesus. What does this tell us about John? What does this tell us about Jesus?
- What does John say about baptism? What is the difference between John's baptism and Jesus' baptism?
- Why did Jesus say that John is the greatest while at the same time saying the least in the kingdom is greater than he?
- How can all this help us prepare for Christmas?

A Key to the Reading

for those who wish go deeper into the text.

The Context of John the Baptist's Appearance in the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John was written towards the end of the first century. In those days, wherever there were communities of Jews in Palestine and in Asia Minor, there were those also who had come in contact with John the Baptist or who had been baptized by him (Acts 19: 3). Outwardly, John's movement was very similar to that of Jesus. Both proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God (Mt 3: 1-2) and both demanded conversion (Mt 4: 17). There must have been some rivalry among the followers of John and those of Jesus. Thus, John's answer concerning Jesus was not just for those sent by the priests and Pharisees in John's time, but also for the Christian communities of the end of the first century. In fact, the four Gospels are careful to quote John the Baptist's words when he says that he is not the Messiah (Mt 3: 3, 11, Mk 1: 2, 7, Lk 3: 4, 16, Jn 1: 10-23, 30, 3: 28-30).

Comments on John's Witness

- John 1: 6-8: *John's place in God's plan: to give witness to the light.*

  The prologue of the fourth Gospel says that the living Word of God is present in all things and shines like the light in the darkness for each person. Darkness tries to snuff out the light but fails to do so (Jn 1: 15). No one can hide it because we cannot live without God for long. The search for God is born again and again in the heart of mankind. John the Baptist came to help people discover the luminous presence of the Word of God in life. His witness was so important that many people thought he was the Christ (Messiah)! (Acts 19: 3, Jn 1: 20). Thus, the prologue explains "John was not the light! He came to bear witness to the light!"

- John 1: 19-21: *John's negative witness concerning himself: he is not the one others think he is*.

  The Jews wanted to learn who this John was who baptized people in the desert and drew people to himself. Therefore, they sent emissaries to ask, "who are you?" John's reply is strange. Rather than say who he is, he tells them who he is not: "I am not the Messiah!" He then adds two other negative replies: he is not Elijah nor is he the Prophet. Both figures play a part in the messianic hope. In messianic times, Elijah would return to lead the hearts of fathers back to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers. In other words, he would have returned to restore human solidarity (Mt 3: 23-24, Si 48: 10). The Prophet would bring the work started by Moses to a conclusion. He was seen by the people as the long-awaited Messiah (Dt 18: 15). John rejects these messianic titles because he is not the Messiah.

  Later, however, it is Jesus himself who says that John the Baptist was Elijah (Mt 17:12-13). How can we explain this statement? The fact is that there were various interpretations concerning the mission of Elijah. Some said that the Messiah would be like a new Elijah. In this sense, John was not Elijah. Others said that Elijah's mission consisted of preparing the way for the coming of the Messiah. In this sense, John was Elijah.

  In this dialogue between John and the Pharisees and the priests, we see the

catechesis of the communities of the end of the first century. The questions put by the priests and Pharisees on the meaning of John the Baptist in God's plan are the questions of the communities. Thus, Jesus' replies as written by the Evangelist, are also addressed to the communities.

- John 1: 22-24: *John's positive witness: he is only one who prepares the way.*

  "Why do you baptize if you are not the Christ nor Elijah nor the Prophet?" Those sent by the priests and Pharisees wanted a clear answer because they had to render an account to those who had sent them to interrogate John. It was not sufficient for them to know what John was not. They wanted to know who he was and what he meant in God's plan. John's reply is a phrase taken from the prophet Isaiah which is quoted in the four Gospels: "I am a voice crying in the desert. Prepare the way of the Lord" (Mt 3: 3; Mk 1: 3; Lk 3: 4; Jn 1: 23). In this use of the Old Testament, we see the mysticism that animated the reading of the Sacred Scripture by the first Christians. They found these words expressed their experience of God in Jesus (cf 2 Tim 3: 15-17).

