

DAILY INSPIRATIONS of FAITH



A Season of Prayer Advent to Epiphany 2020-21

Holy Name of Mary Parish - Hunters Hill, NSW

A Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus, my Saviour and Master,
model of all perfection,
I resolve—and will try this day—to imitate Your example,
to be like You

- mild, humble, chaste, charitable, and loving.

I will strengthen my efforts to see Your image
in all those I meet and deal with this day,
and to be as helpful to them as I would be to You.

I resolve this day to avoid all those sins
which I have committed before in my life
and which I now sincerely desire to give up forever.

Amen.

Tips for using Daily Inspirations of Faith:

Establish a regular and comfortable time and place for your devotions. Before you begin, close your eyes. Settle your thoughts. Breathe deeply.

Read the scripture passage and meditation. Think about the author's story and how it might connect with your life. What is God saying to you?

Pray. Offer God your thanksgivings and petitions. Open your heart and mind to listen to God.

If you wish to take it further:

Reflect on the other Bible passages appointed for the day. These are noted at the bottom of each page. Try writing your own meditation. Compare it to the day's 'Daily Inspiration of Faith' offering. What might the Spirit be saying to you through both meditations? You can read the day's readings here: www.usccb.org - just click the date on the calendar.

Share a meditation with a family member or friend on Facebook or Twitter.

Use 'Daily Inspirations of Faith' in a Bible Study or prayer group.

Introduction from from Fr Kevin

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

No one needs reminding that our lives have been turned sideways this year due to the coronavirus pandemic. The changed circumstances have called us to re-imagine our lives in many ways. Neighbourhoods have discovered each other afresh, friendships have been formed stranding generations, care for each other has become more apparent and people have been searching for meaning in ways not seen in recent times.

Many people have been looking to the Church, often via online services and commentaries to help them make some sense of this strange and challenging time.

Once again we have another instrument, this lovely Advent booklet to support you through the sacred Advent season. May you find in it a blessing and source of inspiration and hope.

My thanks to Nicholas Chaplin who has once again provided this resource and to the other parishioners who have contributed to these pages.

A blessed Advent to you all.

Father Kevin Bates sm, OAM

Parish Priest

SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER, 2020

First Sunday of Advent

Year B

Matthew 13: 33 "You do not know when the time will come."

Today's Gospel urges us to stay alert as we await the coming of the Lord. Advent is the season of waiting. We place ourselves in the position of those who, over the centuries, waited for the coming of the Messiah. With them, we cry out, "How long, O Lord?"

Though Jesus fulfilled the expectations of his people, nevertheless we still wait. The liturgy states it very clearly: "as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." In one of the Eucharistic prayers, we find, "as we await his coming in glory..." The Creed says, "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." And the very last words of the New Testament are "Maranatha, Come Lord Jesus."

What do we make of all of this? Do we really think that he is going to come again and walk on the earth? We stay awake in our waiting if we pray on a regular basis; if we educate ourselves in the faith; if we participate in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist; if we perform the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; if we become people of love.

Reading 1: Isaiah 63: 16-17; 19; 64: 2-7

Responsorial Psalm: PS 80: 2-3; 15-16; 18-19

"Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved."

Reading 2: I Corinthians 1: 3-9

Gospel: Mark 13: 33-37

PRAY for to be always alert to the coming of the Lord.

MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER, 2020

Matthew 4:19 “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men”

Today’s Gospel reports the Lord’s calling of his first disciples. What is it about this scene that is so peaceful and right? Somehow it gets at the very heart of Jesus’ life and work, revealing what he is about. He comes into the world as the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, a representative from the community which is God—and thus his basic purpose is to draw the world into community around him.

“He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” There is so much packed into that simple line. Notice the way that God acts. He is direct, in your face; he does the choosing. Jesus is not offering a doctrine, a theology, or a set of beliefs. He is offering himself: become my disciple, apprentice to me.

“And I will make you fishers of men.” This is one of the best one-liners in Scripture. God is the Creator, the one who makes us from nothing. And what he makes us is always a reflection of himself: a fisher of men.

Reading I: Romans 10: 9-18

Responsorial Psalm: PS 19: 8-11;

“The judgments of the Lord are true, and all of them are just”

Gospel: Matthew 4: 18-22

PRAY for the joy that the gift of faith brings.

TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER, 2020

Isaiah 11:3 “Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide”

God’s way of being and judgement is, as we would expect, superior to anything we can manage here on Earth.

Our politicians, for example, no matter what party they represent, generally do things that will look good or sound good to the voters, rather than focus totally on what will be good for the country and its citizens - even if it doesn’t sound optimal at the time. This sort of behaviour is mirrored in state and local government, as well as on company boards and within company management.

We are not blameless either. In our own lives, we judge others frequently on appearance and act on hearsay that could be simply the outcome of gossip. If only we could live the way God guides us. Only good can come of doing this as we leave the judgement to God and only speak the truth.

This Advent, let’s try to put away our need to blame, our desire to judge, our liking for gossip, and live as our Lord desires of us.

