

# DAILY INSPIRATIONS of FAITH



## A Season of Prayer Advent to Epiphany 2021-22

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](http://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.

Our thanks to Bishop Robert Barron for his commentaries within these reflections.

## Introduction from from Fr Kevin

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

After these seasons of uncertainty and concern during the pandemic, we come again to the wonderful season of hope. Advent, which heralds a hope for all people and all creation as God's eternal Word emerges into sight for us all, renews the dreams of our youth in which life seemed good and promising.

May these little reflections serve to bring you joy and hope as you adjust to a world in flux and turmoil. God's good purposes will have their way in due course and in them our hearts find their ultimate comfort and peace.

Father Kevin Bates sm, OAM

Parish Priest,

Holy Name of Mary, Hunters Hill

# SUNDAY 28 NOVEMBER, 2021

First Sunday of Advent

Year C

**Luke 21: 36 “Be vigilant at all times”**

In today's Gospel Jesus tells his disciples to be vigilant. Today marks the beginning of Advent, the great liturgical season of vigilance, of waiting and watching.

What can we do, practically, during this season of vigil keeping? What are some practices that might incarnate for us the Advent spirituality?

Always recommended is the classically Catholic discipline of Eucharistic adoration. To spend a half hour or an hour in the presence of the Lord is not to accomplish or achieve very much—it is not really “getting” anywhere—but it is a particularly rich form of spiritual waiting.

As you keep vigil before the Blessed Sacrament, bring to Christ some problem or dilemma that you have been fretting over, and then say: “Lord, I’m waiting for you to solve this, to show me the way out, the way forward. I’ve been running, planning, worrying, but now I’m going to let you work.” Then, throughout Advent, watch attentively for signs.

Also, when you pray before the Eucharist, allow your desire for the things of God to intensify; allow your heart and soul to expand. Pray, “Lord, make me ready to receive the gifts you want to give,” or even, “Lord Jesus, surprise me.”

**Reading 1:** Jeremiah 33: 14-16

**Responsorial Psalm:** PS 25: 4-5; 8-9; 10; 14  
“To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.”

**Reading 2:** 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

**Gospel:** Luke 21: 25-28; 34-36

*PRAY* to be prepared for the coming of the Lord.

# MONDAY 29 NOVEMBER, 2021

**Matthew 8:10** “Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith”

Today's Gospel passage acclaims a centurion's trust in the Lord Jesus.

To trust is to have hope, to turn one's heart to God. It means to root the whole of one's life, to ground and centre one's concerns to God. And oppositely, to trust and to turn one's heart to human beings means to root the whole of one's life, to ground and centre one's concerns in the things of this world - in wealth, fame, power, honour, and pleasure.

What is the centre of gravity of your life? What is your “ultimate concern?” The Bible consistently lays this out as an either/or. Think of the passage in the book of Joshua, when Joshua lays it on the line for the people of Israel: “Do you serve the Lord or some other gods?”

Jesus tells his followers, “Either you are with me or you are against me.” We have to answer this question with great honesty and clarity.

**Reading 1:** Isaiah 2: 1-5

**Responsorial Psalm:** PS 122: 1-9;

“Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord”

**Gospel:** Matthew 8: 5-11

*PRAY* for the joy that the gift of faith brings.

## TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER, 2021

### **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 strength to live our lives with complete honesty.

# WEDNESDAY | DECEMBER, 2021

## Matthew 15:37 “They all ate and were satisfied”

Today's Gospel tells of Jesus feeding the four thousand with seven loaves and a few fish.

An awful lot of contemporary theologians and Bible commentators have tried to explain away the miracles of Jesus as spiritual symbols. Perhaps most notoriously, many preachers tried to explain the multiplication of the loaves and fishes as a "miracle" of charity, with everyone sharing the little that he had.

But I think it's hard to deny that the first Christians were intensely interested in the miracles of Jesus, and that they didn't see them as mere literary symbols! They saw them for what they really were: actions of God, breaking into our world.

This still happens to this day - you just need to stop and notice the miracles happening around you.

**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 the strength to live our lives with complete honesty

## THURSDAY 2 DECEMBER, 2021

**Matthew 7:24** “Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.”

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 3 DECEMBER, 2021

## 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 4 DECEMBER, 2021

**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 5 DECEMBER, 2021

## Second Sunday of Advent

### Luke 3:4 "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths"

In today's Gospel Luke quotes from the prophet Isaiah: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."

