

RISEN LORD
COMMUNITY



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS



Merry Christmas

DECEMBER 2023 | DAILY READINGS & REFLECTIONS



ON OUR KNEES IN HIS HANDS

DECEMBER
2023

“Bethlehem shows us
the simplicity of God,
who reveals himself
not to the wise and the intelligent
but to the little ones,
to those with a pure and open
heart.”

Pope Francis

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Friday December 1

Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Daniel
7:2-14

Daniel
3:75-81

Luke
21:29-33

Saying 'yes' to God's will.

In today's Gospel proclamation, Jesus says: "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away". These words are familiar to many of us and they may sound cliché. What is the purpose of trusting the word of God? It is to draw strength to walk in holiness, saying 'yes' to the will of God for our lives. It is to ensure that we do not lose heaven under any circumstance. Many are the challenges we will have to face as we tarry through this life. The Lord himself said that in this world there will be trouble. As the Word of God proclaims today, we are to be alert to know the signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. The key is to be connected to God, as a branch is to the vine, through a consistent and genuine prayer life. In that way, we are assured that the wisdom of the Holy Spirit will always guide us. Let us give priority to be deeply connected to God. Let us not doubt the mighty power of the Word of God and it will always be fulfilled and bear fruit, according to God's will.

Prayer: Abba Father, hold me close as the vine is to a branch so that your unfailing Word will protect me. Amen.

Saturday December 2

Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Daniel
7:15-27

Daniel
3:82-87

Luke
21:34-36

Total surrender.

Jesus emphasizes that we need to be watchful, alert and vigilant lest the distractions, attractions, cares and worries of life overwhelm us and suck us into a vortex of busyness and preoccupation. As a wife, mother and homemaker, I have to be aware of what occupies my thoughts and of the state of my heart. Am I allowing problems to consume me? Am I allowing them to remain there long enough to affect my feelings and mood? Am I allowing the myriad of things vying for my attention and intervention to draw me into a hamster wheel of endless activity? This busyness has become accepted as normal in today's society. We need to remember that our work, service and ministry are not the end goal but a means to an ultimate end. Being vigilant means that we make an effort not to be attached to the things of this world. We should allow the Holy Spirit to teach us the art of surrendering our desires, cares and anxieties to him and allow him to satisfy our needs. Let us do God's will, so that death, whenever it comes, will find us ready.

Prayer: Abba Father, I surrender my cares to you.
Amen.

Sunday December 3

First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah
63:16-17,19; 64:2-7

Psalm 80:
2-3,15-16,18-19

1 Corinthians
1:3-9

Mark
13:33-37

Citizens of heaven

Today we begin a new liturgical year. On this first Sunday of Advent, the Church is inviting us to prepare for the second coming of Christ.

The first thought Advent brings is about celebrating Christmas. If that is all there is to this season, we Christians are to be pitied, for the rest of the world celebrates Christmas and have a goodtime too. For us this season reminds of two other comings of Christ, his glorious second coming as the King and the continuous coming of the Lord Jesus into our lives every moment.

The theme of today is "Watch!" The irony of our generation is the double standards we apply for our lives. Often, we want to control our lives, having our plans, not willing to submit to the plan and will of God.

We fear that God will destroy our dreams and crush our plans. Yet, when life gets too burdensome, when our striving becomes too exhausting, we question where God is. When unforeseen events crop up, many of us blame God. We have forgotten that we had left God and have been managing our lives independent of him.

The Prophet Isaiah reminds us that God is our Father, who never forgets or forsakes us. Learning about God will sustain us for a while, but it is the Father-child relationship, that makes us know him, allowing his love to fill our lack. All God's promises become 'yes' and 'amen' for us.

Jesus the Son, who came to reveal the Father to us, is inviting us to be watchful to not let life pass us by. He is asking us to watch so that we won't be fooled by the enemy and the world to fall into a life of self-effort, without God, and also to watch for the moments of his 'coming' into our life situations.

This can only be learned when we become intentional about deepening our relationship with him. Our daily quiet time with the Lord helps immensely to know him more intimately through worship. The Word of God helps us to hear his voice in our hearts.

We are called to live as citizens of heaven, our minds being constantly renewed by the Holy Spirit. The world might laugh that it is mere fantasy, but St Paul tells us that every spiritual gift we need to live a life of rest and joy, in good times and bad, has already been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Through our Baptism and Confirmation we have been empowered to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us choose to open the gift bag, take the gifts out and use them to the fullest.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for enriching us with the grace to live like your Son Jesus. May we hear your voice and obey. Amen.

