

Christ is near



Daily Reflections on the Advent 2025 Mass Readings

INTRODUCTION

Near the end of his life, Jesus prepared his disciples for when he would no longer be bodily present with them by promising to be with them in a new way. He also emphasized that they must be always on the alert because “The son of man will come!” (Mt 24:44). So during this Advent season we once again remind ourselves of Jesus’ promise and his charge to be always alert to notice the many surprising ways that he comes to us through the persons and events of our daily lives to draw us into an ever deeper communion with God. So if you find that these Advent reflections help you to be more attuned to God’s coming into yourself and your life, we invite you to consider using similar reflections for each day of the year found in the quarterly editions of *Words of Grace: Daily Reflections & Prayers for Catholics* available from *AllSaintsPress.com*.

—Steve Mueller, *Editor*

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Build a Peaceful World

Is 2:1-5 / Rom 13:11-14 / Mt 24:37-44

Today we see too much discord, too many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of difference, and an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth's resources and marginalizes the poorest. We want to say to the world, with humility and joy: Look to Christ! Come closer to him! Welcome his word that enlightens and consoles! Listen to his offer of love and become his one family: in the one Christ, we are one. This is the path to follow together, among ourselves but also with our sister Christian churches, with those who follow other religious paths, with those who are searching for God, with all women and men of good will, in order to build a new world where peace reigns, a peace that comes from God, the God who loves us all, unconditionally.

—Pope Leo XIV

*What peace and reconciliation
do I most long for to happen this Advent?*

The **Advent Wreath**, usually made from evergreens with 4 candles (three purple and one rose color), symbolizes the approaching celebration of Christ's coming at Christmas. Each Sunday (and the nights in between) the four candles are lighted successively and biblical readings or prayers are recited to prepare for Christmas.

Waging Peace

Is 4:2-6 / Mt 8:5-11

Peace is something to be waged, to plan for, to train for, to sacrifice for, to die for. Peace has institutional prerequisites that don't just happen; they need to be built. Peace has attitudinal prerequisites that run against the grain of our nationalistic and racist cultures. They can be brought about only by experiences of unlearning, relearning. We are given glimpses of the alternative culture that the nations will create when they have come to Jerusalem. The first is what we today call economic conversion. It is expressed in the phrase from the prophecy: swords shall be transformed into plowshares. The skills of smelting and smithing will be devoted to farming not arming. The end of war is announced as part of the prophets' hope.

—John Howard Yoder
Spiritual Writings

*What might I do to help end conflicts
in my household, family, parish or neighborhood?*

Advent devotions remind us of the meaning of the season. Special Advent devotions include the lighting of the Advent wreath, the Advent calendar which helps remind us of the season with daily thoughts and activities and Advent prayers that prepare us spiritually for the birth of Jesus Christ.

God's Peaceable Kingdom

Is 11:1-10 / Lk 10:21-24

Isaiah's marvelous vision of the peaceable Kingdom, in which all violence has been overcome and all men, women, and children live in loving unity with nature, calls for its realization in our day-to-day lives. Instead of being an escapist dream, it challenges us to anticipate what it promises. Every time we forgive our neighbor, every time we make a child smile, every time we show compassion to a suffering person, every time we arrange a bouquet of flowers, offer care to tame or wild animals, prevent pollution, create beauty in our homes and gardens, and work for peace and justice among peoples and nations we are making the vision come true. Instead of making us escape real life, this beautiful vision gets us involved.

—Henri J. M. Nouwen

Bread for the Journey

*What little act of forgiveness and compassion
can I do today to create greater unity and peace?*

"Now is the acceptable time spoken of by the Spirit, the day of salvation, peace and reconciliation: the great season of Advent. When we remove all obstacles to his presence he will come, at any hour and moment, to dwell spiritually in our hearts, bringing with him the riches of his grace."

—St. Charles Borromeo

The Sneaky Ways of God

Is 25:6-10a / Mt 15:29-37

The mystery of Advent/Christmas is the mystery of the human and the specific—as specific and human as each one of us, as the face you saw in the mirror this morning, as the children you almost tripped over on your way out to work, as the shoppers at the store counters. God isn't obvious in entering the world. What is more ordinary than a baby's birth to a poor family in a poor country? Still, God leaves tracks in the straw. The tracks are faint but there for those who look and follow them with imagination. And imagination is the dancing partner of faith. Though that birth is surely not just a metaphor, it is a mystery because it involves the unknowable—dare I say sneaky?—ways of God.

