Winter's Wisdom

Advent 2026



ADVENT 2026
INTRODUCTION

The mention of Advent always stirs thoughts of waiting: waiting for Christmas. We recall the three ways that Christ comes: in history in Bethlehem, in the daily events of our lives, and in the second coming for which we wait.

I've been thinking that we've got it all wrong! We need not wait for God! God is ever present, always with us. The name Emmanuel means God-with-us. And that is the truth we hear in the Scriptures and in our Sacraments. God is indeed with us.

This Advent, I've come to see that it's GOD who waits for us!

. . .waits for us to notice our very creation by God. We each have unique gifts as well as certain limitations. God only sees our goodness and waits for us to notice too.

. . .waits for us to notice the many ways in which God is with us: in the beauty and amazing capacities of creation. We know God when we receive and give love. And we turn to God when we encounter mystery, when we don't have answers or explanations. God is especially close in our moments and seasons of pain.

. . .waits for us to notice when we observe people acting with kindness and concern—this is indeed living in the image of God.

. . .waits for us to notice that emptiness in our hearts that can only be filled with/by God.

. . .waits for us to notice the innocence and joy of children, and we hear echoes of Jesus' calling us to change and become more like them.

It is true that in Advent we wait. But, in reality it is God who waits for us. May we be renewed in our response. This Advent, let us INTEND to see, to experience Emmanuel: God with us. Amen.

Sallie Latkovich, CSJ
- revised 2026

Cover Photo – Theresa Hafner, CSJ

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
NOVEMBER 29

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 63: 16b-17, 19b; 64 :2-7
Ps 80: 2-3,15-16, 18-19
1 Cor 1:3-9
Mk 13:33-37

REFLECTION

"God is faithful and by God you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ." 1 Cor 1, 9

When I was a primary grade teacher, I liked to share the tradition of the Advent Calendar with my students as a balance to the crazy consumerism of Christmas. Recently while searching to find a calendar for my young nephews, I was amazed at the modern spin on the Advent countdown tradition. Offerings for daily reveals included wines, dad jokes, rock star figurines, and the most unusual, "The Jesus Escape Room Advent Calendar."

After a bit of outrage about this being one more example of the commercialization of Christmas, I thought about alternative ideas to better prepare my heart for this wonderous season. Today's readings provided a good head start.

Isaiah pleads, "Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down" and I reply, please heal our broken world. The Psalmist urges: "look and see" and I ask to be more responsive to the needs of those around me. Corinthians reminds me "Give thanks …you lack no spiritual gift as you wait" and I think about how I can be more patient and less selfish.

Watch, implore, be grateful, will be the themes for my personal Advent calendar. What can I conscientiously do each day to better prepare my heart to ease into the beautiful days of Christmas? I invite you to try the same.

PRAYER

Wondrous One, in this season of anticipation, please diminish my distractions as I focus on the gratitude I have for all that is and all that is yet to be.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Before falling asleep each night, think about what one thing you might do the next day to create your own Advent calendar.

Jean McGrath, CSJ
Chicago, IL

MONDAY – FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
NOVEMBER 30

SCRIPTURE

Romans 10: 9-18
Psalm 19: 8 – 11
Mt: 4 18-22

REFLECTION

"For if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord,
And believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead,
you will be saved." Romans 10: 9
"Your words, Lord … are more precious than gold…" Ps. 18:11
"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Mt. 4:19

In today's gospel Jesus walks on the edge of the Sea of Galilee, a scene thick with fishing boats. He spots Peter and his brother, Andrew, and calls out, "Come after me and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they leave their nets and follow him. It sounds so spare a start for such a world-shaking launch. But this is Jesus and these men likely know something of him because of the influence of John the Baptist.

What kind of disciples is Jesus seeking? Not scholars, not men of great wealth or social stature. Fishermen - who know when, where, and how to fish. What does he ask? He asks them to know him, not just to know about him, but to travel with him as he reveals the good news of salvation.

What is good news for them? That they come to know with their hearts what Paul later tells the Romans – this Jesus is Lord, Kyrios, the One whom God raised from the dead.

PRAYER

Jesus, I have learned much about you, certainly
that you are Lord and that you were raised from the dead.
Give my heart the grace of knowing you more intimately,
as did the apostles, following in your footsteps each day.
Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Let me remember that I bring good news
when my heart is attentive and listening,
not when I am overly concerned
about saying the right words.

Joan LaPlace, CSJ
Baton Rouge, LA

TUESDAY – FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 1

SCRIPTURE

Is 11: 1-10
Ps 72: 1-2, 7-8, 12-13,17
Lk 10: 21-24

REFLECTION

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit."
Isaiah 11:1

Have you ever been walking in the woods and come upon a tree stump, with no apparent life? Most of us have experienced something that felt like a stump. A lifelong dream that has not come to fruition, a relationship that seems irreparable, doubt and fear that won't leave us, an experience of unbearable grief, a failure that seems to define us, or a time when God feels distant.

