

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



## A Body Prepared

Saving God,  
you shepherd your flock  
and give new life.  
Preparing to welcome the king of all nations,  
we call upon your name.  
Let us see your face,

guide us to serenity so we can discern  
your will.  
Grant us the courage to respond to you.  
Come to save us!  
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 22, 2024

## Leaping for Joy



*Today's readings: Micah 5:1–4a; Psalm 80:2–3, 15–16, 18–19; Hebrews 10:5–10; Luke 1:39–45.* Just before today's Gospel, the angel Gabriel tells Mary that she will "bear a son" (Luke 1:31). As confirmation of the pregnancy, Gabriel says that Elizabeth, is also pregnant. Since Elizabeth is past childbearing age, Gabriel implies that if Elizabeth is pregnant, Mary can be as well: "for nothing will be impossible for God" (1:37). Finally, when Elizabeth greets Mary, we hear that she is blessed because she "believed that what was spoken . . . by the Lord would be fulfilled."

This fulfillment is proclaimed in the first reading as Micah shares his prophecy of salvation: "From you shall

come forth for me / one who is to be ruler in Israel / . . . / his greatness / shall reach to the ends of the earth; / he shall be peace." The Letter to the Hebrews tells of Jesus' sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins, for as is sung in the refrain of the responsorial psalm, "we shall be saved."

Knowing this, Elizabeth exclaims, "the infant in my womb leaped for joy" the moment she heard Mary's greeting. Overcome by the Holy Spirit, mother and son anticipated the coming of the Lord. As we enter the final week of Advent, how can you ready yourself so that you, too, can leap for joy when the Lord approaches?



## THIS WEEK AT HOME

### Monday, December 23

#### O Emmanuel

Today's antiphon is "O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: come to save us, Lord our God!" With the end of Advent near, pray with the song "O Come, O Come Emmanuel," and if you are able, go to Mass today. Ask God to help you see that he is coming to save us. Consider how you, like Zechariah, might speak blessing God. *Today's readings: Malachi 3:1–4, 23–24; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 8–9, 10 and 14; Luke 1:57–66.*

### Tuesday, December 24

#### Sing the Goodness of the Lord

Today we hear the Canticle of Zechariah in the Gospel. Like the Canticle of Mary, this hymn proclaims the greatness of the Lord. Zechariah's praise of God speaks of the Lord's mercy, guidance, and salvation. Apart from the inevitable chaos of preparing for tomorrow's celebrations, write a canticle of praise. Remember to "worship him without fear!" *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.*

### Wednesday, December 25

#### The Nativity of the Lord

Alleluia! "A light has shone," today a Savior is born for us! Amidst the darkness and constant pull of worldly desires, rest in abundant joy knowing that the "Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace" reigns and sustains, "both now and forever." Resolve to proclaim this good news during Christmas Time. How can you "announce his salvation" and tell of "his wondrous deeds"? Consider sending mail to family and friends, baking Christmas cookies for someone who is homebound, or serving at a shelter. *Today's readings: Vigil: Isaiah 62:1–5; Psalm 89:4–5, 16–17, 27, 29 (2a); Acts 13:16–17, 22–25; Matthew 1:1–25. Midnight: Isaiah 9:1–6; Ps 96:1–2, 2–3, 11–12, 13; Titus 2:11–14; Luke 2:1–14. Dawn: Isaiah 62:11–12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11–12;*

*Titus 3:4–7; Luke 2:15–20. Day: Isaiah 52:7–10; Psalm 98:1, 2–3, 3–4, 5–6 (3c); Hebrews 1:1–6; John 1:1–18.*

### Thursday, December 26

#### St. Stephen, Martyr

The Church celebrate the witness of St. Stephen, who was chosen by the community of disciples to share Jesus' teachings. St. Stephen was stoned for "working great wonders and signs among the people." Read the account of his witness and martyrdom in Acts 6—7:60. Pray for the courage to model yourself after this saint's discipleship. *Today's readings: Acts 6:8–10, 7:54–59; Psalm 31:3cd–4, 6 and 8ab, 16bc and 17; Matthew 10:17–22.*

### Friday, December 27

#### St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

Today we celebrate the Feast of St. John, apostle and evangelist. From this saint, we hear that the faithful are to share the Good News, or to evangelize "so that you too may have fellowship . . . with the Father and with his Son." The work of evangelization is done in community: in today's Gospel, Mary Magdalene and two disciples share the news of the resurrection of the Lord. With whom do you share the call to evangelize? Say a prayer for that person and consider reaching out in gratitude for the partnership. *Today's readings: 1 John 1:1–4; Psalm 97:1–2, 5–6, 11–12; John 20:1a and 2–8.*

### Saturday, December 28

#### Feast of the Holy Innocents

Just as the angel told Joseph in the dream, King Herod searched for Jesus "to destroy him." Mary and Joseph take Jesus and flee, seeking refuge and safety. Today, on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, we honor the first martyrs: the children massacred in Bethlehem by King Herod as he searched for baby Jesus. If there is a pantry or community center near you, donate baby supplies, such as diapers or baby food. Say a prayer for those who are persecuted, for refugees, migrants, and displaced persons seeking safety. *Today's readings: 1 John 1:5–2:2; Psalm 124:2–3, 4–5, 7b–8; Matthew 2:13–18.*