—Ted Loder
Tracks in the Straw

*What traces now reveal how God
has been sneaking into my life in unnoticed ways?*

In most Bible translations today, God's sacred personal name, Yahweh, is put in small capital letters. So when Isaiah says the "LORD God" this means "Yahweh God." And when GOD is in small capitals it also means YHWH, thus "Lord GOD" means "Lord Yahweh."

Build on Rock

Is 26:1-6 / Mt 7:21, 24-27

There are times in our lives for action, when it is simply not enough to cry out, “Lord, Lord!” To do nothing is like building a house on sandy ground. Once the rainy season sets in, the water will lash at the foundation and the house will collapse. Only when each of our actions is directed by a conscious turning to the Lord for guidance, only when a sense of the Lord’s presence accompanies us in all that we do, only then will there be an integral wholeness about life. No single action will be out of harmony with the others nor disrupt the peace of our lives. Whether we are silent or speak, remain motionless or act, we must rest upon the rock of the Lord.

—Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP
Biblical Meditations for Advent

*What has most helped me turn
toward God so far this Advent?*

“Hold dominion over my heart, O Lord. Keep it as your inheritance. Make your dwelling in me, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit. For you are my God and I will praise you, together with the Eternal Father and your quickening Spirit, now, henceforth and forever.”

—St. John Damascene

Open Our Eyes!

Is 29:17-24 / Mt 9:27-31

All have eyes, but some have eyes that are shrouded in darkness, unable to see the sun's light. Because the blind cannot see it, it does not follow that the sun does not shine. The blind must trace the cause back to themselves and their eyes. In the same way, you have eyes in your mind that are shrouded in darkness because of your sins and evil deeds. No one who has sin within can see God. But if you want, you can be healed. Entrust yourself to the doctor, to the One who will be able to open the eyes of your mind and heart. Who is this doctor? It is God, who heals and gives life through God's Word and God's wisdom.

—Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch

Apology to Autolycus

*What blind spot most keeps me
from accepting Jesus' healing touch?*

The **Holy One of Israel** is a brief description of God summarizing God's most important characteristics. Holiness identifies God as transcendent—totally other and different from all created things. But Yahweh is also Israel's special God by the covenant established with them from among all the nations.

Jesus Cured Them

Is 30:19-21, 23-26 / Mt 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6-8

Knowing God's will for us can be difficult, especially when all the options seem to be basically good ones. How do we choose? The prophet Isaiah speaks of God as our Teacher. We need to trust that God will be with us in our searching and our decision-making. If we long to follow God's ways, Holy Wisdom will surely guide us and teach us what is best for us. Isaiah also implies that we need to listen. Rarely will we hear God's words as clearly as Isaiah did, but if we daily attune to God through prayer, try to be open, be aware of our resistances, and live life as best we can, then I believe we can trust that we will make good decisions.

—Joyce Rupp
Inviting God In

*How might I bring God's perspective
more into my daily decision-making?*

The **kingdom of heaven** is Matthew's characteristic description of the kingdom of God. Since out of reverence Jews often substituted another word instead of saying God's name, this might be one more indication that Matthew had a previous Jewish background.

In Your Heart Prepare a Way

Is 11:1-10 / Rom 15:4-9 / Mt 3:1-12

The Lord wishes to find a way to enter your hearts and walk therein. Prepare this way for God. What way are we to prepare for the Lord? Is it a material way? Can the Word of God take such a way? Ought we not rather to prepare an inner way for the Lord by making the paths of our heart straight and smooth? Indeed, this is the way by which the Word of God enters in order to take up his abode in the human heart made ready to receive him. We can prepare the way of the Lord there and make straight the way where the Word, the Wisdom of God, may walk within you without stumbling and may give you knowledge of his mysteries and of his coming.