During those times, we are tempted to look at the stump and believe that "Nothing can grow here anymore." But Isaiah reminds us to take another look and see that there is life in the roots of the stump. It does not mean every painful circumstance or every hardship will immediately be taken away or changed in the way we would want it to be, but God can bring something new out of what appears hopeless. Therefore, we can place our hope in God because nothing is impossible for God.

PRAYER

God of great love, thank You for being with us during the good times and difficult times.
When our lives feel like stumps and we cannot imagine anything growing again, remind us that You are the God who causes new life to spring from unexpected places.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

When a situation seems hopeless, help me to turn to God and be reminded of God's great love for me and that God is enfolding me in that love.

Tami Schab, CSJ
Kalamazoo, MI

WEDNESDAY – FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 2

SCRIPTURE

Is 25: 6-10
Ps 23: 1-6
Mt 15: 29-37

REFLECTION

"Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?"" Mt 15:34

Jesus was faced with a hungry crowd. He could have fed them, like manna in the desert, a miracle that surely would have gotten everyone's attention. Yet, he asked his disciples what they had to offer. Jesus took their meager offering and fed the whole crowd.

I think Jesus often asks of us, "How many loaves do you have, and will you give them to me?" What time, treasure, and talents do we have to feed the hungers of the world? We can look at the world around us and think the needs are too big, and our offerings are too small. Can we offer what we have without worrying if we will have enough left over for ourselves? Do we truly believe in the miracle that Jesus can take what we offer and make it enough, and not just enough, but more than enough?

PRAYER

Good and gracious God, you have gifted us with so much.
Give us the courage to share what we have, trusting in you to provide for us in our needs.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Give of yourself today to someone who hungers.

Pat Murray, CSJ
Beckley, WV

THURSDAY – FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 3

SCRIPTURE

Is 26:1-6
Ps 118: 1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27
Mt 7: 21, 24-27

REFLECTION

"This is the plan decreed: you will GENERATE PEACE, the peace entrusted to you." Is 26: 3
"Open for me the GATES of SAVING JUSTICE, I shall go in and thank God." Ps 118: 19
"Everyone who LISTENS to these words of mine and ACTS on them… builds their house on rock." Mt 7: 24

Recently, I held a door open waiting for the last of thirtyish people, most of them students. The beauty of that small choice returned to me later when several of those same students eagerly ran ahead to open a door for me, smiling warmly.

In Imagine One, Sister Cynthia Sabathier writes that offering respect, reverence, and concern enriches others while expanding our own goodwill. She invites us to foster "spaciousness" and resist "too-muchness." This reminded me of when my children were young. I used to set the kitchen clock back an hour (or two) just to build a sense of ease into our morning routine.

Today is the Feast Day of St. Francis Xavier. He understood the shifting sands of political turmoil and tribalism, yet he chose to stand firm on the rock of loving people without distinction. By slowing down to create spaciousness for others, we build the very unity he championed - one open door at a time.

PRAYER

Dear God,
Please!
I can't; You must; I am yours; Show me the way!

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Commit to holding open at least one "door" this week for a group of people with the intention of generating peace.

Brooke Whitten, CSJ Associate
Noblesville, IN

FRIDAY – FIRST WEEK OF LENT
DECEMBER 4

SCRIPTURE

Is 29: 17-24
Ps 27: 1, 4, 13-14
Mt 9: 27-31

REFLECTION

"…When the children see the work of my hands in their midst, they shall… be in awe of the God of Israel…: Is 29:23
" …Do you believe?... Let it be done for you according to your faith…" Mt 9:28-29

How strong is your faith? If Jesus were to ask you, "Do you believe?" How would you answer? The next line that Jesus speaks is the reason I ask those questions because he says, "Let it be done for you according to your faith."

We are in the first week of Advent and for our Jewish brothers and sisters Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, begins this evening. In our passage today, we have the healing of two blind people. What is it that you cry out to God to see…to come into the light and believe deeper during this beautiful, gentle season from darkness to light? Like children on a Christmas morning, surrounded by squeals of delight and awe, what is it you desire during this season of Advent that would open your eyes and heart to the God in your midst and bring you to the gift of awe and wonderment from your relationship with God…for your community…for the world?

PRAYER

"Open my eyes, Lord. Help me to see Your face…Open my ears, Lord. Help me to hear Your voice…Open my heart, Lord. Help me to love like You…" May Your light radiate through me as I see, listen, hear, and love this day with a deeper awareness of Your presence…Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

If you can, listen to the song, Open My Ears, by Jesse Manibusan on YouTube to expand your prayer. Walk this day as if you were seeing things for the first time…Notice how you feel and be filled with awe in the presence of God.

Juli de Tarnowsky, CSJ
La Grange Park, IL

SATURDAY – FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 5

SCRIPTURE

Is 30: 19-21, 23-26
Ps 147: 1-6
Mt 9: 35-10: 1, 5-8

REFLECTION

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying,
"This is the way; walk in it." Is. 30: 21
"God's understanding has no limit." Ps147: 5

There are times in our lives when we long for clarity about what we are to do. We might be in a time of transition or just experiencing stress in our daily lives. Advent is a time when we wait, listen, and long for God's presence in our lives. We light our Advent wreathes. We sit in silence. We anticipate God's coming into our lives. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had the clarity of words telling us the way to proceed?