Monday December 4

First Week of Advent

Isaiah
2:1-5

Psalm
122:1-9

Matthew
8:5-11

Amazing faith of the Centurion

In today's Gospel proclamation Jesus is moved by the faith of the Centurion, who acknowledged his unworthiness and believed in the power and authority of Jesus to "only say the word" and heal his dying servant. This is the kind of faith that the Lord Jesus expects us to have. Faith to acknowledge the power and authority of the Lord Jesus to do the impossible. Faith to hold on to him no matter what. Faith to believe that he is in control and faith to accept that he will work everything out for our good at his appointed time. As I look at my life, can I say that I have the same faith to believe that the Lord is in control? Or do I worry and remain anxious? In the First Reading, the prophet Isaiah calls us to go up to the mountain, to a place of stillness where we can draw the presence of the Lord. Let us go to that place and seek his mind and his heart. Then we will be able to find comfort knowing that the Lord is in control. Let us believe that he will work out everything for our good.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I hold on to you and believe that you are in control, because nothing is impossible for you. Amen.

Tuesday December 5

First Week of Advent

Isaiah
11:1-10

Psalm 72:
1-2,7-8,12-13,17

Luke
10:21-24

The reason for the season.

Going through today's readings makes one think of a Christmas fairy-tale movie, about a happy-ever-after kingdom ruled by a gracious, majestic and kind king. The good news is that such a kingdom is promised to us, but because we are so battered by evil and hopelessness, the kingdom of God feels like a distant fairy tale. Perhaps, that is why we await eagerly for Christmas, for that little bit of hope and joy, for that little bit of light in the darkness. Yet, hope, joy, peace and love are not a season but a person. There is no spirit of Christmas without "Christ", who came into this world in the form of a child and continues to exist as King forevermore. The Spirit of the Lord lives not for a season but a lifetime in us. Therefore, in today's Gospel proclamation our Lord invites us to come to him in a child-like dependency, to not let the hopelessness of this world steal the assurance of the hope, peace and joy we possess in his Kingdom through him. For joy, is the laughter of heaven.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we experience the presence of Jesus in our lives. Amen.

Wednesday December 6

First Week of Advent

Isaiah
25:6-10

Psalm
23:1-6

Matthew
15:29-37

To be blessed and broken for the multitudes

Jesus has compassion on all who suffer from sickness and hunger. Jesus' presence brings healing to the sick and he provides food to the multitudes. This is a sign of the ultimate healing and restoration that Jesus has brought us through his death and resurrection. To encounter the presence of the Lord, to be healed and restored we have to go to the mountain – the place where God's presence and revelation comes to us. This is where we have fulfillment and communion with the Lord no matter what we are facing in life – sickness, relationship issues, financial crisis, addiction, sin or suffering. He is able to lift the veil because he has conquered sin and death. We should place our trust and confidence in God to heal, provide, comfort, strengthen, deliver, free, protect and restore us. Just as Jesus blessed and gave back the few fish and bread that the disciples offered him, when we offer our broken, sinful, shattered limited lives, Jesus will bless and restore us so that we will become a blessing to others.

Prayer: Abba Father, I offer my life to you,
to be blessed, broken and given to others. Amen.

Thursday December 7

Memorial of Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Isaiah
26:1-6

Psalm 118:
1,8-9,19-21,25-27

Matthew
7:21,24-27

How to build a strong foundation

"If everything seems to be coming your way, you are probably in the wrong lane." This saying is true not only when driving on the road, but also regarding our spiritual journey. If everything is going smoothly without any challenges, we may often lose sight of God or forget that we need his presence and power. When everything comes our way easily, we may be tempted to think that we are right with God and therefore rewarded justly. But what happens when disappointments, sufferings and difficulties come our way. Do we stand loyal to the Lord? Isn't our spiritual foundation shaken? Our Lord says that those who listen to his words and act on them will have a strong foundation that will not be shaken from underneath. He wants us to build our spiritual life on strong faith and trust. The Lord calls us all to have love, compassion, forgiveness, faith and hope. With these everything will be calm and peaceful because as true disciples our foundation will be strong and firm even when facing calamities.

Prayer: Abba Father, may I hear and act on your Word.
Amen.

Friday December 8

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Genesis
3:9-15,20

Psalm
98:1-4

Ephesians
1:3-6,11-12

Luke
1:26-38

God washes away the stain of sin.

The Blessed Mother said to the angel: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word". This is the highest form of worship that we could offer our Heavenly Father for his graciousness, faithfulness and goodness: our complete surrender. Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We celebrate the day when the Blessed Mother was conceived in the womb of Saint Anne. God created us to be holy and without blemish, but human beings fell into sin and God knew that only his grace could wash away the impurity or taint of sin. God created a woman without original sin (without blemish/untainted) to bear his beloved Son Jesus Christ. The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Mother was an unfathomable and holy act of God. Let us continue to seek his presence and strive to be holy, so that we too may bear witness to the mighty acts of God. May he wash away our sins and make us holy.