—Origen
Homily

*What am I most doing to open a new way
for God to come into my heart this Advent?*

God's inevitable judgment and restoration of the people of Israel was a constant prophetic theme. John the Baptist appealed to the image of God first separating the good from the bad like the edible **wheat and** the discarded **chaff**, and then gathering the people like good wheat into the granary.

Trusting Always

Gn 3:9-15, 20 / Eph 1:3-6, 11-12 / Lk 1:26-38

We probably don't often think of ourselves as having much in common with Mary. She lived in an utterly different culture than we do. She was probably just a young girl when the angel Gabriel appeared to her. She bore the Christ with love beyond all telling. But if you can't find the common ground between yourself and the mother of God, try this: After Gabriel brought this life-changing news to her in her parents' home in Nazareth, *the angel left her*. And that's your anchor. Cling to that. The angel, at least as far as we know from scripture, did not return to her again. Not in Bethlehem. Not in Jerusalem, where Jesus was "lost." Not even, O God, at the cross. She was faithful. Just like we are called to be.

—Kathy McGovern

*How am I most struggling to remain faithful,
though I may not feel God's nearness?*

Mary's **Immaculate Conception**, solemnly defined as a Catholic doctrine in 1854 by Pope Pius IX, describes her conception in the womb of her mother Anne and is not to be confused with Jesus' Virgin Birth, which describes his birth from the womb of Mary.

Listening for the Lost

Is 40:1-11 / Mt 18:12-14

Are we so deaf that we do not hear the just God demanding that we do all we can to stop the injustice suffocating the world? Are we so alienated that we can worship God at our ease in luxurious temples and fail to see, hear, and serve God where he is present and where he requires our presence—among the poor, the oppressed, the victims of injustices in which we ourselves are often involved? It is not difficult to hear God's call today in the world about us. It is difficult to do more than offer an emotional response, sorrow and regret. It is even more difficult to give up our comfort, break with old habits, let ourselves be moved by grace and change our life, be converted.

—Dom Helder Camara
The Desert Is Fertile

*How might I overcome my comfort
to do something for those in need today?*

Holiness as unique to God—no human analogy, that is, nothing in our experience is the starting point for understanding it and elevating it to the divine level (like know, see, king, father, etc.). It separates God's type of being from our own and thus nothing created can be called "holy" unless it comes into contact with God and God bestows holiness on it.

Take My Yoke upon You

Is 40:25-31 / Mt 11:28-30

O Lord, you are meek and merciful. Who would not give oneself wholeheartedly to your service. “Take my yoke upon you,” you say. And what is this yoke of yours like? “My yoke,” you say, “is easy and my burden light.” Who would not be glad to bear a yoke that does not press hard but caresses? Who would not be glad for a burden that does not weigh heavy but refreshes? And what is this yoke of yours that does not weary, but gives rest? It is, of course, that first and greatest commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.” What is easier, sweeter, more pleasant, than to love goodness, beauty, and love, the fullness of which you are, O Lord, my God?

—St. Robert Bellarmine

*What burden am I willing to take up
and share with Christ today?*

Jesus invites us to share his burden because he is **“meek and humble of heart,”** which means that he has a gentleness that arises from humility and expresses itself in kindness not violence toward others. He is a teacher who expects his disciples to be likewise.

Now Is the Time

Is 41:13-20 / Mt 11:11-15

We need to direct our attention again and again back to the present, back to our own lives, away from the rabbits we chase and the anxious distractions, and to what God might be saying to us now. The reason we pay attention to today and stop worrying about tomorrow is that today is the only place we can encounter God. Looking at the birds is training in paying attention to God's activity in the present, which is the only place we can experience God's activity. The way to get rid of worries is to pay attention to the present. Give yourself fully to what is in front of you. Consider your life is training in attending to God. For there, if we pay attention, we might hear God speak as well.