Instead, every year we have the Advent Season to practice listening for that quiet nudge within our hearts that shows us the way. We learn to trust that God speaks to us in the stillness of our hearts. We grow in confidence that we are walking hand in hand with our God.

Psalm 147 reminds us that God's understanding has no limit. God understands our changes as we move through life and our longing for direction as we move through these changes.

Together with God, we find the way and walk in it.

PRAYER

Loving God, we trust in your presence during this Advent season of hope and anticipation.
Teach us to listen to your voice, to the nudges within our hearts calling us to follow in your way.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Take time today to sit in stillness and listen for the voice of God speaking in your heart.

Marie Hogan, CSJ
Detroit, MI

SUNDAY – SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 6

SCRIPTURE

Is 40: 1-5, 9-11
Ps 85: 2-14
2 Peter 3: 8-14
Mk 1: 1-8

REFLECTION

"…Jesus Christ…" "…the Son of God…"
"…a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin..."
"I am not worthy…"
"I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."
Mk 1: 1-8

Some challenging, esoteric ideas and language from this ancient text, especially for this 21st-century disciple with no academic background in sacred scripture. In the passage:

For John, who was "Jesus Christ" when Spirit and Jesus have led this disciple to understand that Christ is cosmic while Jesus was a human living into a new fullness of the Christ identity?

For John, who was "the Son of God" when Spirit and Jesus have led this disciple to understand that everyone and everything—all creation—is the Beloved of God?

What was "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin" when Spirit and Jesus have led this disciple to understand that baptism is invitation and welcome into a community of believers who accept and choose to grow into their True Nature?

Who could be "unworthy" when Spirit and Jesus have led this disciple to understand that there is no such thing as unworthiness because all are included in the Divine Embrace?

Did John not recognize that the baptismal water of the River Jordan was always and already Living Water—en-Spirit-ed Water?

PRAYER

Spirit of the Living God, all creation is part of the Divine Dance, your constant renewal and reweaving of the glorious Web of Life. Awaken the human family so we understand that we are not mere bystanders or even participants, but true co-creators of the Dance. May we have hearts always ready and eager to offer the fullness of our love into the Web.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Be intentional about inclusion.

Barbara Foreman, CSJ Associate
La Grange, IL

MONDAY – SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 7
MEMORIAL OF ST. AMBROSE

SCRIPTURE

Is 35: 1-10
Ps 85: 9-14
Lk 5: 17-26

REFLECTION

"Love and truth will meet; justice and peace will kiss." Ps 85:11
"What are you thinking in your hearts?" Lk 5:22

The story of St. Ambrose, whom we celebrate today, is one of a harbinger of peace. After the death of the Arian bishop, he was asked, as a magistrate, to attend a meeting in Milan. He was to facilitate the dialogue between the Nicenes and Arians, who were vehemently opposed to each other. Ambrose's fairness and impartiality were so outstanding that both sides asked that he become bishop, so he was quickly baptized, ordained, and anointed bishop. He needed to promote peace and dialogue, and he saw generosity to the poor as a just sharing of God's gifts.

As we prepare for Christmas, we must ask the question Jesus asked, "What are you thinking in your hearts?" How will love and truth meet within us and our community? How will justice and peace be our gift to others? How can we, like Ambrose, be a doctor to our church and our world?

PRAYER

My heart is yours, O Lord. Let the truth of who you are always guide me and help me to be your messenger of peace.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will commit myself to considering how love, truth, justice, and peace are inviting me to growth during these weeks before Christmas.

Celeste Cotter, CSJ
Brookfield, IL

TUESDAY – SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 8 – IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

SCRIPTURE

Gn 3: 9-15, 20
Ps 98: 1-4
Eph 1: 3-6, 11-12
Lk 1: 26-38

REFLECTION

"Hail, Mary! Full of grace! Do not be afraid.. you have found favor with God. You will conceive and bear a son. How can this be, since I am a virgin? Here I am...let it be with me according to your word."
Luke 1:28;30-31;34;36;38

As a liturgist I became aware that many Catholics, when asked, are unaware that the Feast of the Immaculate Conception is about Mary being conceived immaculately. Because the Gospel of the day tells the story of an angel appearing to Mary and announcing that she has been chosen by God for a deeply holy yet daunting task, many assume the conception mentioned is about Jesus. The Greek text of this story uses the word kecharitomene to describe Mary. This verb is the perfect passive participle of the verb charitoo meaning "to fill or endow with grace." Because kecharitomene is in the perfect tense, it indicates that it is Mary who is full of grace from the first moment of her existence*, marking her as immaculate from her conception. She is still a human being with free will and is asked to participate in God's plan. She is not spared from human situations or emotions. Mary was able to navigate all life situations, happy and sad, exciting and scary, deeply moving and supremely torturous by being grounded in her love of God, prayer, the Hebrew Scriptures, and her community. This allowed her to say a resounding. "YES!" God fills us with grace, too, through the love of God, prayer, Scripture, and community. Let us say, "Yes!"