Prayer: Abba Father, I accept the Mother of Jesus as my own.
Amen.

Saturday December 9

First Week of Advent

Isaiah
30:19-21,23-26

Psalm
147:1-6

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

You are not alone, God is with you.

Today's readings are not only a prophecy of what is to come, but also a reminder of what has already happened. The Kingdom of heaven is here, we need not look elsewhere, for it is in the depths of our hearts. We need to fix our eyes on the Lord Jesus, and allow him to renew our true identity as sons and daughters of God. Through our baptism, we have been given access to the Kingdom, as we are now the adopted children of God, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. When we cling onto our true identity, we will hear the Holy Spirit whisper in our ears, "This is the way, walk in it" (Is 30:21). We are then empowered and given authority to go out to the lost and to fulfill God the Father's dream in our spheres of influence. It maybe in our own families, in our workplace, amid our friends or in our parish communities. When we speak with the authority we have been given as children, and declare the Word of God boldly in the situations we face, we will see victory in Jesus' name.

Prayer: Abba Father, open my eyes to see myself as your child.
Amen.

Sunday December 10

Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah
40:1-5,9-11

Psalm
85:9-14

2 Peter
3:8-14

Mark
1:1-8

God is never in a rush and never too late

When it comes to surrender, we may find it easier to yield to the nature of God's plans. Yielding to the timing of his plans, however, is a test of faith on a different level.

We as humans, are wired and familiar with time in the linear sense. We find comfort in sequences, and step-by-step patterns, and view life's progression like a movie or a storybook.

God, however, exists beyond time and space. As the Second Reading states, "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." He is omnipresent; he is everything, everywhere, all the time.

As his children, this means there is nothing that time has robbed us of, that God cannot restore. There is nothing we can ever be too late for, because God is forever on time. It means when we enthrone God in our lives, we choose to no longer be enslaved to the rhythm and clockwork of this world. Though we shall not know when, we do know that his providence and goodness are assured, for as the First Reading declares: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd."

As his children, serving an omnipresent God also means that we are connected to the heartbeat of heaven. It means we do not move as the world does, but that we wait on him.

It means every day is a day of waiting on the Lord and for the Lord. And since we do not know his timing, every day must be lived as if were the day of promise-fulfillment. Everyday must therefore, be a day of preparing the way of the Lord, and straightening his path, as Saint John the Baptist did.

The Gospel proclamation states, "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief", not because God, like a thief, intends to rob us in the shadows, but because God, like a thief, may come and go, and we might miss him if we are not awake.

How could we stay awake? By meditating on the truth of his Kingdom, instead of the distorted truths of the world. By standing upon our true identity bought by Jesus' blood, and not as shown in a mirror. By remaining vigilant for attacks of the enemy and fighting for the purity of our hearts, souls, and minds. By leading lives of repentance declaring victory over sin. And by remaining in constant connection with our omnipresent Father – the Author of time, the Saviour of our past, present and future, and the One who is never in a rush, and never too late.

Prayer: Abba Father, as we wait upon you, may we be found spotless and blameless in your presence. Amen.

Monday December 11

Second Week of Advent

Isaiah
35:1-10

Psalm
85:9-14

Luke
5:17-26

Our God will come to save us

Today's Gospel proclamation presents us with the unfailing assurance of the freedom that God brings us through his son Jesus Christ. As we prepare our hearts for the second coming of Christ, we are reminded that he is coming to do the impossible with the authority from his Father. Only God can forgive our sins and at times, our physical and mental sicknesses are a result of the sinful nature of our hearts. We need to have humility to allow those around us to accompany us on the spiritual journey. Jesus will transform us to receive the freedom that we need. There was no direct access to those who were carrying the person on the stretcher, it took a little creativity to reach the healer. We could be blocked from the sight of Jesus due to clutter and the crowdedness of the materialism we face day in and day out. Let us keep trying until we reach closer to the Lord Jesus so we can receive forgiveness and healing. Let us keep in mind, that Jesus is the only way to salvation.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for sending your only Son with the authority to forgive, so that we are cleansed from our sins. Amen.

Tuesday December 12

Second Week of Advent

Isaiah
40:1-11

Psalm
95:1-3,10-13

Matthew
18:12-24

To err is human, to forgive divine

In today's First Reading, a voice cries out in the desert, bringing hope and comfort to the shattered exiles. Some of them thought the exile was a punishment from God. But when Isaiah speaks of the "strong arm" of the Holy One, it is not raised to inflict punishment, but is one that has the strength to gather all the lost lambs, hold them close to God's heart and gently lead them home. The Psalmist reminds us to sing joyfully to the Lord for he is our rock of salvation. We should not harden our hearts, test God or have erring hearts. Our praise adds nothing to God's greatness, but makes us grow in his grace. In today's Gospel proclamation Jesus echoes the cry of Isaiah, announcing that he will leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go in search of the one that goes astray. God picks us up and fills us with unending love. Let us allow God to wash our sins away and empower us to journey according to his divine will. To err is human, to forgive divine, that is why Jesus told Peter to forgive without limits.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray for the grace to listen and to obey you. Amen.