—L. Roger Owens
Abba, Give Me a Word

*How might I focus more on the present
to pay more attention to God's presence?*

“Advent invites us to open our hearts to welcome Jesus. During Advent we do not just anticipate Christmas but are also called to anticipate the glorious return of Christ—when he will return at the end of time—preparing ourselves, with consistent and courageous choices, for our final encounter with him.” —Pope Francis

The Way of Love

Zec 2:14-17 or Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab / Lk 1:26-38 or Lk 1:39-47

It is natural that those who truly want to be Jesus' companion really share in his love for the poor. For us, the option for the poor is not ideological but is born from the Gospel. Just as we cannot ignore the poor on our spiritual journey to Christ, so we cannot ignore our faith as we labor for the poor. In Our Lady of Guadalupe, we have a model of "the preferential option for the poor" in a woman who came to conquered and conqueror alike in order to show to all—even the poorest and those without hope—the way to true resurrection. In her, we hear a voice expressing the true means to overcoming difficulties through personal generosity and the "way of love."

—Carl A. Anderson & Msgr. Eduardo Chávez
Our Lady of Guadalupe

*How might I reach out somehow
to make a poor or needy person's life better today?*

"O gracious and loving Mary, Lady of Guadalupe, through your presence make us aware of our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son. May Christ send us blessings of peace and harmony, and may we receive love and the healing we need to get closer to him. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen."

—Pope St. John XXIII
October 12, 1961

Turning Our Mind toward God

Sir 48:1-4, 9-11 / Mt 17:9a, 10-13

Paranoia is a popular word that literally, (although, not technically) means to be out of your mind. To be paranoid is to have lost your way. There is another word, which has not yet entered popular speech, for the turning of the mind to the lost home: *metanoia*. The path of *metanoia* is a way of glory which leads us home. Paranoia (to be out of your mind) is that process by which the mind is unhinged and the personality splintered and fragmented. *Metanoia* (to turn the mind, to be right in your mind), which is usually translated in the New Testament as repentance, means the restoration of mind, the coming together of the shattered fragments of the self. It means a turning to God as the source and the power of life.

—Alan Jones
Journey into Christ

*How have I grown this year by better turning
my mind to God and God's ways?*

“God seeks us where we are, not so that we stay there, but so that we may come to be where he is, so that we may get beyond ourselves.”

—Pope Benedict XVI

Joyful Anticipation!

Is 35:1-6a, 10 / Jas 5:7-10 / Mt 11:2-11

Advent is a season of joyful anticipation. It calls us to be alert and watchful, waiting in patient hope for the one who is coming. It may seem silly to be waiting for someone who has already come, but the season isn't just a commemoration of the birth of Jesus. It also calls on us to prepare for the second coming of Christ not with fear, but with joy. It invites us to experience more fully and in new ways the presence of Christ with us now. Advent is a time of deep longing for Jesus—not just remembering his first coming but anticipating his second coming in glory. It's a time of longing for a deeper relationship with him right now. Coupled with this watchful waiting, this longing, this hope in the promise is a deep trust in our loving God.

—Angeline Hubert

*For what am I most hoping and
longing to happen during this Advent season?*

Today is called **Gaudete Sunday** (Latin: rejoice), so named from the opening Entrance Antiphon of the Mass “Gaudete in Domino semper” (Rejoice in the Lord always, Philippians 4:4). On this Sunday rose vestments are normally worn in the Eucharistic liturgy.

I Will Ask You a Question

Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a / Mt 21:23-27

Unlike answers, questions attract and hold our attention. They are irresistible, like a half-open door. Answers, especially wrapped in dogmatic certainty or claiming to be right in this form for all time, soon come either to bore or oppress us. Even the best answers can be as unwelcoming as a door banged in our face when they exclude alternative responses. Rather than giving answers and making rules, Jesus called people to experiential knowledge. By asking questions or telling stories he invited his hearers to a personal discovery of truth, a redemptive recognition of reality. Throughout the Gospels his questions magnetize and capture our attention. By his questions he leads his disciples into a deeper understanding of who we are and who he is.

—Laurence Freeman
Jesus the Teacher Within

What question would I most like to ask Jesus right now?

The Jerusalem Temple was not a quiet prayer building like our churches. Although it had a quiet innermost room reserved for God alone, it was surrounded by the busy public gathering **temple area** where foreign money was changed into temple coinage, offerings were collected and animals were daily killed, butchered and sacrificed.