- John 1:25-28: *The meaning of John's baptism and person.*

  In Christian communities at the end of the first century, there were those who knew only of John's baptism (Acts 18: 25; 19: 3). When they met other Christians who had received the baptism of Jesus, they wanted to know what John's baptism meant. In those days, there were many kinds of baptisms. Baptism was a form whereby a person committed him/herself to a particular message. Those who accepted the message were invited to confirm their decision by means of a baptism (ablution, purification or bath). For instance, through the baptism of John a person would bind him/herself to the message proclaimed by John. Through the baptism of Jesus, one bound oneself to the message of Jesus that gave him/her the gift of the Spirit (Acts 10: 44-48; 19: 5-6).

  There is among you one whom you do not know. This statement of John refers to Jesus who is present among the multitude. When John was writing his Gospel, Jesus continued to be present in the communities and among the people, above all in the poor with whom he identified. Today, He is in our midst in many ways. Very often, we do not recognize Him.

Further Comments on John the Baptist in the Gospel of John

- **John the Baptist in John's Gospel.**

  John gave rise to a very large popular movement. Jesus himself followed his movement and was baptized in the Jordan. Even after his death, John continued to exercise great attraction and influence among the Jews and among the Christians who came from Judaism (Acts 19: 1-7). Information concerning John the Baptist in the fourth Gospel (Jn 1: 6-8, 15, 19-36; Jn 3: 22-30) can be seen as as follows:

  - John came to give witness to the light (Jn 1: 6-8).
  - Jesus came after John and was John's disciple. Nevertheless, He is

more important than John because He was before John: “He who comes after me ranks before me because He existed before me” (Jn 1: 15, 30).

- Jesus is the creative Word standing by the Father even from the beginning of creation (Jn 1: 1-3).
- John confessed openly: “I am not the Christ. I am not Elijah. I am not the Prophet awaited by the people. I am only a voice crying in the desert: straighten the path of the Lord” (Jn 1: 19-23).
- When compared to Jesus, John considers himself unworthy to undo the straps of His sandals and says “He must increase and I must decrease” (Jn 1: 27; 3: 30).
- John declared to the people concerning Jesus: “I saw the Spirit coming down on Him from heaven like a dove and resting on Him. He is going to baptize with the Holy Spirit” (Jn 1: 32-33).
- John points to Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1: 29, 36), God’s chosen one (Jn 1: 34).

- A Gallery of Jesus’ meeting with people in John’s Gospel.

  In his Gospel, John relates in detail various meetings that Jesus had with people throughout his itinerant life in Palestine: with the first disciples (Jn 1: 35-51), with Nicodemus (Jn 3: 1-13; 4: 14; 7: 50-52; 19: 39), with John the Baptist (Jn 3: 22-36), with the Samaritan woman (Jn 4: 1-42), with the woman about to be stoned (Jn 8: 1-11), and with Martha and Mary (Jn 11: 17-37). These and other meetings are described as if they were tableaux hung on the walls of an art gallery. To attentive eyes, and to those who are able to appreciate things beyond the details, they reveal the identity of Jesus. At the same time, they reveal the characteristics of the communities that believed in Jesus and witnessed to His presence. They are also mirrors which help us to discover what goes on within ourselves when we meet Jesus. The mirror of the meeting between Jesus and John the Baptist, which we are reflecting on during this third Sunday in Advent, helps us prepare for the meeting with Jesus in the coming feast of Christmas.

Psalm 131

O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high;
I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me.
But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a child quieted at its mother's breast; like a child that is quieted is my soul.
O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and for evermore.

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.

Monday, December 14, 2026

3rd Week of Advent / St. John of the Cross, priest and Doctor of the Church

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 15, 2026

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 coming
through 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 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 did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'In truth I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom 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 tells the 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 communicate his 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 you refused 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 16, 2026

3rd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that the coming solemnity of your Son
may bestow healing upon us in this present life and bring us the rewards of life eternal.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Gospel Reading - Luke 7: 18b-23

At that time,
John summoned two of his disciples and sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?”
When the men came to the Lord, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask,
‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?’”
At that time Jesus cured many of their diseases, sufferings, and evil spirits; he also granted sight to many who were blind.
And Jesus said to them in reply,
“Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight,
the lame walk, lepers are cleansed,
the deaf hear, the dead are raised,
the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.”