Reading: Isaiah 11: 1-10

Responsorial Psalm: PS 72: 1-2; 7-8; 12-13; 17

“Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever”

Gospel: Luke 10: 21-24

PRAY for the strength to live our lives with complete honesty

WEDNESDAY 2 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 15: 31 “The crowds were amazed when they saw the blind able to see”

Today's gospel says a lot about the times that will come with the return of Jesus, our Lord. At that time, that was foreseen in the revelation, there will be many in the crowds who will finally be able to see.

Imagine it - immediately no more disability. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the mute will speak, the lame will walk. Those that were not previously afflicted by a disability will be the most amazed as God cures all in his return to gather his people together in his company.

At this time the rules of society will no longer matter. The political forces will be worthless. The subjective views that we held on all human matters will fritter away like brittle pieces of paper. The wealthy will voluntarily leave their material possessions and follow the previously marginalised who will be the first to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus told many parables about the attributes of the Kingdom of Heaven and how we should 'keep our lamps lit' and be on watch for the return of the Lord. Let us always remember these stories that remain so importantly relevant for us today as each day we are indeed closer to the day of the final return of Jesus.

Reading: Isaiah 25: 6-10

Responsorial Psalm: PS 23: 1-6

“I shall live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life”

Gospel: Matthew 15: 29-37

PRAY for those that use their gifts to help others.

THURSDAY 3 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 7:21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of heaven"

Today's Gospel asks how we apply the Lord's teaching. "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse." This is the heart of it: if you are rooted in God, then you can withstand anything, precisely because you are linked to that power which is creating the cosmos. You will be blessed at the deepest place, and nothing can finally touch you.

But the one who does not take Jesus' words to heart "will be like the fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined." When the inevitable trials come, the life built on pleasure, money, power, or fame will give way.

So the question is a simple one: Where do you stand? How goes it with your heart? On what, precisely, is the whole of your life built?

Reading: Isaiah 26: 1-6

Responsorial Psalm: PS 118: 1; 8-9; 19-21; 25-27

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord"

Gospel: Matthew 7: 21; 24-27

PRAY for those with illness today.

FRIDAY 4 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 9:28 “Do you believe that I can do this?”

The miracles of Jesus are very much linked to faith. When people truly believe that he is the son of God, he is able to heal them. On the other hand, when Jesus was unable to inspire the people of Nazareth - his own hometown - it is said that he was unable to do many miracles there due to the people's lack of faith.

Another observation about faith and the acts of Jesus is to consider the question people ask frequently today, which is 'why are there no miracles seen today like those we read about in the Bible?'. The fact is, these miracles are all around us if we could only look and listen for them. The first miracle is that Jesus saved us through his taking on all our sin as he died on the cross. His rising again delivered us a divine miracle in everlasting life with our Father in heaven.

Meanwhile, many miracles happen through our lives by the grace of God. It's easy to take them for granted, but try and remember those very special times when something happened that was perhaps a little surprising or pleasantly unexpected. Miracles don't have to be life-changing, but they are life-giving. It's not important to notice them, but just know that they happen and enrich our lives and support our faith.

Reading: Isaiah 29: 17-24

Responsorial Psalm: PS 27: 1, 4, 13-14

“The Lord is my light and my salvation”

Gospel: Matthew 9: 27-31

PRAY for our beautiful environment today.

SATURDAY 5 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 9:37 “The harvest is abundant but the labourers are few”

Today's Gospel from Saint Matthew is a portrait of the Church. It shows us what Jesus wants his followers to do and how to do it. We are a missionary Church. We are sent by the Lord to spread his word and do his work. The Christian Gospel is just not something that we are meant to cling to for our own benefit. Rather, it is like seed that we are meant to give away.

We do this work together, with others, in community. Ministers need people to support them, pray for them, talk to them, challenge them. Francis of Assisi had an experience of God and then, within months, gathered people around him; Dominic, from the beginning, had brothers in his work; and Mother Teresa attracted a number of her former students to join her in her mission. We don't go it alone.

And prayer is not incidental to ministry. It is not decorative. It is the lifeblood of the Church's efforts. Without it, nothing will succeed; without it, no ministers will come forward. At all points, pray, pray, pray.

Reading: Isaiah 30: 19-21; 23-26

Responsorial Psalm: PS 147: 1-6

“Blessed are all who wait for the Lord”

Gospel: Matthew: 9: 35-10: 1; 5-8

PRAY for the victims of natural disasters today.

SUNDAY 6 DECEMBER, 2020

Second Sunday of Advent

Mark 1:7 "One mightier than I is coming after me"

Today we are compelled to come to grips with the great Advent figure of John the Baptist. It's really impossible to grasp the significance of Jesus without passing through the cleansing bath of John the Baptist. He provides a lens through which Jesus is properly interpreted.

John, we learn today, made his appearance as a preacher in the desert of Judea. Deserts are places of simplicity and poverty, places where distractions and attachments are eliminated—and hence where the voice of God can be heard. Wealth, pleasure, power, honor—and all of their avatars and priests—are shouting at us, luring us, tempting us. But what is God saying? We have to go to these silent and deserted places in order to hear.

What is the first thing that the prophet says? We read in another Gospel that he says, "Reform your lives!" In other words, "Repent!" This word cuts to the heart of every one of us, precisely because we all know that our lives are not where they are supposed to be. We have all fallen short of the glory of God; we have all fallen into patterns of self-absorption and addiction. So let us hear John's word today: "Repent!"