Changing Our “No” to “Yes”

Zep 3:1-2, 9-13 / Mt 21:28-32

In today's Gospel, the one who makes the best impression is the first brother, not because he said “no” to his father, but because after his “no” he changed it to a “yes.” God is patient with each of us. God does not tire, does not desist after our “no.” God leaves us free even to distance ourselves from God and make mistakes. God's patience is wonderful! How the Lord always waits for us. God is always beside us to help us but respects our freedom. God anxiously awaits our “yes,” so as to welcome us anew in God's fatherly arms and to fill us with God's boundless mercy. Faith in God asks us to renew every day the choice of good over evil, the choice of the truth rather than lies, the choice of love for our neighbor over selfishness.

—Pope Francis

*To what do I most need to say “yes” to God
in myself and my life now?*

The “**O Antiphons**,” (because all begin with the interjection “O”) refer to the 7 special antiphons or invitations to prayer recited before the *Magnificat* during evening Vespers of the Liturgy of the Hours during the Octave before Christmas, December 17-24. These Antiphons have been part of the liturgy since the 8th century.

Remembering Our Roots

Gn 49:2, 8-10 / Mt 1:1-17

Matthew went to great pains to record Jesus' lineage. He makes it clear that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham and of David. That makes him a son of God's core covenant with these chosen people, and a royal leader. But what is that to us who are neither Jewish nor fans of monarchy? Just as we may quote our parents or explore our genealogy, this is a reminder of our background in faith. The God who took flesh in Jesus was involved with humanity long before the first Christmas Day—and continues to be the covenanting God whose kingdom on earth is hidden among us. Matthew's genealogy invites us to remember the roots of our faith—from the level of our own family to the history of the universe.

—Mary M. McGlone, CSJ

How do the roots of my faith in Jesus and his ancestors most influence my life now?

“O Wisdom, coming forth from the mouth of the most high, reaching from one end to the other, mightily and sweetly ordering all things. Come and teach us the way of prudence.”

—Liturgy of the Hours

Listen to God in Silence

Jer 23:5-8 / Mt 1:18-25

St. Joseph was great in faith, not because he uttered any words of his own but above all because he heard the words of God. He listened in silence. The words of God fell deeply into the soul of that upright man. And we, do we know how to listen to God's word? Do we know how to absorb it in the depths of our souls? Do we open our consciences to this word? Do we read Sacred Scripture? We have so much need of faith! Great faith to drive out fear is so necessary to people of our time, this difficult modern age. Fear not to accept Mary, together with Joseph. Fear not to accept Jesus Christ. Fear not to accept him with faith like Joseph's.

—Pope St. John Paul II

Prayers & Devotions

*How has my listening in silence to God most
helped me this Advent and this year?*

“O Adonai, and leader of the house of Israel, who appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush and gave him the law on Sinai: Come and redeem us with an outstretched arm.”

—*Liturgy of the Hours*

Open-Ended Waiting & Hoping

Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a / Lk 1:5-25

Open-ended waiting such as we see in Mary is hard for us. We seek to control the future. We want the future to go in a specific way, and if it does not, we are disappointed and can even slip into despair. But Zechariah, Elizabeth and Mary were not filled with wishes but with hope. Hope is something very different. Hope is trusting that something will be fulfilled, but fulfilled according to the promises and not just according to our wishes. So hope is always open-ended. I have found it very important in my own life to let go of my wishes and start hoping. It is only when I was willing to let go of wishes that something really new, something beyond my own expectations, could happen to me.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen
Seeds of Hope

*When and how has my open-ended hope been answered
with something unexpected from God?*

“O Root of Jesse, standing as a sign among the peoples, before you kings will shut their mouths, to you the nations will make their prayer. Come and deliver us, and delay no longer.”

—Liturgy of the Hours

Now Hear This!

Is 7:10-14 / Lk 1:26-38

We often listen to inspiring accounts of scripture as passive observers of historical blessings visited upon others. Everything changes, however, if we hear the gospel as participants in an ongoing story. Every miracle and grace recorded in the Bible is ours by extension. The angel Gabriel is not only speaking to Mary in the past, but to each one of us in the present. Disciples of Christ are called to hear the good news that we are “full of grace” and vessels of the divine. Once we embrace this humbling and daunting truth, we are invited to put aside fear, to acknowledge the living presence of Christ within us, and—each in our own way—to give birth to God in the world.