Lectio

This text is found both in Matthew and Luke and inserted in the latter between the account of the miracle of the restoration to life of the widow's son at Naim (which is proper to Luke) and the discourse of Jesus with John the Baptist. In this context we can speak of this passage as having the function of moving us from the image of Jesuswho heals, even death itself, to the invitation to conversion, recalled by Jesus himself in three successive passages: focusing on John the Baptist, the judgment on his generation and the acceptance of the gesture of the sinful woman in the house of the Pharisee. This text can be understood in a further context: within the entire event of the Baptist and in the prophetic experience of Israel that waits, and that has the experience of listening for the God who comes to them.
The disciples of John have a basic role here, they are open the passage and close it; they are the means of communication between their master, held in Herod's prison (see Lk 3: 19-20), and Jesus. They inform the Baptist and two of them are sent on his behalf to return with the direct question to the master of Nazareth:

twice Luke puts the question, which is of great importance. And the question is about waiting. John knows that someone must come. The problem is whether it is Jesus or must they wait for another. The fact that John sends the question expressly to Jesus means that he already trusts in him. Perhaps he is mistaken because of the lack of understanding of fulfillment in the biblical image of "the Day of the Lord," which is fundamental to all his preaching (see Lk 3: 7-ff).
It is as if the passage makes a great leap here: the question is left in suspension and instantaneously, the complete healing works of Jesus "for all" are set out, concluding with the gift of sight to the blind. And after the works comes the response. "Go back," Jesus says to the disciples of John: it is a mission, in the light of what has already transpired - by whatever means - to what has already been announced (see Lk 3: 8). Now the Good News is complete and happening, since the works that he does are those announced by the prophets (like a "lectio," on various passages of Isaiah; but this time it is the sight to the blind that is mentioned first). This is an unmistakable message for a man like John, to whom the Word of God has come (see Lk 3: 2). Finally, there is a blessing which might seem strange for it is expressed negatively: blessed are those who do not find in Jesus a stumbling block, an obstacle in the way faith. How can we understand this? Certainly, it is a blessing further than the message of the Baptist, and is addressed to the listener to the Word.

Meditatio

The context of this text is already indicated to us the relationship between grace and responsibility, between the initiative of God and what is responded to in us. God calls and loves first but wants a free and responsible assent: such a response is possible because God loves us first.
The fact that the disciples come into play at this point shows that John is not just interested in the present moment, but also the "spiritual decendency" of the movements for whom John is an exponent. Already at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry two disciples of the Baptist become his disciples (see Jn 1:37), and even Paul some years afterwards encounters individuals who have received the baptism of John (see Acts 19: 1-7).
At the heart of this passage is the theme of fulfilled waiting, according to the God's plan, announced and not simply compiled by the prophets of Israel. Even the Word of God does not diminish and lessen the seriousness of the God who loves and offers in his Son mercy and nearness - a possibility to receive with faith just as the healing of the blind suggests. And it is faith that leads to blessedness. That which is proclaimed by Jesus at the end of the passage is understood only if one considers the weight of the responsibility on the part of the observer, where it risks giving scandal; it is then necessary to reflect, casting aside human pretensions and prejudices, in order to freely open oneself with simplicity to what God in Jesus is doing. It is the logic of the Reign of God, that it exceeds the heroism of John (Lk 2: 28).

We Must Ask Ourselves:

- Do we live the Word as the dynamic of conversion?

- Do we read the signs of the living presence of God even in our own times?
- Do we actively trust in the Gospel, as true disciples?

Oratio

Give us, Lord, eyes to see and ears to hear.
Give us, Lord, the courage always to seek the truth and to desire your revelation in prayer.
Give us, Lord, wisdom to walk with others, with those who have understood your ways and who seek to find your presence.

Contemplatio

This passage of the Gospel invites us to recognize the style of Jesus: patient, welcoming, enlightening.
Listening to the Word requires an overall vision of what has been revealed, without being too strict about it: for in each situation Jesus brings enlightenment.
It invites us moreover to know how to read the action of God in the world; that is, to be open to the "signs of the times."