Wednesday December 13

Memorial of Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr

Isaiah
40:25-31

Psalm
103:1-4,8,10

Matthew
11:28-30

Patient waiting

What does “wait” mean? It is to “stay where one is or delay action until a particular time or event”. It is an uncomfortable place, as it is between where we are and where we want to go. Many of us do not like such states. It seems a waste of time, specially when our culture screams, “if you want something, do something and don’t wait”. Instant coffee and noodles, make us picture waiting as boring and unproductive. There are two kinds of waiting: active and passive. Passive waiting indicates defeat, complaining or simply doing nothing. Active waiting means to be in the moment fully believing that God is working in the background. Before leading God’s people, Moses spent 40 years as a shepherd. How did those years prepare him? Following the Lord is not easy. It calls us to wait on Him 24/7. The best way is to accept his yoke and the rest that accompanies it, because on the other side of the yoke is the Lord himself. Then we will renew our strength, run and not be weary, walk and not faint. Who or what are we waiting for?

Prayer: Abba Father, may I be patient as I wait for the coming of your Son.
Amen.

Thursday December 14

Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Isaiah
41:13-20

Psalm
145:1,9-13

Matthew
11:11-15

Rivers will flow in the desert

The Gospel proclamation reveals that the Kingdom of Heaven is a moving force that causes human history to progress. It takes advantage of both gentle and violent changes that keep happening in our lives. We are called to participate actively in this constant transformation. The dynamics of death and resurrection are at work among us. Often we do not like what is happening. Our weaknesses, pain and disappointments are situations we rather not have to go through. Our past may have been scandalous, shocking and disgusting. But thanks to God’s grace, we experienced his love. However, our lives may not be sailing smoothly. The Lord says “Fear not I will help you” (Is 41:13). Those struggles and disappointments are necessary. The Kingdom of Heaven can only be accessed that way. God will help us to have hope and patience. God does not answer only with words but wonderful happenings also. Rivers will flow in the desert: heaven will open amid our terribly dry and desolate situations.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we not be passive but hopeful and excited about what awaits us even when things don’t seem right. Amen.

Friday December 15

Second Week of Advent

Isaiah
48:17-19

Psalm
1:1-4,6

Matthew
11:16-19

Unconditional love of God

Often we judge people according to their behaviors and their appearances. This is not appropriate for us as Christians, because the Lord never did that. He welcomed the people who were rejected by society. He did not care about other people's opinions because he knew the mind of the Father. Jesus welcomed the weak, rejected, discarded people and made them great in the Kingdom. That is the love of our God. We are not perfect, we may not receive acceptance from society, but if we have faith, it is enough. In my life, many people rejected me and laughed at me because of my weaknesses. They put me to shame, it affected me, I felt inferior and at times I even thought of ending my life. However, I encountered the Risen Lord, and my life changed because of his love. We are called to love others as God loves us. We are not here to judge but to love like our Master does. Therefore, let us ask the Lord to teach us and give us his heart to accept others in his love.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for your unconditional love.
May I be able to love my brothers and sisters. Amen.

Saturday December 16

Second Week of Advent

Sirach
48:1-4,9-11

Psalm 80:
2-3,15-16,18-19

Matthew
17:9-13

Jesus is here

We are called to repent and experience a conversion of heart. We read about the miracles performed by one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament. The miracles and wonders that happened when prophet Elijah spoke were unimaginable. However, the greatest miracle is a conversion of heart. It is possible only through an encounter with the Risen Lord Jesus. When we see him and receive the power of the Holy Spirit, we will be changed and renewed. The Holy Spirit is within us. Many people did not want to listen to John the Baptist who prepared the way for Jesus. They did not accept Jesus as the Messiah. Let us not be like them, instead let us allow the Holy Spirit to open our inner eyes and allow him to change our hearts on a daily basis. Then we will be able to experience the true joy of God's presence in our lives. We will also be able to witness his glory and the power of his presence. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom"; let us enjoy this peace.

Prayer: Abba Father, open our eyes to see Jesus in our daily events.
Amen.

Sunday December 17

Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah
61:1-2,10-11

Luke
1:46-50,53-54

1 Thessalonians
5:16-24

John
1:6-8,19-28

Jesus - the hope of the ages

This Sunday is called Gaudete Sunday: Rejoicing Sunday. The readings for the third Sunday of Advent call us to rejoice and remind us that the coming of the Lord Jesus in the past, present, and future, is the reason for our rejoicing.