PRAYER

Dearest Mary, help us to say "Yes!" to life. Help us to be open to all situations and be willing to move forward. Help us to transform into our best selves so that we can help others.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

This week look at something that is a challenge. Be present and sit with God and the challenge. Thank God for providing this challenge. Ask for what is needed to navigate through it. Add an "I am" statement to whatever you ask. When ready, answer God's challenge.

Denise Waytes, CSJ Associate
Dexter, MI

**https://www.catholic.com/qa/full-of-grace-versus-highly-favored*

WEDNESDAY – SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 9

SCRIPTURE

Is 40: 25-31
Ps 103: 1-4, 8 and 10
Mt 11: 28-30

REFLECTION

"Come to me…and I will give you rest."
Mt. 11:28

"Come near to me," an Irish phrase, means not "Draw closer" but "Listen! I have something important to tell you." Jesus gazes at the crowd. He sees their stooped shoulders, troubled hearts and weary spirits and has something important to tell them. "Come to me.

Advent is a time of anticipation, hope, and expectant joy. Yet, circumstances in the outer world, difficulties in our personal world, and "obligations of Christmas" (gift-giving, baking, writing cards, etc.) frequently make it challenging to embody these Advent virtues. Jesus gazes and longs to give us rest, give us hope, give us peace, give us joy. "Come to me." "I have something important to tell you.

We are tempted to think, "If I try harder…if I pray more…if I were only more aware…if I were less busy. "We tie up heavy burdens, hard to carry, and lay them on our shoulders" (Mt 23:4). All the while, Jesus is calling us away from focusing on ourselves: "I", "I", "I", away from even in our doing more to "resting" more.

"I, the one closest to God's heart, have come to make God known." "I will be with you always, even to the end of time." "My love will never leave you." "Come to me." "I have something important to tell you: Marinate in the abiding love of God that I have brought tangibly to you. Even in your doing, rest in my love."

PRAYER

Holy One, I believe you enfold and permeate me at all times
with your infinite and intimate love.
Do what I cannot do myself, take me to the inner room
of your love.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Today, I will consciously take at least a few minutes to simply
"rest in God's love."

Marcella Clancy, CSJ
Detroit, MI

THURSDAY – SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 10

SCRIPTURE

Is 41: 13-20
Ps 145: 1 and 9-13
Mt 11: 11-15

REFLECTION

… and Jesus said, "now let me tell you what is going on here. No one in history surpasses John the Baptizer; but in the kingdom he prepared you for, the lowest person is ahead of him. Are you listening to me, really listening?" Mt 11:11

The calendar of the world today marks the adoption of the Declaration of Human Rights. This document is the most translated document in the world with 30 articles outlining the fundamental rights of every human being regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or religion. The United States is a signer of this document. Nobel prizes are awarded on this day. Just a few weeks ago we voted in the United States mid-term elections. As we live with the results of the elections that took place in all fifty states what is in your mind and heart? Does it seem to you, when we reflect on Jesus' words, "In the kingdom he prepared you for the lowliest person is ahead of him" we, as citizens, have Jesus' clear words to be implementers of the Gospel as well as the Declaration of Human Rights? Our wish for all just might be that we have the courage to bring about Jesus' dream that all, even the lowliest person in someone's opinion, will be one.

PRAYER

Psalm 145: 1, 12-13

I lift you high in praise, my God, and I'll bless your name into eternity, letting the world know of your power for good, the lavish splendor of your kingdom. Your kingdom is a kingdom eternal; you never get voted out of office.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will live tomorrow and, hopefully, more tomorrows, acting that all peoples are a part of and are welcome to attend Jesus the Christ's banquet of love.

Scripture: The Message - The Bible in Contemporary Language

Carol Crepeau, CSJ
Burr Ridge, IL

FRIDAY – SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 11

SCRIPTURE

Is 48: 17-19
Ps 1: 1-4, 6
Mt 11: 16-19

REFLECTION

"But wisdom is vindicated by her works."
Mt 11:19b

Can you think of a time when you were trying to do the right thing but felt cornered or judged by others; i.e., the experience of "I'm damned if I do, and damned if I don't." In today's Gospel Jesus speaks for himself and John the Baptist when lamenting the hardheartedness of their opponents: "We can't win for losing with you people!" (My loose translation.)

Maybe Jesus' last line—But wisdom is vindicated by her works—doesn't sound like a good clincher to you. It is helpful to know that the Gospels of Matthew and John portray Jesus as the embodiment of Holy Wisdom: God is revealed in every one of Jesus' deeds of loving compassion and authoritative teaching. Consider Jesus through the wisdom-lens of this scripture: Compared to light, she is found more radiant; though night supplants light, wickedness does not prevail over Wisdom (Wisdom 7:29-30). That's what I call a clincher of vindication.

PRAYER

O Holy Wisdom! May your spirit be born in me as in Jesus: a spirit manifold, subtle, agile, clear, unstained, certain, never harmful, loving the good, keen, unhampered, beneficent, kindly, firm, secure, tranquil…Pass into my soul and make me a friend of God and prophets.
(cf. Wisdom 7:22-23, 27)

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Choose a couple of the above qualities of a wisdom-spirit from Chapter 7 of the Book of Wisdom (above) and pray with your desire for them, for friendship with God and prophets.