Thursday, December 17, 2026

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 a bit what you want us to be, like your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 1: 1-17

Roll of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers, Judah fathered Perezand Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse; and Jesse fathered King David.
David fathered Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa, Asa fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, Joram fathered Uzziah,

Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah, Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah; and Josiah fathered Jechoniah and his brothers. Then the deportation to Babylon took place. After the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor, Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud, Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob; and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesuswho is called Christ.
The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Abraham to David; fourteen from David to the Babylonian deportation; and fourteen from the Babylonian deportation toChrist.

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. Itis surprising that Matthew also indicates the names of five women among the ancestorsof 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 whichthe Gospel of Matthew leaves for us to answer.
- In the life of the four women, companions of Mary, there is something abnormal. Thefour of them are foreigners, they conceived their sons outside the normal canons and donot respond to the requirements of the Laws of purity of the time of Jesus. Tamar, a Canaanite, widow, she disguised herself as a prostitute to oblige the Patriarch Judah tobe faithful to the law, to do his duty and give her a son (Gn 28: 1-30). Rahab, a Canaanite from Jericho, was a prostitute who helped the Israelites enter into the Promised Land (Jos 2: 1-21). Ruth, a Moabite, widow, poor, chose to remain with Naomi and to adhereto the People of God (Rt 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 (Rt 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 traditionalnorms. 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 therigidity of the norms.

- The calculation of 3 X 14 generations (Mt 1: 17) has a symbolical significance. Threeis 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

- Which is the message which you discover in the genealogy of Jesus? Have you found a response which Matthew leaves for us to answer?
- The companions of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, are very different from what we imagined them. Which is the conclusion which 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)

Friday, December 18, 2026

3rd Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

Lord, faithful God,
in Jesus You have given us someone taken from our human flesh and blood, a man, yet Your Son, through whom You want to restore integrity and fidelity among us.
Help us to give with Him, to You, and also to one another," the proper and adequate response of faithful, serving love, which You expect from Your people.
Be our God for ever through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Matthew 1: 18-25

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. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. 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. 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."
Now all this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: "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'."
When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife into his home.

Reflection

- In Luke's Gospel, the story of the infancy of Jesus (chapters 1 and 2 of Luke) centers around Mary. However, in the Gospel of Matthew, the infancy of Jesus (chapters 1 and 2 of Matthew) centers around Joseph, the promised spouse of Mary. Joseph was a descendant of David. Through him, Jesus belongs to the line of David. Thus, in Jesus, the promises made by God to David and his descendants are fulfilled.
- As seen in yesterday's Gospel relating to the genealogy of Jesus, there was something unusual in the marital unions of the five women mentioned. Today's Gospel shows Mary to be something of a companion to these women. Her union with Joseph is also abnormal, and contrary to the laws of the time, because she was pregnant before living with Joseph. Neither the people, nor the future husband, knew the origin of this pregnancy. If Joseph had the same idea of justice as held by the scribes and Pharisees, he would have denounced Mary. The penalty she would have suffered would have been death by stoning.
- Joseph, however, shows a different manner of justice. He practiced what Jesus would later teach, namely, that "if your uprightness does not surpass that of the Scribes and Pharisees you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven" (Mt 5:20). For this reason, Joseph, not understanding the facts and not wanting to repudiate Mary, decided to leave her in secret.
- In the bible, the discovery of God's call takes place in different ways. Joseph succeeded in seeing the significance of what was taking place in Mary by means of a dream. In his sleep, an angel uses the bible to clarify the origin of Mary's pregnancy. It came from the action of the Spirit of God.
- When everything was clear for Mary, she says "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word!" When everything was clear for Joseph, he takes Mary as his spouse and they went to live together. Thanks to the justice of Joseph, Mary was not put to death and Jesus continued to live in her womb.

Personal Questions

- In the eyes of the scribes, the justice of Joseph would be disobedience. Is there a message for us in this?
- How do you discover the call of the Word of God in your life?

Concluding Prayer

For God 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. (Ps 72:12-13)

Saturday, December 19, 2026

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.
Sometime 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)

Sunday, December 20, 2026

Fourth Sunday 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 forever 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 invitattion.
- 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)

Monday, December 21, 2026

Fourth Week of Advent

Opening Prayer

God, we tend to lose ourselves in the hustle and bustle of the day, in our work and in our petty worries.
Give us the freshness of heart to seek the things that matter, those that make our lives deeply human, and at the same time open us to Your world and to Your values.
Make us long to encounter You with joy, that we may discover again the quality of gratuitous giving, of respect, and of carefree, self-forgetting love, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Gospel Reading – Luke 1: 39-45

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah.