We are preparing our hearts and our lives for the great coming of the Lord. In a world full of chaos and confusion, where we are bombarded with the news of one disaster or another, it may seem hard to rejoice. Yet it is to a world covered in darkness that the Lord Jesus came. He is the hope of the ages.

In today's First Reading we see Isaiah prophesy of the coming of the Messiah, the Redeemer who would bring healing, liberation and blessings of the Almighty God.

In the Responsorial Psalm we see Mother Mary magnify God in her song of praise, the Magnificat, as she sings: "My soul glorifies the Lord, my spirit finds joy in God my Savior."

In the Second Reading we hear St Paul calling us to rejoice always. All these people lived in dramatically worse conditions than we do today. Yet they were able to see the joy of the Lord surround them in the circumstances of their lives and were able to look to the future with hope as they fixed their eyes on the Giver of hope.

In today's Gospel Proclamation Saint John the Baptist is portrayed as a man called by God for a specific mission. He denies that he is the Christ. He even states that he is not a prophet, rather that he is a voice crying out in the wilderness. He has come to prepare God's people calling them to repentance, preparing them for the Messiah. He has come as a witness to the light. The Messiah was already among them, though they did not recognize him.

In this season of Advent as we prepare our hearts for the second coming of the Lord Jesus let us prepare ourselves through repentance and prayer allowing the Holy Spirit to minister to our inner being.

As we surrender to the Holy Spirit and allow him access to our inner-selves, he carries out his work of sanctification in our lives. We are healed and redeemed, set free from our bondages and the core of our being is made whole. Clothed in the garment of salvation, turmoil lifted, our hearts are filled with the joy of the Lord. We can witness to the Light of the world pointing to the Lord Jesus as the hope of the future and the reason to rejoice.

Prayer: Abba Father, send your Holy Spirit to sanctify us. Open the eyes of our hearts to see the hope we have in you and fill us with your joy. Amen.

Monday December 18

Third Week of Advent

Jeremiah
23:5-8

Psalm
72:1-2,12-13,18-19

Matthew
1:18-25

My hope is in you Lord

God's compassionate eyes are turned towards the oppressed, the helpless and the weak. God desires leaders to rule people justly but throughout history sinful ambitions and evil motives have often caused the rich and powerful to neglect the basic needs of the people. Jeremiah who had been God's spokesman for 40 years urged the rulers to listen to God but they silenced the prophet who disturbed their conscience. Through the Responsorial Psalm we see God's feelings for his people. We are precious to him and close to his heart. This truth releases us from fears and anxieties and covers us with peace. God promises to help and deliver us. Instead of depending on human help let us fix our gaze on the Lord. Then, an ocean of mercy and grace will cover us. The Gospel proclamation gives us joy because God says that he is coming to live among us and be in our hearts forever. He will deliver us not only from the challenges we face but also from our sinful nature and the inner wounds of our past.

Prayer: Abba Father, I worship you with all my heart.
Amen.

Tuesday December 19

Third Week of Advent

Judges
13:2-7,24-25

Psalm
71:3-6,16-17

Luke
1:5-25

God never gives up on us

God is faithful to his promises. Even when things seem to be turning out in an unfavourable way, he will fulfil his promises to his people. Often we may feel disappointed with failed promises and unmet expectations. God never gives up on us, even if we lose hope about his promises. The miraculous events leading to the birth of John the Baptist shows the faithfulness of Zechariah and Elizabeth, who despite their old age and barrenness, remained obedient and devoted to God. In his divine plan, God chose this couple to play a pivotal role in the coming of Jesus. The Gospel proclamation reminds us that our unbelief regarding his promises, displeases God. He is above all our struggles and hurdles. Let us remember that, even when things seem to disappoint us, God is in control of the situation, and he is bigger than our problems. "In this hour, in this place I choose to believe that nothing is impossible with God. Everything is possible in Jesus' name." Even if a mother forgets the child, he will never forget us.

Prayer: Abba Father, I believe in your promises.
Amen.

Wednesday December 20

Third Week of Advent

Isaiah
7:10-14

Psalm
24:1-6

Luke
1:26-38

Advent is the season of the seed.

During this season, the church invites us to contemplate on the events of that extraordinary conception. We need to hear the Word speak of himself, to remember who we are called to be. Ann Voskamp a spiritual writer, says that the word 'conceive' is not passive but an active verb and its root in Latin means 'to seize or take hold'. When grace conceives in us, we take hold of God. This is the beauty of what we believe. God reached out from his ineffable glory into the heart and flesh of humanity. In faith Mary relied on God when she said 'yes'. This made her an integral part of the salvific mission. We are blessed to have Mary as a great model. She was humble in accepting her mission with complete trust and faith in God. Every day we have the opportunity to imitate Mary in her love for God, pondering on who he is and the marvelous promises he has given us. Let us allow the seed of God's Word to be conceived in our hearts and live according to the purpose we have been called to.