Mary Jo Curtsinger, CSJ
Chicago, IL

SATURDAY – SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 12
OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

SCRIPTURE

Zech 2: 14-17
Judith 13: 18-19
Lk 1: 26-38 or Lk 1: 39-47

REFLECTION

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! Now, I am coming to dwell among you," says our God.
Many nations will bind themselves to God on that day. They will be my people, and I will dwell in your midst." (Zechariah 2:14-15a)
God, wanting to dwell with the people of Mexico, sent Mary to win their hearts. "Sing and rejoice. . . I am coming to dwell among you," says our God. (Zechariah 2:14)

Mary appeared to Juan Diego in four visions in 1531. When she requested that a shrine to her be built on the spot where she appeared, the local bishop demanded a sign before he would approve construction of a church. So, Mary sent Juan Diego to collect roses he found blooming on a hill in winter and bring them to the bishop. When Juan Diego opened his cloak before the bishop, dozens of roses fell to the floor, revealing the image of Mary imprinted on the inside of the cloak. The figure appeared as a young indigenous woman with features that bridged Spanish and Aztec cultures, wearing a black sash indicating pregnancy to the Aztecs. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe has played an important role in the religious life of Mexicans, leading millions of indigenous people to convert to Christianity.

During this Advent season, we celebrate Mary as a pathway to her son, Jesus.

PRAYER

Mary, Mother of God,
We praise and thank you for all the ways you show us
the face of Jesus.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

May I recognize Emmanuel—God with us—in the people
I meet each day.

Jeanne Cmolik, CSJ
Cleveland, OH

SUNDAY – THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 13

SCRIPTURE

Is 61: 1-2, 10-11
Lk 1: 46-50, 53-54
1Thes 5: 16-24
Jn 1: 6-8, 19-28

REFLECTION

"The spirit of the God is upon me, because the God has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners… " Is 61. 1-2

In Magnifica Humanitas, Pope Leo writes,

Our relationship with life seems to be in crisis today. Everything that appears as a 'limit' – incapacity, illness, old age, suffering, vulnerability – tends to be seen primarily as a defect to be corrected, rather than reality through which our humanity matures and opens itself to relationship…. Humanity flourishes not despite limitations, but often through them. (118)

How does this inform our understanding of the poor, brokenhearted, captive, and imprisoned today?

Accompanying beloveds who are experiencing limitations, I pray what has become a mantra since I saw Jake Heggie's opera *Dead Man Walking*. Before visiting a man on death row, Helen Prejean prays, "Make me wise, make me human." In doing so, I become more aware of my own human limitations even as I am helping others. In healthy relationships, we learn more about ourselves and each other, we allow for God's presence to uphold us, and we increase the potential for humanity to flourish.

PRAYER

May I awaken to the Divine Dignity within me and all people
"so that humanity will never lose its beauty,
and the world once again will come to recognize the human heart
as the place where God desires to dwell." (16)

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Make me wise. Make me human.

Jill Underdahl, CSJ
Minneapolis, MN

MONDAY – THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 14

SCRIPTURE

ST JOHN OF THE CROSS
Num 24: 2-7, 15-17
Ps 25: 4-9
Mt 21: 23-27

REFLECTION

"When he had come into the temple area, the chief priests and the elders of the people approached him as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things?. Jesus said to them in reply, "I shall ask you one question, . . . Where was John's baptism from? Was it of heavenly or of human origin? . . . So they said to Jesus in reply, "We do not know." He himself said to them, "Neither shall I tell you by what authority I do these things."*

The Scribes and Pharisees asked Jesus a "tough" question – where did he get the authority to teach? When Jesus asked a question of them in return, they didn't respond with their answer – worrying more about how their reply would be interpreted (a political response!)

How often do I model the Scribes and Pharisees when I choose to not share my true/honest perspectives or beliefs because I'm afraid of how others will react? Particularly, if I'm looking for a true/honest perspective from others?? When I'm critical of others for "dodging" a difficult topic, am I self-aware enough to recognize my own/similar behavior?

Dialog is, by definition, a two-way street. Am I open to sharing the "State of My Heart," particularly when my underlying values are different from others with whom I'm conversing? Can we as a society move beyond living in our own bubbles if we are unwilling to risk sharing our truest thoughts, perspectives, concerns, and fears? If I truly believe "We are all One," then is it not imperative to live my life and share my worldview accordingly, even when it seems that many, if not a majority, don't share my core beliefs? Do I really have a choice??

PRAYER

Loving God, you are my source of strength and compassion.
Help me to become more aware of your presence in my life each day.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Help me to find Your love and compassion more frequently
in my personal interactions each day.

Bill Stauffer, CSJ Associate
Palos Heights, IL

TUESDAY – THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 15

SCRIPTURE

Zeph 3: 1-2, 9-13
Ps 34: 2-3, 6-7, 18-19 and 23
Mt 21: 28-32

REFLECTION

"I will leave as a remnant in your midst a people humble and lowly…"
Zeph. 3:12
"Which of the two did his father's will?" Mt. 21: 31a

Throughout Israel's history, the poor and humble gave voice to a profound longing for God. Those who have nothing know their need of God. Pope Leo XIV echoes this conviction in the heart of Magnifica Humanitas #118, reminding us that "humanity flourishes not despite limitations but often through them." Counterculturally, Jesus turns society's values upside down.