Advent is a great liturgical season of waiting—but not a passive waiting. We yearn, we search, and we reach out for the God who will come to us in human flesh. In short, we prepare the way of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This preparation has a penitential dimension, because it is the season in which we prepare for the coming of a saviour, and we don't need a saviour unless we're deeply convinced there is something to be saved from. When we have become deeply aware of our sin, we know that we can cling to nothing in ourselves, that everything we offer is, to some degree, tainted and impure. We can't show our cultural, professional, and personal accomplishments to God as though they are enough to save us. But the moment we realise that fact, we move into the Advent spirit, desperately craving a saviour.

In the book of Isaiah, we read: "Yet, O Lord, you are our father; we are the clay and you are the potter: we are all the work of your hands." Today, let us prepare ourselves for the potter to come.

**Reading 1:** Baruch 5: 1-9

**Responsorial Psalm:** 126: 1-6

"The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy"

**Reading 2:** Philippians 1: 4-6; 8-11

**Gospel:** Luke 3: 1-6

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

# MONDAY 6 DECEMBER, 2021

**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 in our dealings with others.

## TUESDAY 7 DECEMBER, 2021

**Matthew 18:14** “it is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these little ones be lost.”

Today's Gospel passage recounts the story of the shepherd finding his lost sheep. Let's look at that lost sheep. A sheep is something more than a lost coin, which is to say, it has mobility, sense, appetites, and so on. Bishop Robert Barron, of Los Angeles noted once when he was on retreat at the Abbey of Tamie in the Alps, he heard the desperate bleating of a sheep who had fallen into a pit. All night he cried, knowing that he was in trouble and hoping that someone would come to save him.

There are souls who are like the lost sheep. Spiritually compromised, unable fundamentally to help themselves, they are at least aware that they are in a mess. They are like people who commence the AA process by admitting that they have hit bottom and are out of control. They bleat, they cry for help.

And God finds them—and when he finds them, he carries them back, for they are unable to move on their own.

**Reading I:** Isaiah 40: 1-11

**Responsorial Psalm:** 96: 1-3; 10-13

“The Lord our God comes with power”

**Gospel:** Matthew 18: 12-14

*PRAY* that we can simply trust that no matter what happens, God will always find us.

## WEDNESDAY 8 DECEMBER, 2021

**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 I:** Genesis 3: 9-15; 20

**Responsorial Psalm:** 98: 1-4

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

**Reading II:** Ephesians 1: 3-6; 11-12

**Gospel:** Luke 1: 26-38

PRAY for the recognition of God's love today.

# THURSDAY 9 DECEMBER, 2021

**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 whom 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 10 DECEMBER, 2021

**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 11 DECEMBER, 2021

## Matthew 17:12 "But I tell you that Elijah has already come"

Today's Gospel, which discusses some of the happenings with the Transfiguration of Christ, notes some confusion by the Apostles that had accompanied Jesus to the mountain. Christ clears up the confusion stating that Elijah had returned in the form of John the Baptist. John suffered at the hands of man and Jesus states clearly that he too will suffer in this way.

The links between the Old Testament and the New Testament are strong - like living things, they interact and deliver empowering, life-giving truths.

The Transfiguration of Christ is linked to Exodus when Moses ascends Mount Sinai and into a cloud where God was dwelling - the appearance of the Lord was like a devouring fire and this is revealed to the people of Israel.

In the transfiguration, Christ reveals his radiance and his clothes becomes intensely white. Moses is present, as is Elijah. It is a great proof of the eternal life of the soul, and it is through Jesus that our everlasting life is delivered.

**Reading:** Sirach 48: 1-4; 9-11;

**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."

**Gospel:** Matthew: 17: 9-13

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

# SUNDAY 12 DECEMBER, 2021

Third Sunday of Advent

## Luke 3: 16 “He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire”

Like those in the time of John the Baptist, we ask: “What should we do?” How should we live our lives? This question, of course, tells us something else about repentance: that it has to do with action more than simply changing our minds. The spiritual life is, finally, a set of behaviours.

So what does John the Baptist tell us to do? His first recommendation is this: “Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none.” This is so basic, so elemental—yet so almost thoroughly ignored! In the Church’s social teaching, we find a constant reminder that although private property is a social good, the use of our private property must always have a social orientation.