Prayer: Abba Father, thank you for the gift of your Son,
and for Mother Mary who continues to inspire us. Amen.

Thursday December 21

Third Week of Advent

Song of Songs
2:8-14

Psalm 33:
2-3,11-12,20-21

Luke
1:39-45

A new season of growth

Let us exalt and praise the name of Jesus as we prepare our hearts for the celebration of his Nativity. The First reading shows a beautiful illustration of a new season: Spring. It is a season to embrace new growth and new beginnings just as the flowers and vines are in bloom, and there is a sense of excitement and freshness in the air. We can sense God's presence and wonder through nature. The Responsorial psalm reminds us of our relationship with God. We are being reminded of the divine love of the Father: that he has chosen us as his people to claim his inheritance for many generations. When we wait on the Lord, he comes to our aid and becomes our protector. It is a blessing and privilege that we can enjoy as disciples of Christ. When we reflect on the Gospel proclamation, we can see how Elizabeth was excited and joyful to see Mary. The news of the new baby was such a blessing to the family. God spoke a word and the Word became flesh in the womb of Mother Mary.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace to be open to your Word
and declare your Word with faith, that it may bear fruit. Amen.

Friday December 22

Third Week of Advent

1 Samuel
1:24-28

1 Samuel
2:1,4-8

Luke
1:46-56

A heart of thanksgiving

In today's readings, we meet two women from different eras, praising God for the wonders he has done in their lives: Hannah, giving thanks for an answered prayer, and Mary thanking God for the unexpected news she received. As we look at the background of each woman's story, we see each of them having suffered or about to suffer great sorrows, but their acts of thanksgiving are not affected. Hannah goes to great lengths to thank God by offering him the gift she received from him and the Blessed Mother sings the greatness of God amid the uncertainties looming ahead, with an unwavering trust in God's faithfulness. Let us look at our lives; the prayers that were answered, the graces that are yet to be received and the blessings that have come about unexpectedly. Can we say 'thank you Lord for all what you have done in my life', even when the blessings seem to have stirred the waters around us? Are we able to trust God and sing his goodness with thankful hearts?

Prayer: Abba Father, may we remember what you have done and be thankful for what is yet to come. Amen.

Saturday December 23

Third Week of Advent

Malachi
3:1-4,23-24

Psalm
25:4-5,8-10,14

Luke
1:57-66

We are called to be prophets

Today's Gospel proclamation focuses on the birth of St. John the Baptist who came to pave the way for the coming of Jesus, by calling people to repentance. Living in a desert, he led a simple and humble life. Yet, this great New Testament prophet was courageous and forthright. Like in the era of St. John the Baptist, we too are dominated by injustice, and we do not see the servant leadership portrayed by St John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus. The Messiah, the Lord Jesus, came to prepare the sinners' hearts to be his temple. The Lord Jesus Christ, by his Gospel, shall purify and transform our lives by his Spirit working within us. He will take away our sinful nature and place his perfect nature within us. Are we ready to prepare our hearts this Christmas for the Lord Jesus Christ to enter and be born within us? As we prepare for Christmas, the Lord is inviting us to make this a moment of revelation and try to make his coming a living experience in the hearts of those around us.

Prayer: Abba Father, fill us with your love and may it overflow to those around us. Amen.

Sunday December 24

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel
7:1-5,8-12,14,16

Psalm
89:2-5,27,29

Romans
16:25-27

Luke
1:26-38

Hope is the memory of the future

Today's readings emphasize the importance of holding on to God's promises. The first reading says that King David was thinking of creating a house for the Ark of the Lord to dwell in. But the Lord had different plans concerning the same. The messenger of the Lord, prophet Nathan jumped at the idea until the Lord corrected him.

God's ways our not our ways. We may have different understandings of his promises and his interventions in our crisis situations. Through King David's situation, he is reminding us of the plan of salvation that he has prepared for us: a plan to offer us eternal life.

We may be cured of sicknesses, or we may have received what we have prayed for, but the greater reality and the truth he wants us to seek is his presence.

We must turn this fulfillment of promises into the beginning of a spiritual journey seeking his constant presence in our lives. We must claim his plan of salvation for us and our loved ones.

Just like King David, we may be saved from our enemies and having many things that we could ask for. But we need to remember that this is not the end but the start of a journey to seek him.

God's plan for the human race is unfolded in the Gospel proclamation and through a simple "yes" of a young girl named Mary, the Word of God was made flesh among us.