Reading 1: Isaiah 40: 1-5; 9-11

Responsorial Psalm: 85: 9-14

"Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation."

Reading 2: 2 Peter 3: 8-14

Gospel: Mark 1: 1-8

PRAY for patience as we manage our way through the pandemic.

MONDAY 7 DECEMBER, 2020

Luke 5:26 "Then astonishment seized them all and they glorified God "

Our Gospel for today tells that wonderful story of the healing of the paralytic. People gather by the dozens to hear Jesus, crowding around the doorway of the house. They bring him a paralysed man, and because there is no way to get him through the door, they climb up on the roof and open a space to lower him down.

Can I suggest a connection between this wonderful narrative and our present evangelical situation? There are an awful lot of Catholics who are paralysed, unable to move, frozen in regard to Christ and the Church. This might be from doubt, from fear, from anger, from old resentment, from ignorance, or from self-reproach. Some of these reasons might be good; some might be bad.

Your job, as a believer, is to bring others to Christ. How? A word of encouragement, a challenge, an explanation, a word of forgiveness, a note, a phone call. We notice the wonderful urgency of these people as they bring the sick man to Jesus. Do we feel the same urgency within his Mystical Body today?

Reading I: Isaiah 35: 1-10

Responsorial Psalm: 85: 9-14

"Our God will come to save us!"

Gospel: Luke 5: 17-26

PRAY that we can put our ego aside today

TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER, 2020

Luke 1:38 "Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord"."

In today's Gospel the angel Gabriel reveals to Mary that she will bear a Son who will reign from David's throne.

As background, note that God had promised that David's throne would last forever, but his line had apparently been broken in 587 BC. Six hundred years later Gabriel appeared to Mary, who was betrothed to a man named Joseph of the house of David.

Greeting her as "full of grace," the angel announced that she will conceive in her womb and bear a Son. "He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High." Then comes the kicker that would have taken the breath away from any first-century Jew listening to the story: "And the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end."

What seemed to have come to an end had in fact just gone underground, and was now ready to appear fully in the light. The kingly line of David was in fact unsevered, and now the full meaning of God's promise would be revealed.

Reading 1: Genesis 3: 9-15; 20

Responsorial Psalm: 98: 1-4

"Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvellous deeds."

Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38

PRAY that we can learn to put our ego aside in our dealings with others.

WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 11:30 “For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

In today’s Gospel, the Lord offers to relieve us of our burdens. He is identifying everyone who feels oppressed by the world: by sin, worries, suffering, injustice, the death of a relative or friend, our concerns with the virus, the fear of death—whatever it may be.

Relief comes when we submit to his kingship, his new way of ordering things. We are meant to imagine ourselves as pack animals who have been tied under a yoke and are under the command of a farmer. It seems rather demeaning, but this is what submission to Christ’s lordship looks like: we serve his purposes and go where he wants us to go.

Is Christ commanding your life in every detail? Is he the Lord of your family life? Of your recreational life? Of your professional life? Is he Lord of every room in your house, including the bedroom? Are you totally given over to him, under his lordship?

I know that this may sound oppressive, but remember, “My yoke is easy, and my burden light.” When we surrender to the path of love that he has laid out for us, our lives become infinitely lighter, easier, and more joyful, for we are moving with the divine purpose.

Reading: Isaiah 40: 25-31

Responsorial Psalm: PS 103: 1-4;8; 10

“O bless the Lord, my soul!”

Gospel: Matthew 11: 28-30

PRAY for the recognition of God’s love today.

THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 11:12 “the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force”

in today's Gospel Jesus says to the crowds: "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent are taking it by force."

The name of Flannery O'Connor's second novel was taken from the Douay-Rheims translation of this last line: "the violent bear it away." What do we make of this strange and famously ambiguous wording?

Many have taken it to mean that the kingdom of God is attacked by violent people, such as those who killed John the Baptist, and that they threaten to take it away. But others have interpreted it in the opposite direction, as a word of praise to the spiritually violent who manage to get into the kingdom. O'Connor herself sides with this latter group. In one of her letters, she says, "St. Thomas's gloss on this verse is that the violent Christ is here talking about represent those ascetics who strain against mere nature. St. Augustine concurs."

The "mere nature" that classical Christianity describes is a fallen nature, one that tends away from God and his demands. The "violent," on this reading, are those spiritually heroic types who resist the promptings and tendencies of this nature and seek to discipline it in order to enter into the kingdom of God.

Reading: Isaiah 41 13-20;

Responsorial Psalm: PS 145: 1; 9-13

"The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger, and of great kindness."

Gospel: Matthew: 11: 11-15

PRAY for more humility today.

FRIDAY 11 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 11: 16 “To what shall I compare this generation?”

Here we have the Pharisees comparing the eating habits of John the Baptist, who fasted, and Jesus, who dined with sinners. In the carefully stratified society of Jesus' time, a righteous person would never associate with the unrighteous, for fear of becoming unclean.

But here is Jesus, scandalising everyone because he does indeed break down these barriers. How would you feel if you saw me socialising with prostitutes and drug-dealers, eating and drinking with terrorists? Would it shock you, dismay you, disappoint you? But this is what Jesus did, precisely because he was the Incarnation of the God who aggressively seeks out the lost.