She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now it happened that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.
She gave a loud cry and said, “Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honored with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made to her by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

Reflection

- Luke stresses the readiness of Mary in serving, in being a *handmaid*. The angel speaks about the pregnancy of Elizabeth, and immediately Mary rises and sets out as quickly as she can to go and help her. From Nazareth to the house of Elizabeth there were more than 100 km, at least four days of traveling! There were no buses or trains. Mary begins to *serve* and fulfills her mission on behalf of the people of God.
- Elizabeth represents the Old Testament, which was about to end. Mary represents the New Testament. The Old Testament accepts the New one with gratitude and trust, recognizing in it God’s gift which is going to be realized and is going to satisfy people’s expectations. In the encounter of the two women the gift of the Spirit is manifested. The child leapt with joy in Elizabeth’s womb. This is Elizabeth’s faith- filled reading of things.
- The Good News of God reveals His presence in the most common things of human life: two housewives who visit each other to help one another. Visit, joy, pregnancy, children, mutual help, house, family: Luke wants us and the community to see precisely this, and to discover in this, God’s presence.
- Elizabeth says to Mary: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!” To this day, these words form part of the most prayed prayer in the whole world: “*The Hail Mary*”.
- “And blessed is she who has believed that the promise made to her by the Lord would be fulfilled”. This is the Elizabeth’s praise of Mary and the message of Luke for the community: to believe in the Word of God, because the Word of God has the power to fulfill all that it proclaims. It is a creative Word. It generates new life in the womb of the Virgin, and in the hearts of people who accept it with faith.
- Mary and Elizabeth already knew one another. In this encounter, they discover in each other a mystery which they had not known as yet, and which fills them with great joy. Today, we also meet people who surprise us because of the wisdom they possess and the witness of faith that they give. Has something similar ever happened to you? Have you met people who have surprised you? What prevents us from discovering and living the joy of God’s presence in our life?

- The attitude of Mary before the Word expresses the ideal which Luke wants to communicate to the community: do not close yourselves off, but get out of yourselves, be attentive to the real needs of people and try to help others as far as possible according to their need.

Personal Questions

- Putting myself in the place of Mary and Elizabeth: am I able to perceive and experience the presence of God in the most simple and common things in everyday life?
- Elizabeth's praise of Mary: "You have believed!" Her husband had difficulty believing what the angel was telling him. What about me?

Concluding Prayer

We are waiting for Yahweh; He is our help and our shield, for in Him our hearts rejoice, in His holy name we trust. (Ps 33: 20-21)

Tuesday, December 22, 2026

Fourth 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 with favor on his lowly servant. Yes, from now on 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 up 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 of mercy He made to our ancestors –to Abraham and to His descendants forever.
Mary stayed with her about three months and then returned 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 gaze of God, full of mercy. Because of this, she sings joyfully: "I rejoice in God, my Savior".
- Luke 1: 51-53: Afterwards she sings of 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 up 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 the expression of His fidelity to the promises made to Abraham. The Good News is not seen as a reward because of the observance of the Law, but rather as an expression of the goodness and fidelity of God to His promises. This is what Paul taught the Galatians and the Romans.

> *"The song of Mary is the oldest Advent hymn. It is at once the most passionate, the wildest, one might even say the most revolutionary Advent hymn ever sung. This is not the gentle, tender, dreamy Mary whom we sometimes see in paintings....This song has none of the sweet, nostalgic, or even playful tones of some of our Christmas carols. It is instead a hard, strong, inexorable song about the power of God and the powerlessness of humankind."*
>
> *(The German theologian Dietrich Bonheoffer, who was executed by the Nazis, in a sermon during Advent 1933.)*

Personal Questions

- The canticles are the thermometer of the life of the community. They reveal the degree of consciousness and commitment. Examine the canticles of your community.
- Analyze the social conscience which comes from Mary's Canticle. In the 20th century after Christ, it is said that this Canticle was censored 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)