As we are preparing for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus tomorrow, let us remind ourselves how Mother Mary obediently said "Yes" to the will of the Father even though she could not see what was about to take place.

For the sake of our families, our loved ones and those around us, let us make the effort in our prayer life to seek the Lord and to be filled with his Spirit. The Lord has promised that those who seek, would receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity will come and live within us.

"Hope is the memory of the future". This is an inspiring quote I hold on to as it is indeed accurate. Hope in the Lord and his promises are truly the memories of the future. We have not yet seen them, but we are confident in reaching them.

It is easy to understand the things of the world but difficult to comprehend the supernatural. Mother Mary was surrounded by things that she could not comprehend, but she held on to the Word of God and his promises. Let us follow her example and believe that nothing is impossible for God.

Prayer: Abba Father, we cast our cares upon you. We are grateful for the promise of your care. Hold us close to your heart. Amen.

Monday December 25

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Isaiah
9:1-6

Psalm
96:1-3,11-13

Titus
2:11-14

Luke
2:1-14

Today is born our Saviour

The question "Why me Lord" would have echoed in the minds of the shepherds, when they were singled out to be told about the birth of Jesus. Just imagine an angel appearing to a person working on a farm and telling him the Good News. We would question, "Is his role so important in society? Does he need a Saviour? Is he playing a role which requires crucial decisions? Is his life so important? A shepherd's life was concerned with a few sheep and all he has to do is ward off the predators. Is he a person of influence? Does he have a million followers on Instagram?" Nothing. And yet the Father looked upon these humble souls. We go through similar internal struggles which are known only to God. No matter how far we may reach in life or how large our spheres of influence, we are mere humans, who depend on the Lord's love. The angels appeared to the shepherds to give the message that our Saviour would be the Good Shepherd to humanity. The Lord is waiting to lift us up and save us, to give us hope and a future.

Prayer: Abba Father, we pray that a deep conviction and faith will be birthed in us to accept the dominion of our Shepherd King, Jesus. Amen.

Tuesday December 26

Feast of Saint Stephen, first martyr

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

Psalm
31:3-4,6,8,16-17

Matthew
10:17-22

Standing for the truth.

Have we been rejected, criticized or misunderstood because we stood for Christian values? At our jobs, at home or with friends, have we stood for moral principles and got reprimanded by superiors, colleagues, family or friends? When a person is challenged by the truth he or she may react with negative responses. We may have been misunderstood when we tried to help a person or do good to a person. What was our response in those situations? Was it withdrawal, judgment or condemnation of the people who misunderstood us? A person who has not gone out of the way to stand for Christian values, would not face such issues. In the Gospel proclamation, Jesus explains how the disciples will have to suffer. St. Stephen was put to death for speaking the truth. We may have to undergo persecution if we are serious about living a Christian life. When we go through these sufferings we are called to respond like St. Stephen, by forgiving and blessing the persecutors.

Prayer: Abba Father, may we be courageous to go through the suffering that comes when we witness to Christ. Amen.

Wednesday December 27

Feast of Saint John, Apostle and evangelist

1 John
1:1-4

Psalm
97:1-2,5-6,11-12

John
20:1-8

Unlock the hidden treasures of God's word

Today we celebrate the feast of Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist. He was one of the 3 intimate disciples of Jesus along with Peter and James (Mt 17:1, 26:37). At the cross, Jesus entrusted Mary his mother to Saint John who was known as the disciple whom Jesus loved (Jn 19:26-27). Today's first reading refers to Jesus as the "the word of life" who existed from the beginning as the second member of the Holy Trinity. Jesus came into the world to be touched by human hands, gazed upon by human eyes and to give us eternal life. Today's Gospel proclamation invites us to believe in the resurrected Christ just as Saint John did upon reaching the empty tomb and observing the burial cloth left behind. The First Reading and the Gospel proclamation beautifully unlock the hidden treasures of God's word. As we reflect upon the life of this great apostle, let us ask God to give us the grace to be open to the deeper truths of the Word. Let us imitate Saint John and grow in our love for the Lord.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us your grace to hold on to your Word.
Amen.

Thursday December 28

Feast of the Holy Innocents, martyrs

1 John
1:5--2:2

Psalm
124:2-5,7-8

Matthew
2:13-18

Walk in the light

Today's readings remind us that God is light and there is no darkness in him. God's ways have no hint of sin. If we say we have a relationship with God, we have to act accordingly. Just as we would not find warmth in an icy pool or a polar bear in a desert, we cannot find God in a life lived un-remorsefully; in ways contrary to God's ways. For those of us who want to be truthful of our weaknesses and live in God, we have our Lord Jesus who cleanses us and strengthens us to walk in the light with God. When we strive to live in obedience to God as Joseph did, and when we have the favor of God, we could praise God with the psalmists. When God is on our side our soul/spirit is indeed set free from the snare of the wicked and the chaos of this world. Let us strive to love the Lord, our God, with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind, and let us also love our neighbour as we love ourselves (Mt 22:37,39). In this way, we would be walking according to God's ways.