God looks for us, comes running after us, never lets go, never relents, never gives up. The more we run, the more he runs after us; the more we hide, the more he looks; the more we resist, the more he persists. God loves sinners and associates with them.

Reading 1: Isaiah 48: 17-19;

Responsorial Psalm: PS 1: 1-4; 6

“Those who follow you, Lord, will have the light of life”

Gospel: Matthew 11: 16-19

PRAY for understanding of others in all we do today.

SATURDAY 12 DECEMBER, 2020

Luke 1:28 “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.”

This significant passage within the Advent story evokes several different emotions which affected Mary. The sheer weight of the angel’s message would have been enough to cause her concern, to say nothing of the fear, anxiety, and apprehension of what was to come.

And yet, amidst this tumult of feelings Mary kept her composure long enough to recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit. She willingly gave her consent, her fiat, accepting, with complete faith and trust, that task which God asked of her.

This passage from Luke provides us with an opportunity to revisit how we have answered God’s call and the way we might proceed. Amidst our brokenness and fear, God still calls us to holiness and uses our Blessed Mother as a guide to our continued relationship with Him.

Reading: Zechariah 2: 14-17;

Responsorial Psalm: Judith 13: 18-19

“You are the highest honour of our race”

Gospel: Luke: 1-26-38

PRAYER: Come, Lord Jesus, help us to value the gift of belonging to your Kingdom.

SUNDAY 13 DECEMBER, 2020

Third Sunday of Advent

John 1: 23 “I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘make straight the way of the Lord,’”

Today’s Gospel presents John the Baptist as the messenger preparing the way for Jesus. John speaks: “I am ‘the voice of one crying out in the desert, make straight the way of the Lord.’” He is saying that his job is to prepare for the mighty coming of the Lord. He is to build the highway that will facilitate his arrival. A change is coming, a revolution is on the way, a disaster (the destruction of the old) is about to happen. Prepare the way of the Lord.

And what is the manner of preparation? It is a baptism of repentance. Baptism — an immersion in water — reminded first-century Jews of the exodus, passing through the Red Sea, leaving the ways of slavery behind. God would humble the powers of their time as he once humbled Egypt and Babylon.

And repentance? It simply means going beyond the mind that you have. How our minds are conditioned by the fallen world! How our expectations are shaped, stunted by what has gone before. It’s time, John is saying, for a new mind, a new set of eyes, a new kind of expectation.

Reading 1: Isaiah 61: 1-2; 10-11;

Responsorial Psalm: Luke 1: 46-50; 53-54

“My soul rejoices in my God”

Reading 2: 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-24

Gospel: John 1: 6-8; 19-28

PRAY for understanding of others in all we do today.

MONDAY 14 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 21:23 “By what authority are you doing these things?”

Many people don't like authorities. We rebel against them when we are children, even more so when we are teenagers, and some continue to rebel into adulthood. This of course can lead to rule breaking that goes against the judgement of society. When this happens, the authorities are human and the penalties harsh.

Is there really any forgiveness when a prisoner is released from prison? More likely relief that one less trouble-maker is required to be cared for.

Have you ever known anyone that has been in prison, and then released? How have you come to deal with these people. With respect? With disdain? Was there forgiveness in you? What we do know is that there is forgiveness for these people from God, and that is the most important thing. The authority of God is what we should all consider as we look back at perhaps something we did earlier in life. No, we didn't go to prison for it, but we still know it was wrong.

Thankfully for us, and everyone else around us, we have a God that loves and forgives us. All we have to do is seek his love and ask for his forgiveness.

Reading: Numbers 24: 2-7; 15-17

Responsorial Psalm: PS 25: 4-9

“Teach me your ways, O Lord.”

Gospel: Matthew 21: 23-27

PRAY for the opportunity for greater acts of love today.

TUESDAY 15 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 21: 31 “Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you”

Here we have the parable of the two sons, a story about obedience to God. To live the good life is not finally a matter of autonomy but of obeying commandments.

The obedience that Jesus desires is a surrender to the one who wants what is best for the surrenderer. The entire to-be of the Son is a listening to the command of the Father, and the creature, consequently, is meant to be nothing but a listening to the command of the Son.

This is why Jesus says in the Gospel of John, "You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer. . . . I have called you friends." What was lost in the Garden of Eden was friendship with God, symbolised by the easy fellowship enjoyed by Adam and Yahweh.

The whole of the biblical revelation—culminating in Jesus—could be construed as the story of God's attempt to restore friendship with the human race. In the Last Supper discourse we hear the conditions for this restoration: coinherence with God, which is tantamount to an insertion into the coinherence that God is.

Reading: Zephaniah 3: 1-2; 9-13

Responsorial Psalm: PS 34: 2-3; 6-7; 17-19; 23

“The Lord hears the cry of the poor”

Gospel: Matthew 21: 28-32

PRAY for the strength to pray often to our Lord.

WEDNESDAY 16 DECEMBER, 2020

Luke 7: 22 “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard”

In the first century at the time of Jesus, to have witnessed his miracles would have been a life-changing event. Imagine seeing this man curing the sick instantly, enabling the lame to walk, the blind to see - instantly. Incredulously, these amazing physical miracles were often met with disdain rather than amazement by the Pharisees and other people who were set on destroying the influence of Jesus.