In today's gospel Mt. 21: 28-32, Jesus uses the technique of asking his hearers for their opinion, allowing them to pass judgment on themselves. Yet Jesus focuses, not on failure, but on conversion. The son who first refuses ultimately acts, reminding us that change is always possible.

Our CSJ charism calls us to align our actions with our words. As the Trinity pours itself out in love, we, too, are invited to live authentically and faithfully. Where is God nudging me to move from intention to action? How will I change this Advent? How will we?

PRAYER

Dear God, no prayer of ours goes unanswered. When we cry out, you hear. Give us humble hearts that not only listen to your word but also act upon it.
Come, O Lord, do not delay. In Jesus' name we pray.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Today, identify one commitment and take a concrete step to fulfill it.
or
Choose one opportunity to let your actions speak as clearly as your words.

Cynthia Sabathier, CSJ
Baton Rouge, LA

WEDNESDAY – THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 16

SCRIPTURE

Is 45: 6-8, 18, 21-25
Ps 85: 9-14
Lk 7: 18-23

REFLECTION

"Are you the one who is to come or should we look for another?" Lk 7:19

The disciples are in an active search for Christ as they ask, "Are you the one who is to come or should we look for another?" It is to the point – they don't have time to waste. The world needs its Savior. As I sat with their question, I was brought to the woman and her child whom I passed on the street last week asking for anything I could spare, the student who tentatively walked into my office to see if I had time to chat, a friend who is holding it together through a dark time. I see these interactions with new eyes – am I the one who can meet them where they are? Can I hold space, compassion, and care? Am I willing to be Christ for them, even if its inconvenient, uncomfortable, or hard? Maybe the Christ we are waiting for is in us and in the other who asks for our presence.

PRAYER

As we wait with you, Oh Holy Light, may we be moved
to see you calling us
to your work of justice, peace, and compassion.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Reflect on your day – where have you seen the
one who is to come?
When did you notice another asking for your Christ-Light?

Sarah Simmons, CSJ
Chicago, IL

THURSDAY – THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 17

SCRIPTURE

Gen 49:2, 8-10
Ps 72:1-4, 7-8, 17
Mt 1:1-17

REFLECTION

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Mt. 1:1

As I was growing up, my great uncle, Fr. Joe, started researching our family genealogy. In the process of gathering information, connections and understandings about the family grew. Understanding our family origins and the history that impacted the members over generations helped to root us in our identity.

In this gospel, we see Matthew teaching the genealogy of Jesus Christ. Matthew wants to make sure we know that Jesus is part of the Davidic line, that he descended from Abraham, and thus is connected to the whole of salvation history and royal lineage. He also wants us to understand that the "irregularities" in Jesus' lineage were part of God's saving plan. The irregularity of his birth is preceded by several women named when usually only men are named. Not only that, but these women were Gentiles. Matthew carefully chose how to present the genealogy in order to provide roots and to explain that salvation includes all.

The women—the ones who as Gentiles were considered outsiders, are an important part of the story. It was their actions in standing up for what was just, in opposition to what was offered them, that helped advance the lineage that led to the birth of Jesus: the anointed, the messiah, the one promised of old, and the one in whom we find our identity.

PRAYER

O God, you who call all of us, help me to listen,
to know that I am part of a story
much greater than myself. Help me to live
and act for the good of all. Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Today, I will note that I am part of a broader story.

Karen Salsbery, CSJ
Wichita, KS

FRIDAY – THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 18

SCRIPTURE

Jer 23: 5-8
Ps 72: 1, 12-13, 18-19
1:18-24

REFLECTION

"This is the name they give him: 'The Lord our justice'" Jeremiah 23:4
"Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever." Psalm 72

We are beginning the "home stretch" of preparing for Christmas, now only one week away. Let us take a deep breath of quiet and truly take the time to prepare our hearts. The readings of this day call us to reflect on justice—on God's own justice, which is simply "being in right relationship."

What does that mean? Claiming and recommitting to our relationship with God: that God is God alone of our lives, not the "false gods" we sometimes unintentionally claim. And that we are God's own, created in the image of the Creator, called to create life in every circumstance in which we live.

The Dominican, Meister Eckhart, in the 13th Century said: "We are all meant to be mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born." Another reflection for us: how do we "mother" God in our lives, our actions, our decisions, our loves? Perhaps people will say, upon meeting us, that God is with us, Emmanuel.

PRAYER

Oh God, give us the grace to be just, to do justice.
May we always seek to live
in right relationship with you, all of Earth, and all people.

PEERSONAL CHALLENGE

Every time we start our car today, let us remember who God is, and who we are;
inviting God to create our best selves, open to welcome the Christ again and again.

