

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Anticipating Emmanuel

Loving Father and King of Glory,
you accept us with all of our flaws.
As we anticipate the nativity of our Lord,
we are reminded that we should
seek to model the humility
of Mary and Joseph
and obey God's will.
Help us find the serenity
to ready our hearts to welcome others,
as Mary and Joseph welcomed Jesus.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 18, 2022

Submitting to God's Will



Today's readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; Psalm 24:1–2, 3–4, 5–6; Romans 1:1–7; Matthew 1:18–24. In the second reading, St. Paul is referred to as “a slave of Christ Jesus.” The word *slave* to Paul means “one who is devoted to the service of another.” The apostle emulates what we are called to do and to become as Christians. In serving God, we submit to a duty that stems from our baptism.

Numerous works of art beautifully reflect Mary's yes at the annunciation. Today, we hear of St. Joseph's yes. When an angel appears to Joseph in a dream, telling him not to be afraid “to take Mary your wife into your home,” Joseph responds with action. “When Joseph awoke,” the

Gospel tells us, “he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took his wife into his home.” As another account of the nativity, this is a wonderful story to share with children and teenagers. Becoming the foster father of Jesus was not something that was done to Joseph; he accepted his role with eyes of faith.

This week pray for stronger faith to continue to ponder the mystery that is God-among-us. The Lord is here, and he is yet to come. Salvation is promised, and it is near. Joyful expectation, indeed. The second “O” antiphon is prayed today, moving us closer to Christmas: “O sacred Lord . . . Come . . . to set us free.”



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 19

O Flower of Jesse's Stem

In today's Gospel, we hear the angel tell Zechariah that his barren wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to the child John, who "will be great in the sight of the Lord." Take a moment today to ask God's blessing on all women who struggle to become pregnant, all who have difficult pregnancies, and those who will deliver a child this day. At a family meal, pray for parents, grandparents, foster parents, and all who work tirelessly to raise children. *Today's readings: Judges 13:2–7, 24–25a; Psalm 71:3–4a, 5–6ab; 16–17; Luke 1:5–25.*

Tuesday, December 20

O Key of David

Consider the "O" antiphon reference to Jesus as the key of David as the key to unlock our heavenly home. Today's Gospel reveals how Mary's words, "May it be done to me according to your word," gave her a role in salvation history. Before going to bed, read aloud the story of the annunciation from Luke as a way to joyfully anticipate Christmas. *Today's readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; Psalm 24:1–2, 3–4ab, 5–6; Luke 1:26–38.*

Wednesday, December 21

St. Peter Canisius

Today's "O" antiphon prays: "O Radiant Dawn, / splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: / Come, shine on those who dwell in darkness / and the shadow of death." The life work of St. Peter Canisius, a sixteenth-century German Jesuit priest and educator, was much like the "radiant dawn." He was dedicated to leading people from the "darkness" of distorted Catholic beliefs to the "radiant light" of correct information and right practice. He created several catechisms, helping adults and children know the true faith. Read St. Paul's letter to Timothy from your Bible. The letter models the work of St. Peter Canisius and gives guidance for our lives. *Today's*

readings: Song of Songs 2:8–14 or Zephaniah 3:14–18a; Psalm 33:2–3, 11–12, 20–21; Luke 1:39–45.

Thursday, December 22

O King of All Nations

Jesus came as the Son of God so that we would know God the divine Father. Begin the day by reading the Magnificat from today's Gospel from Luke. Let Mary's praise of God seep into your heart. Praise God in what you plan and do today as you finish your preparations for Christmas. *Today's readings: Samuel 1:24–28; 1 Samuel 2:1, 4–5, 6–7, 8abcd; Luke 1:46–56.*

Friday, December 23

St. John of Kanty

Today's "O" antiphon asks Emmanuel to "come and set us free." If possible, as a final preparation for Christmas, attend Mass. After receiving Communion, pray that you may become what you have received. Like St. John of Kanty, we are sometimes misunderstood, and are victims of injustice. But like St. John, we are so loved by God that we should trust in God's unconditional love. *Today's readings: Malachi 3:1–4, 23–24; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 8–9, 10 and 14; Luke 1:57–66.*

Saturday, December 24

Daybreak

In a Christmas Eve homily, St. Oscar Romero focused on the poverty of spirit needed for a true celebration of Christmas: "No one can celebrate a genuine Christmas without being truly poor. The self-sufficient, the proud, those who, because they have everything, look down on others, those who have no need even of God—for them there will be no Christmas. Only . . . those who need someone to come on their behalf, will have that someone. That someone is God, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Without poverty of spirit there can be no abundance of God" (published in *An Advent Sourcebook* [Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1988]). *Today's readings: 2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27 and 29; Luke 1:67–79.*