Wednesday, December 23, 2026

Fourth 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 Judea. 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 plan. What God begins in the Old Testament starts to be realized through them. This is why, in these two chapters, Luke presents many facts and people of the Old Testament and succeeds in imitating the style of the Old Testament. This is in order to show that with the birth of these two little boys history makes a 180 degree turn. The time of the fulfilment of the promises of God begins through John and Jesus, 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 barren. Just as God had pity on Sarah (Gn 16: 1; 17: 17; 18: 12), on Rachel (Gen 29: 31) and on Anna (1Sam 1: 2, 6, 11) transforming the sterility into fecundity, he also had pity on Elizabeth and she conceived a son. Elizabeth hid herself for five months. When, after the five months, people could see in Elizabeth’s body God’s goodness toward her, all rejoiced with her. This community, in which all got involved in the life of others, both in joy as in sorrow, is the environment in which John and Jesus were born, grew and received their formation. Such an environment marks the personality of a person for their whole life. 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 like 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 name for 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 decide on 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. When a person departs from the normal custom of the place, she is criticized. Elizabeth does not follow the custom 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 surrounded 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 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. He is like a person who uses X-Rays which register what the human eye cannot see. Luke reads the facts with the X-Ray of faith which reveals what the human eye cannot perceive.
- Luke 1: 64-66: 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 people in the Old Testament who had an important role in the realization of God’s plan and whose childhood seemed to be marked by the privileged destiny which they would have: Moses (Ex 2: 1-10), Samson (Judg 13: 1-4 and 13: 24-25), and Samuel (1Sam 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 of stories today. They are, rather, a mirror to help the readers discover that John and Jesus came to fulfill 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, he 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 attitudes of Elizabeth and Zechariah, of Mary and Joseph, Luke presents a model of how to convert oneself to believing in the New one which is being formed.

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. (Ps 25: 10, 14)

Thursday, December 24, 2026

Fourth 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)

Friday, December 25, 2026

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 l*ogos* 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.

Saturday, December 26, 2026

St. Stephen, the First Martyr

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)

Sunday, December 27, 2026

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Opening Prayer

O God, our Creator and Father, You willed that Your Son, generated before the dawn of the world, should become a member of the human family. Rekindle in us an appreciation for the gift of life, so that parents may participate in the fruitfulness of Your love, old people may pass on to young ones their mature wisdom, and children may grow in wisdom, piety and grace, all giving praise to Your holy name. Through Christ our Lord.

Reading: Luke 2: 22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."
Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel."

And His father and His mother marveled at what was said about Him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."
And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years from her virginity, and as a widow till she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she gave thanks to God, and spoke of Him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.
And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town, Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon Him.

A Moment of Prayerful Silence

- that the Word of God may dwell in us and that we may allow it to enlighten our lives;
- that before we share any comments, the very light of the Word may shine with the mystery of the living presence of the Lord.

Some Questions

to help us in our personal reflection.

- Why should Jesus, Son of the Most High, and His mother Mary, conceived without sin, obey the prescriptions of Moses? Maybe because Mary was not yet aware of her innocence and holiness? Would He be be seen as part of the community if He did not take part in the rituals of the community?
- Is there special significance in the words and attitudes of Simeon and the prophetess Anna? Do their actions and joy recall the style of the ancient prophets?
- How can we explain this "sword" that pierces: is it a rending of consciences before the challenges and richness of Jesus? Or is it only the inner pains of the Mother?
- Can this scene mean anything to parents today: for the religious formation of their children; for the plan that God has for each of their children; for the fears and sufferings that parents carry in their hearts when they think of the time when their children grow up?

A Key to the Reading

To go deeper into the text.