Sallie Latkovich, CSJ
Ft. Myers, FL

SATURDAY – THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 19

SCRIPTURE

Judges 13: 2-7, 24-25
Ps 71: 3-6, 16-17
Lk 1: 5-25

REFLECTION

"An angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her,
"Though you are barren and have had no children,
yet you will conceive and bear a son." Judges 13:3

In today's first reading, God makes a great promise to an unnamed woman: a miraculous child, and a place of privilege for her whole family in salvation history.

This woman in the book of Judges is not lesser in the eyes of God for having been named as "barren" but has likely been seen as lesser in her particular community for her lack of children. God's promise of a child to this woman is a reminder of her inherent value, for all the times we failed to see it. Elizabeth's story in the Gospel serves to stress the point: she and her husband were faithful, not inferior, and yet did not have children until God intervened.

Miracles offer both consolation to suffering persons and call their community to recognize that they have always had value. It is God who reminds us to see that value when we fall short.

PRAYER

Gracious and Ever-Loving God,
Help us to see the inherent value in each person,
especially when we are tempted to compare what
we have to what they lack.
Remind those who have the least in this life will be greatest in your Kingdom.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

How can I serve as a healing presence to restore those who have been isolated?

Julia Erdlen, CSJ Candidate
La Grange, IL

SUNDAY – FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 20

SCRIPTURE

2 Sam 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14, 16
Ps 89: 2-5, 27, 29
Rom 16: 25-27
Lk 1: 26-38

REFLECTION

"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Luke 1:38

The readings for December 20 center on God's sweeping plan of salvation, which moves from a grand royal promise to a quiet, hidden moment in Nazareth. The bridge between God's ancient promise and its historical fulfillment is Mary's radical obedience.

In the first reading, King David wants to build a house for God, acting out of his own good intentions and desire for control. God redirects him, showing that true faithfulness starts with letting God build us. Unlike David, Mary does not offer God a project. She offers God her very self. Her "yes" was not based on having all the answers, but on the absolute reliability of the One making the promise. She does not demand a complete roadmap; she simply asks for clarity on her next step. Once she hears that the Holy Spirit will guide her, she consents.

As we prepare our hearts during Advent, Mary's fiat serves as the ultimate blueprint for our own spiritual readiness. Advent is a time to stop trying to manage God. We must shift from asking, "What can I do for God?" to "How can I let God work through me?" True preparation requires trusting God in the dark. We do not need to see the entire future to say "yes" to what God is asking of us today. We must look at what is cluttering our hearts. True readiness means clearing away our noise, pride, and distractions so there is actual room for Christ to dwell.

PRAYER

God of Mystery, like Mary, I surrender my plans to You.
Give me the courage to say "yes" to Your disruptions,
trusting Your perfect will.
Come, dwell in me. Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Surrender one area of your life where you are over-controlling and invite God to take the lead.
Are you willing to let God disrupt your plans?

Judith Minear, CSJ
Cleveland, OH

MONDAY – FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 21

SCRIPTURE

Song of Songs 2:8-14 or Zeph 3:14-18
Ps 33: 2-3, 11-12, 20-21
Luke 1: 39-45

REFLECTION

"for YHWH your God is in your midst, a warrior to keep you safe; who will rejoice over you and be glad of it; who will show you love once more, and exult with songs of joy" Zeph 3:17
"Sing God a new song, play with all your skill, and with shouts of joy!" Ps 33: 3
"As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Luke 1:41

These three passages suggest a conversation of JOY between God, our Creator, and the human person. Zephaniah tells us God is present always and everywhere and God is excited to be present. In the Psalm we as human persons are answering God, singing happily in response, "thank you!" Then, in Luke we actually "feel" the physical presence of God as John leaps in Elizabeth's womb at the sight and sound of Mary.

In my mind I know God is present; however, I don't always "feel" God's presence. Reading Luke today is a reminder to stop and feel the presence of God. It is not enough to know of God's presence and to praise God in God's presence, we need to stop long enough to "feel" God's presence. As Teresa of Avila would say here, we are in the 7th mansion. Here we are experiencing heaven on Earth. It is our window into the next life and what that life might be.

PRAYER

Dear God, my Creator, give me the time today to stop
and feel your presence.
Allow me to visit the 7th mansion of your home.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

During your time of prayer today, leave the traditional prayers behind and just sit. Sit with your eyes closed, in silence – no music – just sit and listen. Sit until you "feel" the presence of God.

Kate Theriot, CSJ Associate
Houma, LA

TUESDAY – FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 22

SCRIPTURE

1 Sam 1: 24-28
1 Sam 2: 1, 4-8
Lk 1: 46-56

REFLECTION

" My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior.
My heart exults in the LORD,
My horn is exalted in my God.
I have swallowed up my enemies;
I rejoice in my victory.
My heart exults in the Lord, my Savior.
The bows of the mighty are broken,
While the tottering gird on strength."

I love the place of importance that Hannah has in these touching and challenging scripture passages. So seldom do we highlight women, especially in the scriptures! And she is a stellar example for us all. Many of us can sympathize with her situation in longing for a child. And God provides such a precious baby boy. We can spend time, perhaps in prayer with Hannah, as she reflects on her son's future path in life. I suspect few of us would make choices even close to hers, but we can pray about our own willingness to be generous with our God who is so very lavish with us.