I am always astounded at the reaction of the Pharisees etc. How could you not be simply changed as a person upon witnessing a life-long crippled person, get up and walk away having been cured by Jesus! Instead they accuse him of curing on the Sabbath! It's almost humorous. “If you are going to perform incredible feats of impossibility, then please don't do it on the Sabbath!”.

Little do many of us know, but these miracles of Jesus are continuing to this day, but like the Pharisees, we are blind to their reality. People are cured of life-threatening diseases every day. Unexplained miracles are delivered every day. Let us embrace the reality of Christ's presence in our lives through the actions of the Holy Spirit and live in God's grace as is intended.

Reading I: Isaiah 45: 6-8, 18; 21-25

Responsorial Psalm: PS 85: 9-14;

“Let the clouds rain down the Just One, and the earth bring forth a Saviour.”

Gospel: Luke 7: 18-23

PRAY for justice and peace for the world today.

THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER, 2020

Psalm 72 “Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever”

I would have to say that Psalms is the book in the Bible from which I get the most comfort and encouragement. Those who have understood Psalms best throughout church history have always been surprised at how raw and honest the psalmists are.

Athanasius, the 20th Bishop of Alexandria said that in the Psalms you find depicted all the movements of your soul, all its changes, its ups and downs, its failures and recoveries.

Psalm 72 was written by King Solomon. In a nutshell, King Solomon told the Israelites to pray that he would be a good king. On one level, Solomon's reign was just as the Israelites prayed, however, on another level, Solomon went off the rails, as we read in 1 Kings 11 - that he was a very human King who couldn't go the distance. Solomon was not to be the ultimate answer to the prayers of God's people. A better King was yet to come.

Jesus was the complete and optimal answer. Jesus, our Lord and King went the whole distance to the cross to save his subjects and now is on his royal throne in Heaven where one day all creation will bow to the Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

Amen.

Reading I: Genesis 49: 2, 8-10

Responsorial Psalm: PS 72: 1-4; 7-8, 17

“Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever

Gospel: Matthew 1: 1-17

PRAY to make Jesus the centre of our lives today.

FRIDAY 18 DECEMBER, 2020

Jeremiah 23:5 “I will raise up a righteous shoot to David”

Here is a glorious statement from God our Father. While David was raised by his human parents, the shoot of David, our Lord Jesus Christ, was raised, or to put it another way, brought into being by his holy Father through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' kinship to David is via his earthly father, Joseph. While Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Mary entered the family of David via marriage to Joseph. This is the confirmation of the direct line back to David. This is our shoot springing from the earthly family tree of David.

I love the connections between the two testaments. The promise of the old testament is brought to fruition in the new. The basis described in the old testament is affirmed and revealed in its glory in the new.

There are many examples of this as I read my Bible. Jesus is the fulfilment of all of the promises of which we read all the way back to Genesis.

Jesus remains our fulfilment now and all the way to his return.

Reading: Jeremiah 23: 5-8

Responsorial Psalm: PS 72: 1-2; 12-13; 18-19

“Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever”

Gospel: Matthew 1: 18-25

PRAY for all those who need your forgiveness today.

SATURDAY 19 DECEMBER, 2020

Judges 13:3 “An angel of the Lord appeared to the woman”

I am fortunate to be a mother of two beautiful children. There are some women, however, who have never wanted to have children, or some that have tried unsuccessfully. It is easy for us to apply our human views on these outcomes, yet, the reasons life works one way for someone and another for someone else will always remain a mystery to us.

God has a plan for all of us, and he also controls the time and order of the way our life unfolds.

Similarly, we are all blessed with different gifts. Sometimes the gifts we have don't make themselves known until later in life. It can be that we feel we have no gifts and then, an opportunity arises and we are shown that we do have gifts, such as generosity of spirit, or a gentle kindness, or an ability to befriend the friendless.

Be thankful and praise God for his grace in what he has bestowed on you today!

Reading: Judges 13: 2-7; 24-25

Responsorial Psalm: PS 71: 3-6; 16-17

“My mouth shall be filled with your praise, and I will sing your glory!”

Gospel: Luke 1: 5-25

PRAY for the continued protection of our Guardian Angels today.

SUNDAY 20 DECEMBER, 2020

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:14 “The virgin shall conceive and bear a son”

In today's Gospel of Luke, we find the Annunciation to Mary. Here is what Gabriel said to the Virgin: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus...The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

No first-century Israelite would have missed the meaning here: this child shall be the fulfilment of the promise made to King David.

And this means that the child is, in fact, the king of the world, the one who would bring unity and peace to the nations. The conviction grew upon Israel that this mysterious descendent of David would be king—not just for a time and not just in an earthly sense, but ruling forever and for all nations. This definitive king of the Jews would be king of the world. He would be our king as well.

Reading 1: 2 Samuel 7: 1-5; 8-12; 14; 16

Responsorial Psalm: PS 89: 2-5; 27; 29

“For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.”

Reading 2: Romans 16: 25-27

Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38

TELL someone about your belief in Jesus today.

MONDAY 21 DECEMBER, 2020

Luke 1: 42 “Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb”

In the eleventh chapter of the book of Revelation, the visionary sees in the heavenly place the Ark of the Covenant—that box in which the remnants of the Ten Commandments were kept, that sign of Yahweh’s presence among his people. Immediately after, we hear of a queen who is about to give birth to a son. As a dragon waits to devour the child, the mother and child are swept away, and a great war breaks out between Michael and his angels and the enemy.