An early Church Father, St. Basil the Great, expressed the idea in tones that echo John the Baptist: “The bread in your cupboard belongs to the hungry. The cloak in your wardrobe belongs to the naked. The shoes you allow to rot belong to the barefoot. The money in your vaults belongs to the destitute. You do injustice to every man whom you could help but do not.”

So what should we do this Advent, we who seek repentance, we who await the coming of the Messiah? Serve justice, render to each his due, and give to those who are in need.

**Reading 1:** Zephaniah 3: 14-18;

**Responsorial Psalm:** Isaiah 12: 2-6

“Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel”

**Reading 2:** Philippians 4: 4-7

**Gospel:** Luke 3: 10-18

PRAY for understanding of others in all we do today.

# MONDAY 13 DECEMBER, 2021

## Matthew 21:23 "By what authority are you doing these things?"

In today's Gospel the chief priests and elders question Jesus: "By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?"

The Greek word used for "authority" is most enlightening: *exousia*. It means, literally, "from the being of." Jesus speaks with the very *exousia* of God, and therefore, his words effect what they say. He says, "Lazarus, come out!" and the dead man comes out of the tomb. He rebukes the wind and says to the sea, "Be still!" and there is calm. And the night before he dies, he takes bread and says, "This is my body." And what he says is.

Friends, this is the authority of the Church. If we are simply the guardians of one interesting philosophical perspective among many, then we are powerless. If we rely on our own cleverness in argumentation, then we will fail. Our power comes—and this remains a great mystery—only when we speak with the authority of Jesus Christ.

**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 14 DECEMBER, 2021

**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 15 DECEMBER, 2021

### 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 16 DECEMBER, 2021

**Luke 7: 27**      **“Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, he will prepare your way before you”**

In today's Gospel once again the fiery and frightening character of John the Baptist bursts on the scene as the forerunner of Jesus. The opening line is important. Jesus asks the crowds, "What did you go out to the desert to see?" The desert is the place of simplicity and poverty, a place where illusions die, where reality is faced honestly and without compromise.

The Bible frequently employs the desert as the setting for the discovery of bold and simple truths. Advent is, for us, a desert time. It brings us back to the basics. Now what does John say in the desert? "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That wonderful word, "repent," implies a change of mind and vision. John is telling his audience (and us) to wake up and be ready to see something. What does he want us to see? The Kingdom, the new order, God's way of doing things. There is a cleaning and a scouring, a rearranging and a renovation that is going to happen. And we have to be ready for it.

**Reading I:** Isaiah 54: 1-10

**Responsorial Psalm:** PS 30: 2; 4-6; 11-13

"I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me"

**Gospel:** Luke 7: 24-30

**PRAY** to make Jesus the centre of our lives today.

# FRIDAY 17 DECEMBER, 2021

**Matthew 1: 16** “Of her was born Jesus who is called the Christ”

Today's Gospel records the genealogy of Jesus. It was desperately important for Matthew to show that Jesus didn't just appear out of the blue. Rather, he came out of a rich, densely textured history. St. Irenaeus tells us that the Incarnation had been taking place over a long period of time, with God gradually accustoming himself to the human race.

Look at this long line of characters: saints, sinners, cheats, prostitutes, murderers, poets, kings, insiders, and outsiders—all leading to the Christ. Of course, King David is mentioned. He was, without doubt, a great figure, the king who united the nation. But he was also an adulterer and a murderer.

From this long line of the great and not-so-great, the prominent and obscure, saints and sinners, and kings and paupers came "Jesus who is called the Messiah." God became one of us, in all of our grace and embarrassment, in all of our beauty and ordinariness. God had a series of human ancestors, and, like most families, they were kind of a mixed bag. And what good news this is for us! It means that God can bring the Christ to birth even in people like us.

**Reading:** 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 for all those who need your forgiveness today.

# SATURDAY 18 DECEMBER, 2021

Matthew 1:21      “She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus”

Today's Gospel centres on the intriguing figure of Joseph. Joseph is one of the most beloved of the saints, featured in countless works of art and prominent in the devotional lives of many.

We know almost nothing about him, yet some very powerful spiritual themes emerge in the accounts of Joseph. He had become betrothed to Mary and this union had been blessed by God. And then he finds that his betrothed is pregnant.

This must have been an emotional maelstrom for him. And, at a deeper level, it is a spiritual crisis. What does God want him to do? Then the angel appears to him in a dream and tells him, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home." He realises at that moment that these puzzling events are part of a much greater plan of God's. What appears to be a disaster from his perspective is meaningful from God's perspective.