- “As laid down in the law of Moses and the Lord.” This is a kind of refrain repeated several times. Luke mixes two prescriptions without making any distinction. The purification of the mother was foreseen in Leviticus (Lv 12: 2-8) and was to take place forty days after the birth. Until then, the woman could not approach sacred places, and the ceremony was accompanied by the gift of a small animal. But the consecration of the first-born was prescribed in Exodus (Ex 13: 11-16) and was considered a kind of "ransom" in memory of the saving action of God when He liberated the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. For this, the offering was also a small animal. In all of this scene, the parents seem to be in the process of presenting or offering their son, as was done, with sacrifices and Levites, while through the persons of Simeon and Anna, it seems rather God who offers or presents the son for the salvation of people.
- Simeon and Anna: these are figures full of symbolic value. Their role is one of recognition that comes from both the enlightenment and action of the Spirit and a life lived in expectation and faith. Simeon is especially defined as *prodekòmenos*, one entirely absorbed in waiting and one who goes forward to welcome. He, too, appears to be obedient to the law, the law of the Spirit, who leads him towards the child in the temple. The canticle he proclaims defines his pro-existentia: he has lived in order to come to this moment and now he withdraws so that others may see the light and the salvation to come for Israel and the pagans. Anna completes the picture, by her very age (symbolic value: 84 equals 7x12, the twelve tribes of Israel; or 84 – 7 = 77, double perfection), but above all, by her way of living (fasting and praying) and by her proclamation to all who "looked forward". She is led by the Spirit of prophecy, docile and purified in her heart. She belongs to the smallest of the tribes, that of Asher, a sign that the small and fragile are those more disposed to recognize Jesus, the Savior. Both of these old persons – who look like an original couple – are symbols of the best of Judaism, faithful and meek Jerusalem, that awaits and rejoices and from now on allows the new light to shine.
- A sword will pierce: generally, these words are interpreted as meaning that Mary will suffer, a drama made visible in Our Lady of Sorrows. Rather, we need to see the Mother as a symbol of Israel. Simeon feels the drama of his people who will be deeply torn by the living and sharp word of the Redeemer (cf Lk 12: 51-53). Mary represents the path: she must trust, but will go through times of pain and darkness, struggles and painful silences. The story of the suffering Messiah will be painful for all, even for the mother. One does not follow the new light of the whole world without paying the cost, and without being always born again from on high and in newness. But these images of the "sword that pierces", of the child who will "trip" and shake hearts from their lethargy, are not to be separated from the meaningful action of the two old persons: the one, Simeon, takes the child in his arms to show that faith is a meeting and an embrace, not an idea or theory; the other, Anna, takes on the role of proclaiming and enkindles a bright light in the hearts of all who "looked forward" to Him.

- Daily life, an epiphany of God: finally, it is interesting to note that the whole passage emphasizes the situation simply and humbly: the young couple with the child in their arms, the old man who rejoices and embraces, the old lady who prays and proclaims, and those listening who appear to be indirectly involved. At the end of the passage, we also get a glimpse of the village of Nazareth, of the growth of the child in a normal context, an impression of a child extraordinarily gifted with wisdom and goodness. The theme of wisdom, woven into the fabric of normal life and growth in a village context, leaves the story as if in suspense, and it will be taken up again with the theme of the wisdom of the boy among the doctors in the temple. Indeed, this is the episode that immediately follows (Lk 2: 41-52).

Psalm 122

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord!"
Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!
Jerusalem, built as a city which is bound firmly together, to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. There thrones for judgment were set, the thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem! "May they prosper who love you! Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers!"
For my brethren and companions' sake I will say, "Peace be within you!"
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good.

Final Prayer

Father, we praise You and we bless You because Your Son, born of woman by the working of the Holy Spirit, born under the law, has ransomed us from the law, and You have filled our life with light and new hope. May our families welcome and remain faithful to Your designs, may they help and sustain in their children the new dreams and enthusiasm, wrap them in tenderness when they are fragile, educate them in love for You and for all creatures. All honor and glory to You, Father. Amen.

Monday, December 28, 2026

The Holy Innocents, Martyrs

Gospel Reading: Mt 2: 13-18

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you.
Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.

He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled: “Out of Egypt I called my son.”
When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious.
He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi.
Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

> A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more.