This sequence is not accidental. In today’s Gospel, we see Mary as the true Ark of the Covenant. She bore in her own womb the Word made flesh and the very presence of God. When she visits her cousin Elizabeth, the infant John the Baptist leapt in his mother’s womb, doing his own version of David’s dance before the Ark.

But Mary, as both the true Ark and the Queen Mother of Israel, is also a fighter. Israel frequently brought the Ark into battle with them, and the king of Israel and his queen mother were warrior figures. Mary is all about spiritual warfare against powers and principalities.

Bishop Robert Barron notes that the terrible crisis that the Church has been passing through in the Catholic Church has been a diabolical masterpiece. It undermines the work of the Church in practically every way. So what do we do? Get in the army of Christ the Warrior-King and Mary the Warrior-Queen. Enter into the great spiritual struggle and fight to set things right—not with the puny weapons of the world but with the weapons of the Spirit.

Reading: Song of Songs 2: 8-14

Responsorial Psalm: PS 33: 2-3; 11-12; 20-21

“Exult, you just, in the Lord! Sing to him a new song”

Gospel: Luke 1: 39-45

PRAY for married couples who desire children today.

TUESDAY 22 DECEMBER, 2020

Luke 1: 46 "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord"

By far, the most important Advent figure is Mary of Nazareth, the Mother of God, for Mary sums up in her person the whole of the people Israel, the nation whose whole purpose was to prepare for the coming of the Lord. In her great Magnificat, which we hear in today's Gospel, Mary is the new Isaiah and the new Jeremiah and the new Ezekiel, for she announces with the greatest clarity and joy the coming of the Messiah.

What was only vaguely foreseen in those great prophetic figures is now in clear focus: "He has shown the strength of his arm; he has scattered the proud in their conceit; he has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent away empty. He has come to the help of his servant Israel, for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever."

There is nothing stronger or more beautiful in any of the prophets.

Reading: 1 Samuel 1: 24-28

Responsorial Psalm: 1 Samuel 2: 4-8

"My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior"

Gospel: Luke 1: 46-56

PRAY for those who have the courage of their faith.

WEDNESDAY 23 DECEMBER, 2020

Luke 1: 66 “For surely the hand of the Lord was with him”

Today's Gospel reflects on the pivotal figure of John the Baptist. It's fair to say that you cannot really understand Jesus without understanding John, which is precisely why all four gospels tell the story of John the Baptist as a kind of overture to the story of Jesus. John sums up Israel, and without the Israelite background, the story of Jesus becomes opaque.

The story of John's birth brings his parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, into focus. Both are strongly priestly people. Elizabeth is a descendant of the family of Aaron, the first priest of Israel, and Zechariah was a practicing temple priest.

What's important for our purposes is that John was of very priestly stock. So why, when we first hear of him in his adult life, is he out in the desert and not in the temple? Well, there was a long prophetic tradition that criticised the temple for its corruption. In John's time, the temple was mired in very messy, vile, and violent politics. So what is he doing in the desert? He is offering what the temple ought to be offering but wasn't, due to its corruption, namely, the forgiveness of sins.

Reading I: Malachi: 3: 1-4; 23-24

Responsorial Psalm: PS 25: 4-5; 8-10; 14

“Lift up your heads and see; your redemption is near at hand.”

Gospel: Luke 1: 57-66

PRAY for all our Parish Priests today. Thank God for their spiritual guidance.

THURSDAY 24 DECEMBER, 2020

Christmas Eve

Luke 1: 79 “To guide our feet into the path of peace”

What would it be like to be given the gift of prophecy? To know what the future holds?

I don't think I would like that personally because not only would we know what joys life on Earth has in store for us, but we would also become aware of the sorrows. We would forever be living out our lives in a manner of expectation, adjusting our behaviour to the known things to come, rather than living to the best of our ability.

Life is a gift, a present to be opened every day. Let's be thankful and grateful for what we receive.

May we accept God's blessings and learn something from those more difficult days.

Reading 1: 2 Samuel 7: 1-5; 8-12; 14; 16

Responsorial Psalm: PS 89: 2-5; 27; 29

“For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord”

Gospel: Luke 1: 67-79

PRAYER: Come, Lord Jesus, show us the Love of God.

FRIDAY 25 DECEMBER, 2020

Christmas Day

John 1:1 "In the beginning"

We are a society that needs to see in order to believe.

God knew this and so sent his only son down to us so that our sins could be forgiven and that we would have eternal life.

On this special day in the calendar, let's look around and 'see' God. You might capture him in the raucous joy of children opening presents, to in the serene nature of a cat asleep in the shade, escaping the summer heat.

Whatever you do today, or wherever you are, be merciful that he is with you and watching over you with his unique love.

Reading 1: Isaiah 52: 7-10

Responsorial Psalm: PS 98: 1-6

"All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God"

Reading 2: Hebrews 1: 1-6

Gospel: John 1: 1-18

PRAY for all Mothers today.