—Jerry Welte

*What labor pains am I called to endure
to give birth to the presence of God for others?*

“O Key of David and scepter of the house of Israel, you open and no one can shut; you shut and no one can open. Come and lead the prisoners from the prison house, those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death.”

—*Liturgy of the Hours*

The God of Surprises

Is 7:10-14 / Rom 1:1-7 / Mt 1:18-24

In today's Gospel, Joseph breaks the law, knowing what he should do with a seemingly "adulterous woman," but he doesn't divorce Mary as the law clearly tells him to do, even though he has no direct way to know that the baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit. It can certainly lead us to wonder why so much of Christianity became so legalistic when we have at its very beginning a man who breaks the law to protect the dignity of the woman he loves. The way we've shaped Christianity, one would think it was all about being nice and middle class and "normal" and under the law. But Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are none of those things so maybe we've been looking for God in places we consider nice and pretty. Instead, God chooses the ordinary and messy.

—Richard Rohr
Homily

*When have I most experienced God
in the messy ordinary details of my life this Advent?*

"O Rising Sun, splendor of light eternal and sun of righteousness, come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death."

—Liturgy of the Hours

Mary's Song of Mercy & Justice

1 Sm 1:24-28 / Lk 1:46-56

Mary's *Magnificat* is not just a hymn of praise to God. It is that and much more, a manifesto of non-violence and a call, not to arms, but to disarmament and justice. She publicly proclaims what God is doing in the world—bringing justice to the poor, fulfilling his promise of peace. She testifies that God is a God of mercy, a God of nonviolence, a God of peace. Such serious words cause trouble in our own times, too. Our nonviolence begins as we face the violence within us. It requires that we declare a cease-fire, place our inner violence before our God, reconcile the conflicting sides within us, and make peace with ourselves. It is a daily project that we must undertake for the rest of our lives.

—John Dear
Mary of Nazareth

*What fears that provoke anger and violence
in me do I most need to eliminate?*

“O King of the nations, and their desire, the cornerstone making both one. Come and save the human race, which you fashioned from clay.”

—Liturgy of the Hours

Humbled by Christ's Coming

Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 / Lk 1:57-66

We should daily praise and thank God for all God's blessings and gifts, but we must think especially about the meaning of Christmas. God comes to us in the person of his Son made flesh in the womb of Mary. We need to reflect on this great mystery of God's love for us. Each one of us, in awe and wonder, should ask, "Who am I that the Lord himself should come to me?" Before receiving holy communion we are invited to confess, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you." We are not worthy indeed, but the Holy Spirit enlightens us to see that God loves us and gives us the great gift of his own Son. And that is really something to praise and thank God for.

—Charles E. Miller, CM
Opening the Treasures

*How can I best express my thanks for God's
coming to me in myself and my life?*

"O Emmanuel, our king and our lawgiver, the hope of the nations and their Savior. Come and save us, O Lord our God."

—Liturgy of the Hours

Giving Birth to Christ

Day: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 | Lk 1:67-79

Christmas Vigil: Is 62:1-5 | Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 | Mt 1:1-25

Our task is to give birth to Christ in our world. What is the process by which we do this? Mary is the paradigm for us to imitate. From her we get the pattern: Let the word of God take root and make you pregnant; gestate that by giving it the nourishing sustenance of your own life; submit to the pain that is demanded for it to be born to the outside; then spend years coaxing it from infancy to adulthood; and finally, during and after all of this, do some pondering, accept the pain of not understanding and of letting go. Christmas isn't automatic, it can't be taken for granted. It began with Mary, but each of us is asked to make our own contribution to giving flesh to faith in the world.

—Ronald Rolheiser
Mary as a Model of Faith

*How might I find a way to imitate
Mary's example and give birth to Christ today?*

"What good is it if Mary gave birth to the son of God fourteen hundred years ago if I do not also give birth to the Son of God in my time and culture?"