Prayer: Abba Father, give us the grace and strength to be true to your ways.
Amen.

Friday December 29

The Fifth Day in the Octave of Christmas

1 John
2:3-11

Psalm
96:1-3,5-6

Luke
2:22-35

From darkness to light

The true light has come into the world. Thus the question we need to ask ourselves is: are we in the light or are we still walking in darkness? "Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble" (1 Jn 2:9-10). We may go for Holy Mass, receive the Sacraments, say our prayers, follow rituals and know 'about' God but have we loved and forgiven our brothers and sisters? If not, we are still walking in darkness. The moment the light begins to shine in us is the moment that we encounter Jesus. It is the beginning of knowing him as opposed to knowing 'about' him. We cannot achieve it by ourselves. It can happen either at a miserable moment or when we are yearning to encounter God and living a life devoted to God in prayer. It is a grace filled moment. Let us yearn for it and once received let us remain in the Word. Let us allow it's light to shine in our lives and let us be a light to the world.

Prayer: Abba Father, we thank and praise you for saving us.
Amen.

Saturday December 30

The Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas

1 John
2:12-17

Psalm
96:7-10

Luke
2:36-40

Faith, hope and perseverance

In today's First Reading, the author is encouraging us to focus on our love for the Father and not to love the things of this world. In the Gospel proclamation we see Anna, a prophetess, who has been faithful to the Lord all her life. She recognized the child Jesus and gave thanks as soon as she saw him. Anna knew the blessings of God through her gifts as a prophetess. She found true happiness in God, even though her outward circumstances may have indicated otherwise. Three words shine through today's readings: faith, hope and perseverance. As we reach the end of this year, let us be grateful for the wonderful things that God did in our lives. As we prepare ourselves for the New Year let us, like Anna have faith and persevere knowing that, in all ages, God has a plan for us. The world may speak despair, but we have hope in the Lord. Even when circumstances seem dim, the Lord's power will guide us safely in the coming year. Let us boldly step into the new year, strengthened with his power.

Prayer: Abba Father, you know all things, you know that I love you.
May my heart be free as that of a little child. Amen.

Sunday December 31

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Sirach
3:2-6,12-14

Psalm
128:1-5

Colossians
3:12-21

Luke
2:22-40

To love our parents is to love God

Today's first reading conveys an important message. As a Catechist I am often led to teach the importance of honouring and respecting parents because it is the only commandment that comes with a promise. Out of the Ten Commandments, the first three directly relate to God and then comes this commandment drawing our attention, even before it speaks about avoiding murder or crime. It draws our attention to our parents.

We have to respect and pay attention to our parents. The Scriptures promise, that we attract blessings by doing so and further says that, "everything will go well with you".

It is a fact that all parents are not perfect and there can be abusive parents too. However our Christian duty is to accept their weak human nature, and forgive and respect them in return. When we do so there is a reward promised for us by God.

We meet many in society, who are wounded and who hold grudges against their parents. We need to keep in mind what God tells us about our parents. It is God's will that our parents receive our love, respect and attention, therefore whatever we do for our parents, is something that we do for the Lord's sake. They may not deserve it, still we are bound to do the best for our parents and elders. By hurting them surely we are hurting ourselves, that is a common error and an experience we often come across. Children who treat their parents well are blessed in many ways.

Jesus Christ our Lord was born to a human family as God willed it. The Holy Family which consists of Saint Joseph, Mother Mary and Jesus is the role model for all human families.

By drawing inspiration from the Holy Family, we too can lead holy and beautiful family lives. The parents of the Lord Jesus paid attention to the Mosaic Law. As we hear in the Gospel proclamation, they take their first born to the temple, for the presentation of the Child Jesus.

The purification rites are followed to the letter, telling us that we too must have this kind of respect and concern for God's law. Our children learn from us. We have to set a right example in the way we follow God's laws, so that they could look up to us. They may not agree for some reason, but in the long run, with prayer and good example, we could win our children for the Lord.

As we draw near to the dawn of another year, let us invoke the Holy Spirit upon our families, our friends, our countries and our community, that we may receive his grace and blessings.

Prayer: Abba Father, as we stand at the threshold of a New Year may we cherish our families. Amen.

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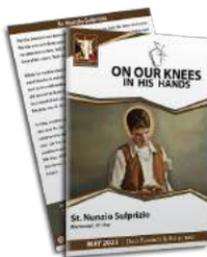
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