Lectio

Through the departure of the Magi, this text is connected to four passages that have preceded it regarding the story of their visit. The following context covers a period of many years following the death of Herod and also telling of the return of Joseph, Mary and Jesus to Palestine and their settling down in Nazareth.
The text of the the infancy narrative according to Matthew is contrasted with what appears in the account of the slavery in Egypt and the Exodus. This is a combination of different elements: the name of Joseph which recalls the son of Jacob who went down to Egypt, the massacre of the children, and the return from Egypt.
It is an angel of the Lord who comes to Joseph. He finds himself in danger, and makes the flight into a land that, at that time, was one of the outlets for Hebrew emigration. This warning came in a dream and it points to a particular revelation, perhaps more hidden and requiring deeper consideration. This would again testify to the characteristic wisdom of Mary's spouse. The flight of Joseph, the child, and the mother has a temporal characteristic: it happens at night.
We find two Old Testament citations, which throw light on the events being recounted. Hosea and Jeremiah are cited. After the first citation, short and to the point, the scene moves to Herod who orders the systematic killing of the children of Bethlehem and its surroundings. This agrees with other historical sources that describe him as a ruler without scruples, ready to kill even his own children to stay in power. The final Old Testament citation, which is much longer, closes the section. It takes up the lament of the prophet Jeremiah regarding the Assyrian deportation; the Evangelist locates the slaughter that takes place at the very heart of the suffering people of God.

Meditatio

Recalling the experience of exile and slavery of the people of Egypt and their return to their homeland also recalls the Passover of the Hebrews, thus opening the passage to its greater meaning.
Furthermore, the perspective given by the text underlines the accomplishment of the Word of God within human experience, even in those people who are the cruelest.

From this emerges the readiness of God to protect the gift given to humankind throughout history: His own Son. But the Son of God is not preserved from pain, a reason for us to consider the future Easter event. Jesus is saved at this moment so that He can announce the Word in the future in order to give life when the time comes, while the protector is Joseph, a wise man, who knows how to listen (see Mt 1:20 & 2:19) and act accordingly.
Herod accomplishes his slaughter, driven by his fear of losing his power and infuriated by the failure of his attempted deception of the Magi. The text expresses it as if it was he who was deceived, and thus it shows the evil reasoning of power, its arrogance that believes that the one who opposes it is always wrong.
So we are drawn to ask ourselves why God allows all this. Perhaps this question may reveal our involvement: our greed and thirst for power, the roots of cruelty that history experiences in every age. God answers the question regarding the "why of evil", and He does it, not with words, but through incarnation of this in our history, thus establishing a history of salvation.
That is why Easter, with its light, is on the horizon at Christmas.

Oratio

So that we might learn from and listen to the Word and put it into practice. For all those who are forced to flee their homeland.
So that we might be aware of the struggles brought about by every form of greed and power seeking, and thus be protected from it.
For all the wounded children of today, the hungry, child-soldiers, the sexually exploited, the sexually abused.

Contemplatio

The text invites us to look into history with the eyes of faith, a history God has chosen to be present in, even beyond all our imagining. At the same time, God is inviting us to take responsibility for those who, for different reasons, suffer persecution and displacement.

Tuesday, December 29, 2026

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 Savior and Lord, now and forever.

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 serve, more than everything else, as a mirror in which the converted Christians from paganism discover that Christ had come to fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament and to respond to the more profound aspirations of the human heart. They are, then, a 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 was a source of great suffering and pain. In 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 revolves around the birth of the two children: John and Jesus. These two chapters make us feel the sense of the Gospel of Luke. In them, the environment is one of tenderness and praise. From beginning to end, there is praise and singing because the mercy of God has finally been revealed in Jesus. He fulfills the promises made to the Fathers. God fulfills them on behalf of the poor, the

anawim, like Elizabeth and Zechariah, Mary and Joseph, Anna and Simeon, and 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 subject to the Law, to redeem the subjects of the Law so that we could receive adoption as sons" (Gal 4: 4-5).
- The story of Simeon teaches that hope will be realized some day if not immediately. 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 children, he sees the realization of his hope and 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 today's Gospel, we have the preferred themes of Luke which are an insistence on the action of the Holy Spirit, prayer and the prayer environment, continuous attention on the action and participation of the women, and a constant concern for the poor and the message for the poor.

Personal Questions

- Would you be able to perceive the light to enlighten the nations in a poor child ?
- 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)

Wednesday, December 30, 2026

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 (Judg 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)

Thursday, December 31, 2026

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)