SATURDAY 26 DECEMBER, 2020

Matthew 10: 22 “but whoever endures to the end will be saved”

Sometimes it is hard to find the right words to say. Sometimes it is better not to speak at all. In this passage, Jesus tells us that he will help us communicate what needs to be said.

Do not be afraid to ask him in prayer. He is always with you, but especially in times of hardship, fear, and sorrow. Sometimes we do not know how to pray for the simplest things. A conversation with God is like any other conversation. We mustn't fear that “he won't know what I really mean”, or “this sounds foolish”.

God understands our needs and will deliver what we need at the appropriate time no matter how we ask. The key thing is that we do ask, and that we don't give up praying too soon.

Stand by the Lord our God, and he will stand by you.

Reading: Acts 6: 8-10; 7: 54-59

Responsorial Psalm: PS 31: 3-4; 6; 8; 16-17
“Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit”

Gospel: Matthew 10: 17-22

PRAY for Catholics to return to Church today.

SUNDAY 27 DECEMBER, 2020

Luke 2:34 “Behold, this child is destined for the fall and rise of many in Israel”

Our Gospel today celebrates the Presentation of the Lord in the temple. We are meant to understand that the glory of Yahweh is returning to the temple in the arms of Mary and Joseph, thus fulfilling one of the deepest aspirations of Israel’s people.

Now, there is more to this story than the return of the Lord to his temple. The Son of God, having taken to himself a human nature, is presented to the Father, and thereby the human race is brought back on line. This little baby is the reconciliation of divinity and humanity, is the very essence of temple sacrifice.

At the climax of his life, this baby, now come of age, would enter the temple again. This time, he would pass judgment on it and declare his own body as the new Temple. A few days later, on the cross, he would perform the final temple sacrifice, offering himself to the Father, even as he bore the sins of the human race.

The Presentation of Jesus in the temple, perfected on the cross, is re-presented every time the Mass is celebrated. The Presentation of the Lord goes on now in our churches, in our temples.

Reading: Sirach 3: 2-6; 12-14

Responsorial Psalm: PS 128: 1-5;

“Blessed are those who fear the Lord and walk in his ways”

Reading 2: Colossians 3: 12-21

Gospel: Luke 2: 22-40

PRAY for a closer relationship with God today.

MONDAY 28 DECEMBER, 2020

1 John 2:1 “But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father”

Another name for Advocate is Paraclete. The Paraclete is often depicted as a bird which, coming from Heaven, represents the Holy Spirit. If we have an active faith, the Holy Spirit lives within us and around us.

We have a Trinitarian God - The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - three in one. When praying through the Holy Spirit to Jesus, we are praying directly to God.

Jesus experienced life as a man. He experienced everything that we experience, including temptation, pain, stress, frustration and anger. Jesus is also divine. However, he physically dealt with these negative experiences as a man, while using his divinity to teach others of the realities of this world and how God the Father can bring about grace and joy if we will allow him to play a part in our lives.

If we open the door to God, he will enter into our lives and bring light and love with him. The direct line to God is through his son Jesus Christ. Let's focus on this icon of life as the year comes to an end so we can prepare for the new year with greater hope for ourselves and the world around us.

Reading: 1 John 1:5 - 2:2

Responsorial Psalm: PS 124: 2-5; 7-8

“Our soul has been rescued like a bird from the fowler's snare”

Gospel: Matthew 2: 13-18

PRAY for those blinded by earthly riches today.

TUESDAY 29 DECEMBER, 2020

1 John 2: 9 “Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness”

Saint John has an important message for us today in the first reading. We cannot have a full relationship with God if we live our lives denying our love to our friends and family. Even if we love our friends and family, and deny our love to a stranger, we are breaking God’s law.

Everyone and everything on the Earth was created by God. Consequently, if we hold a grudge, or attempt to hurt our neighbour in any way, we are really hurting our relationship with God. If we don’t show love to our neighbour, we are shunning the love of God.

What is important here, is the meaning of the word ‘neighbour’. This is anyone with whom we come into contact. We must be able to show love in all our considerations of others. In doing this, we are showing our love of God himself.

As we go through our life, it is appropriate that we are reminded of this important message regularly, as otherwise the noise of our busy lives blocks our attention and we lose the opportunity to be closer to God and his grace.

Remember to love God with all your heart, and your neighbour as well.

Reading: 1 John 2: 3-11

Responsorial Psalm: PS 96: 1-3; 5-6

“Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice!”

Gospel: Luke 2: 22-35

PRAY that we can see through our human pride today.

WEDNESDAY 30 DECEMBER, 2020

1 John 2:15 “Do not love the world or the things of the world”

John is such an astute writer. The first letter of John (the same John that wrote the fourth-Gospel, and the longest-lived apostle of Jesus Christ) offers us some simple truths from which we would hugely benefit if only we could act on the advice!

To some degree, we all love the things of this world because they are physically available to us right now. The proof of them, and the ‘good’ they bring are immediate. We don’t have to wait, we don’t have to have faith. They are there and we can benefit right now.

Yet, John is right to warn us off the cheap celebration of worldly goods. He knows where our hearts should be directed. Coveting goods that make us feel better is such a short-lived joy. Indeed, it isn’t really joy at all. It’s a temporary hit that keeps our human minds focused on the wrong things. Owning things that make us (in our own minds) superior to one another is such a weakness!