Joseph was willing to cooperate with the divine plan, though he in no way knew its contours or deepest purpose. Like Mary at the Annunciation, he trusted and let himself be led.

**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 the continued protection of our Guardian Angels today.

# SUNDAY 19 DECEMBER, 2021

## Fourth Sunday of Advent

**Luke 1:14** “Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste”

Today’s Gospel tells of Mary’s visit to Elizabeth. I’ve always been fascinated by Mary’s “haste” in this story of the Visitation. Upon hearing the message of Gabriel concerning her own pregnancy and that of her cousin, Mary “proceeded in haste into the hill country of Judah” to see Elizabeth.

Why did she go with such speed and purpose? Because she had found her mission, her role in the theo-drama. We are dominated today by the ego-drama in all of its ramifications and implications. The ego-drama is the play that I’m writing, I’m producing, I’m directing, and I’m starring in. We see this absolutely everywhere in our culture. Freedom of choice reigns supreme; I become the person that I choose to be.

The theo-drama is the great story being told by God, the great play being directed by God. What makes life thrilling is to discover your role in it. This is precisely what has happened to Mary. She has found her role—indeed a climactic role—in the theo-drama, and she wants to conspire with Elizabeth, who has also discovered her role in the same drama. And, like Mary, we have to find our place in God’s story.

**Reading 1:** Micah 5: 1-4

**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:** Hebrews 10: 5-10

**Gospel:** Luke 1: 39-45

TELL someone about your belief in Jesus today.

# MONDAY 20 DECEMBER, 2021

**Luke 1: 31**      “Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus”

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 fulfillment of the promise made to King David.

**Reading:** Isaiah 7: 10-14

**Responsorial Psalm:** PS 24: 1-6

“Let the Lord enter; he is the king of glory”

**Gospel:** Luke 1: 26-38

PRAY for married couples who desire children today.

## TUESDAY 21 DECEMBER, 2021

Luke 1: 42      “Most blessed are you among women”

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.

This terrible crisis we’re 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:** 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 those who have the courage of their faith.

# WEDNESDAY 22 DECEMBER, 2021

## 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.

# THURSDAY 23 DECEMBER, 2021

**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 1:** 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.

# FRIDAY 24 DECEMBER, 2021

## Christmas Eve

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

In today's Gospel the Canticle of Zechariah declares how Jesus fulfils the Old Testament's expectations of salvation.

Once we grasp that Jesus was no ordinary teacher and healer, but Yahweh moving among his people, we can begin to understand his words and actions more clearly. If we survey the texts of the Old Testament—and the first Christians relentlessly read Jesus in light of these writings—we see that Yahweh was expected to do four great things: he would gather the scattered tribes of Israel; he would cleanse the holy temple in Jerusalem; he would definitively deal with the enemies of the nation; and finally, he would reign as Lord of the world.

The hope expressed especially in the prophets and the Psalms was that through these actions, Yahweh would purify Israel, and through the purified Israel bring salvation to all. What startled the first followers of Jesus is that he accomplished these four tasks, but in the most unexpected way.

**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.

# SATURDAY 25 DECEMBER, 2021

## Christmas Day

**Luke 2: 11** “For today in the city of David a saviour has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord”

St. Luke’s telling of the Christmas story, commences by invoking the first-century’s most powerful man: “In those days Caesar Augustus published a decree ordering a census of the whole world.” If you can count your people more accurately, you can tax them more efficiently and you can draft them into the military more expeditiously. So far, this story begins like all other ancient epics, by praising the strong and powerful.

But then St. Luke makes a canny move. He shifts his attention away from Augustus Caesar and toward a poor couple of no notoriety whatsoever, making their way to a dusty hamlet on the fringes of the Roman Empire. In the nothing town of Bethlehem, Mary gives birth to a child, who is wrapped up in swaddling clothes and placed in the manger where the animals eat. The baby is visited, not by courtiers, but by shepherds, who had, at that time, something of the status that street people have today.

Then an angel appears and announces that this destitute infant, to whom Caesar Augustus in Rome would pay absolutely no heed, is in fact the true Emperor: “I come to proclaim good news to you—tidings of great joy to be shared by the whole people. This day in David’s city a savior has been born to you, the Messiah and Lord.”

To say “Messiah” and “Lord” was to imply that a new David had arrived, a new King of the Jews. But as any careful reader of the Psalms and Prophets would know, to say King of the Jews was to imply King of the world—which is precisely why the angel said his message was for “the whole people.”