—Meister Johannes Eckhart

Thursday, December 25

The Nativity of the Lord
(Christmas)

We Are Born in Christ Today

Night: Is 9:1-6 | Ti 2:11-14 | Lk 2:1-14

Dawn: Is 62:11-12 | Ti 3:4-7 | Lk 2:15-20

Day: Is 52:7-10 | Heb 1:1-6 | Jn 1:1-18

Christ, light of light, is born to us, he is born in us as light, and therefore we who believe are born to new light. That is to say, our souls are born to new life and new grace by receiving him who is the truth. For Christ, invisible in his own nature, has become visible in our nature. He wills to be visible in us, to live in us, work in us, and save us through his secret action in our own hearts and the hearts of our brothers and sisters. So we must receive the light of the newborn Savior by faith, in order to manifest it by our witness in common praise and by the works of our charity towards one another.

We are born in Christ today!

—Thomas Merton
Seasons of Celebration

*How might I thank God for becoming visible
in Jesus and revealing God's ways?*

The word **Christmas** comes from the Old English *Cristes Maesse*, the Mass of Christ, and is first found in 1038. In Latin it was called *Dies Natalis*, the Day of Birth, from which comes the French *Noël*. The first evidence of its celebration is attested in Egypt around AD 200.

Christ Comes in Everyone

Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59 / Mt 10:17-22

It is part of God's plan for us that Christ shall come to us in everyone; it is in their particular role that we must come to know him. He may come as a little child, making enormous demands, giving enormous consolation. He may come as a stranger, so that we must give the hospitality to a stranger that we should like to give to Christ. If we see everyone in our life as "another Christ" we shall treat everyone with the reverence and objectivity that must grow into love and, as a matter of sheer logic, we shall accept whatever they bring to us, in the way of joy or sorrow or responsibility, as coming from the hand of Christ.

—Caryll Houselander
A Child in Winter

*Who has most revealed the hidden presence
of Christ to me this Christmas?*

Martyr (Greek: a witness) identifies one who gives testimony to the faith, even if that means death. In the Early Church, martyrs were the first to be honored as saints. The Church's official listing of saints and blessed is contained in a book still called the *Roman Martyrology*.

Sharing the Gospel Message

1 Jn 1:1-4 / Jn 20:1a, 2-8

How good it is to be in God's presence and God once more touches our lives and impels us to share his new life! Then we "we speak of what we have seen and heard" (1 Jn 1:3). The best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from contemplating it with love, lingering over its pages and reading it with the heart. If we approach it in this way, its beauty will amaze and constantly excite us. But if this is to come about, we need to recover a contemplative spirit which can help us to realize ever anew that we have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life. There is nothing more precious which we can give to others.

—Pope Francis
The Joy of the Gospel, #264

*How might I better share the fruits
of my Bible reflection with others?*

Evangelist identifies the author of one of the four gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In a wider sense, it has come to be used for one who publicly preaches Christian beliefs (via media like television, televangelists) or engages in Christian missionary work.

Becoming a Holy Family Today

Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 / Col 3:12-21 / Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

Heavenly Father, you have given us the model of life in the holy family of Nazareth. Help us to make our family another Nazareth where love, peace and joy reign. May it be deeply contemplative, intensely eucharistic, revived with joy. Help us to stay together in joy and sorrow in family prayer. Teach us to see Jesus in the members of our families, especially in their distressing disguise. Help us carry out our family duties in a holy way. May we love one another as God loves each one of us, more and more each day, and forgive each other's faults as you forgive our sins. Help us, O Loving Father, to take whatever you give and give whatever you take with a big smile.

—St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta

A Simple Path

*What might I do today to make my household
more loving, forgiving and prayerful?*

Although there is no historical evidence for this particular massacre in Bethlehem, **King Herod**, appointed “King of the Jews” by the Romans (37–4 BC), was known for his cruelty and when his rule was threatened he would certainly act quickly and ruthlessly to eliminate any possible rivals.

Our Daily Advent Prayer

How is it, my God,
that you have given me
this hectic busy life
when I have so little time
to enjoy your presence.

I know that you are
constantly beside me,
yet I am usually so busy
that I ignore you.

If you want me to remain so busy,
please force me
to think about and love you
even in the midst
of such hectic activity.

—*St. Teresa of Avila*