True strength comes from following the example of Jesus. His life is laid out for us in the Gospels and the key messages provided by the Gospel writers, of which John was a master. Be grateful for the faith of the apostles, and notably John. His messages are right in front of us. Let us follow his instructions, as they are instructions from God.

Reading: 1 John 2: 12-17

Responsorial Psalm: PS 96: 7-10

“Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice!”

Gospel: Luke 2: 36-40

PRAY for peace in our world today

THURSDAY 31 DECEMBER, 2020

John 1:14 "And the Word became flesh"

The Word became flesh "and we saw his glory." All the ways that the Old Testament spoke of God's involvement with the world come together in this description of Jesus Christ. He is the powerful Word that will not return without accomplishing his purpose.

Now what is his purpose? Look to the prophet Isaiah. "The Lord has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations. All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God." Saying that Yahweh has bared his holy arm means that Yahweh is rolling up his sleeves to get on with the work.

Now take a look now at the manger at Bethlehem. Perhaps we see a tiny arm reaching out at random from the manger. "The Lord has made bare his holy arm." And this anticipates another baring of that holy arm, when it is stretched out on the wood of the cross, revealed to all nations, just as Isaiah said. God's power would be revealed in the powerlessness of love unto death. This is what became flesh on Christmas day.

Reading: 1 John 2: 18-21

Responsorial Psalm: PS 96: 1-2; 11-13

"Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice!"

Gospel: John 1: 1-18

PRAY with thanks for the joy of loving others today.

FRIDAY 1 JANUARY 2021

Luke 2:16 “The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger.”

Imagine the shepherds living a simple and quiet life herding sheep with the occasional excitement chasing the stray sheep or two or fending off some wild animals.

Suddenly a glorious angel appears and proclaims the birth of the messiah. With fear and obedience at the Lord’s command the shepherds left their posts and sought out the child Messiah.

I try and imagine how I might have reacted when I put myself in their place. How will I feel? Perhaps there would have been some feeling of remorse - a sense of unworthiness to appear in person before him. A sense of shock and fear - knowing that the prophecy of the Messiah is real and lies before me as a new born child.

But then I realise that the Messiah is not someone to fear but to rejoice in as a sign of hope and redemption. My heart soars knowing that in this little babe swaddled in the meekest of clothes - will be our guiding light into the kingdom of God.

Reading: Numbers 6: 22-27

Responsorial Psalm: PS 67: 2-3; 5-6; 8

“May God bless us in his mercy”

Gospel: Luke 2: 16-21

PRAY for the world impacted by Coronavirus today.

SATURDAY 2 JANUARY, 2021

John 1:23 "Make straight the way of the Lord"

Today's Gospel has John the Baptist declaring that he is the forerunner of Christ.

Why, when we first hear of the adult John the Baptist, is he out in the desert and not in the temple, where you would expect the son of a priest to be? Well, in John's time, the temple was mired in very messy politics.

What is drawing people into the desert to see him? He is offering what the temple ought to be offering but wasn't: the forgiveness of sins. This was the importance of John's baptism.

But here's the odd thing: he did not draw attention to himself. Rather, he presented himself as a forerunner, preparing the way of the Lord: "I baptise with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognise." He was pointing toward the one who would be the definitive Temple.

And therefore how powerful it was when, upon spying Jesus coming to be baptized, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God." No first-century Israelite would have missed the meaning of that: behold the one who has come to be sacrificed. Behold the sacrifice, which will sum up, complete, and perfect the temple.

Reading I: 1 John 2: 22-28

Responsorial Psalm: PS 98: 1-4

"All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God"

Gospel: John 1: 19-28

PRAY with joy to God for his life-saving son.

SUNDAY 3 JANUARY, 2021

The Epiphany of The Lord

Matthew 2: 11 “Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh”

I have always loved the story of the three Kings. These men from far-off lands travelling for days to pay homage to the King of Kings.

What was impressive to me in the story of the three Kings was their certitude, and because of this, the ease with which they set their minds to the journey with utter confidence. This confidence and faith that their journey was utterly justified was rewarded with once of the first glances at the King of Kings in his first hours with us on Earth.

The Kings also travelled without guards, or caravans of hangers-on. Humbly, as Kings, they travelled through hostile territory knowing they would be safe, being guided by the Star. They are rewarded with real treasure - the only sort worth having - Jesus Christ.

God bless the three Kings. Their story of absolute faith remains as a perfect example for us all today, over 2000 years later.

Reading: Isaiah 60: 1-6

Responsorial Psalm: PS 72: 1-2; 7-8; 10-13

“Lord, every nation on earth will adore you”

Reading 2: Ephesians 3: 2-3; 5-6

Gospel: Matthew 2: 1-12

PRAY for the focus to avoid sin and to keep a healthy soul.

OUR PARISH PRAYER

Loving God,

You are the home for our heart's deepest longings.

We find our way as families and as individuals only in you,
through our brother Jesus,
encouraged by the breath of your Spirit.

We thank you for all the blessings we enjoy in our parish family.

May we continue to share our gifts of life and love
with glad and generous hearts.

May our world be somehow more alive
because we have passed this way.

May Mary our parish patron continue to inspire us
as we give new birth to your Word in our turn.

We make our prayer in Jesus' name.

Amen.