This true king—simple, humble, vulnerable, and non-violent—would establish an order, a kingdom of God, which stands athwart the order of Rome.

**Reading 1:** Isaiah 9: 1-6

**Responsorial Psalm:** PS 96: 1-3; 11-13

“Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord”

**Reading 2:** Titus 2: 11-14

**Gospel:** Luke 2: 1-14

PRAY for Catholics to return to Church today.

# SUNDAY 26 DECEMBER, 2021

**Luke 2:51**      **“And his mother kept all these things in her heart”**

Today's Gospel tells the familiar story of Mary and Joseph finding twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple. When they find him, they—with understandable exasperation—upbraid him: "Child, why have you treated us like this?" But Jesus responds, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"

The story conveys a truth that runs sharply counter to our sensibilities: even the most powerful familial emotions must, in the end, give way to mission. Though she felt an enormous pull in the opposite direction, Mary let her son go, allowing him to find his vocation in the Temple. Legitimate sentiment devolves into sentimentality precisely when it comes to supersede the call of God.

On a biblical reading, the family is, above all, the forum in which both parents and children are able to discern their missions. It is perfectly good, of course, if deep bonds and rich emotions are cultivated within the family, but those relationships and passions must cede to something that is more fundamental, more enduring, more spiritually focused.

The paradox is this: precisely in the measure that everyone in the family focuses on God's call for one another, the family becomes more loving and peaceful.

**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: 41-52

*PRAY* for a closer relationship with God today.

# MONDAY 27 DECEMBER, 2021

**John 20:8**      “Then the other disciple also went in, and he saw and believed”

Today we celebrate the Feast of Saint John, Apostle and evangelist, one of the first witnesses of Christ's rising from the dead.

The Easter declaration, properly understood, has always been and still is an explosion, an earthquake, a revolution. For the Easter faith is that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been brutally put to death by the Roman authorities, is alive again through the power of the Holy Spirit—and not in some metaphorical sense.

That the Resurrection is a literary device or a symbol that Jesus' cause goes on is a fantasy born in the faculty lounges of Western universities over the past couple of centuries. The still startling claim of the first witnesses is that Jesus rose bodily from death, presenting himself to his disciples to be seen, even handled.

The hope of ancient Israel was the unification of heaven and earth in a great marriage. Recall a central line from the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The bodily Resurrection of Jesus is the powerful sign that the two orders are in fact coming together.

**Reading:** 1 John 1: 1-4

**Responsorial Psalm:** PS 97: 1-2-5-6; 11-12  
“Rejoice in the Lord, you just!”

**Gospel:** John 20: 1-8

PRAY for those blinded by earthly riches today.

## TUESDAY 28 DECEMBER, 2021

**Matthew 2:14** “Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt”

Today's Gospel tells the story of Herod's massacre of the innocents, which mimics, of course, Pharaoh's murder of the male children of the Hebrews at the time of Moses' birth.

John Courtney Murray commented that a major motif of the Gospels is the ever-increasing agon (struggle) that characterises Jesus' life. From the very beginning, he is opposed: Herod trembles in fear at his birth and then tries in the most brutal manner possible to stamp him out, forcing him and his family into exile. And from the first moments of his public ministry, he awakens fierce opposition, from both the cosmic powers and the representatives of the religious establishment. As the narrative unfolds, the warfare only becomes more intense, verbal violence giving way to threats of physical harm and finally to institutional violence that culminates in execution by crucifixion.

The theological meaning of this struggle is made clear in Peter's post-Pentecost speech to the crowds gathered in the temple precincts: "You rejected the Holy and Righteous One . . . and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead." The opposition to Jesus is divine judgment on the dysfunction of the world.

**Reading:** 1 John 1: 5 - 2:2

**Responsorial Psalm:** PS 124: 2-8;

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

**Gospel:** Matthew 2: 13-18

PRAY that we can see through our human pride today.

## WEDNESDAY 29 DECEMBER, 2021

**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.

# THURSDAY 30 DECEMBER, 2021

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

# FRIDAY 31 DECEMBER 2021

## 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.

# SATURDAY 1 JANUARY, 2022

**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”

Reading II: Galations 4: 4-7

**Gospel:** Luke 2: 16-21

PRAY for the world impacted by Coronavirus today.

# SUNDAY 2 JANUARY, 2022

## 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.