PRAYER

Loving God, thank you for your faithful love and care.
You challenge me and support me in my struggles.
Remind me to be grateful! You are ever faithful and carry me through the difficult times.
I am a bit stronger as You and I move through our days.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Help me to remember to turn to you when I am in need!
You are the faithful ONE,
and I am grateful for your love and care.
Show me the way and I will follow.
Thank you for your faithfulness! Teach me to respond with generosity and gentleness to those who have needs.

Marie Benzing, CSJ
Kalamazoo, MI

WEDNESDAY – FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 23

SCRIPTURE

Malachi 3: 1-4, 23-24
Ps 25: 4-5, 8-10 and 14
Lk 1: 57-66

REFLECTION

"Thus says the Holy One: Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me; And suddenly there will come to the temple the ONE whom you seek…the messenger of the covenant whom you desire… But who will endure the day of this coming? And who can stand when the messenger appears? For the messenger is like the refiner's fire, or like the fuller's lye. And will sit refining and purifying you…refining you like gold or like silver… " (Malachi 3:1-4)

Praying with this reading from Malachi, I found myself considering anew the messenger we are awaiting during these final days of Advent. How awake have I been to be looking for the One we are called to seek and desire throughout this season? Have I had any sense of how I am being refined and purified as I moved through this time of waiting for the re-birth of Christ in my heart and life?

I confess, being refined by fire or lye doesn't sound like anything I'd want to aspire to in any season, regardless of my desire to welcome God's message deeper into my heart and life. Then I thought of all the division and intolerance, the destruction and violence in our nation and world and wondered—perhaps I, perhaps we - are being refined and purified as we choose to respond, knowing the reality that the only power we have is that of hope and trust in the promise and strength in birthing God's love over and over again in whatever is ours to do.

PRAYER

As Christ is birthed again in our lives and world, grant us the strength and perseverance to live and share the love, through which we have been created, in all our being and doing today.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

How am I being invited to be an expression of God's love and presence wherever and with whomever I find myself this day?

Christine Parks, CSJ
Kalamazoo, MI

THURSDAY – FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT
DECEMBER 24

SCRIPTURE

2 Sam 7:1-5, 8-12,14,16
Ps 89 2-5, 27 and 29
Lk 1: 67-79

REFLECTION

"Go do whatever you have in mind, for God is with you."
2 Sam 7: 3

In 2 Sam:7, David wanted to build a temple but is reminded God hadn't lived in a house from the time the Israelites left Egypt! Whatever befell them, God never left. God's focus now is on establishing David's house! I was led to reflect on my life and the many ways in which God was always with me. I can remember certain experiences almost as if they had just happened. When I dwell in these experiences I want to believe I acknowledged and gave thanks for God traveling alongside me.

Zachariah 's months of silence and reflection result in his acknowledgement and proclamation of God's active involvement in the lives of God's people by offering comfort and assurance in times of darkness and uncertainty. This prayer serves as a beacon of hope in moments of personal struggles or global and societal crises. It reminds us of God's unwavering faithfulness and active involvement in our lives, as well as God's promise of redemption.

PRAYER

I will sing of your steadfast love, O Lord, forever;
let the heavens praise your wonders,
O Lord, and your faithfulness forever.
Give light to those who sit in darkness,
and in the shadow of death, guide our feet
into the way of peace,

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Compose your own Benedictus recounting God's unwavering faithfulness to you
in times of uncertainty and darkness.

Ginny Yeager, CSJ
Charleston, WV

NATIVITY OF THE LORD
DECEMBER 24
CHRISTMAS VIGIL MASS

SCRIPTURE

Is 62: 1-5
Ps 89: 4-5, 16-17, 27, 29
Acts 13: 16-17, 22-25
Mt 1: 1-25 or Mt 1: 18-25

REFLECTION

"No more shall you be called "Forsaken, nor your land called "Desolate," But you shall be called "My Delight is in her," and your land "Espoused." For the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be espoused." Is 62:4

We could use a good dose of Isaiah in the U.S. these days. In Isaiah's time Israel was besieged by enemy forces. His words (You shall be called "My delight is in her.") could imply a political reversal of fortune for Israel. But Isaiah does not mean military victory. He insisted that ethical behavior by everyone was necessary in order to live in the presence of Israel's holy God. Thus, he called all the people to love and care for one another and rely on God's promises rather than the plans of human leaders. Isaiah's message gives me pause. I desire to be God's "delight." Do I listen with an open mind to those with whom I disagree? Do I care for those for whom government assistance is now denied? As I celebrate Jesus' coming into our world as one of us, may I also be open to meeting him in every neighbor who crosses my path.

PRAYER

On this Christmas Eve we come to you, Gracious God, with hearts
open to receive your gift of Jesus Christ in our midst.
May we learn to love others as you love us; open us
to respect differences among us
and lead us to care for all creation. Amen

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will try to respect the opinion of those with whom I disagree.

Marianne Race, CSJ
Brookfield, IL

CHRISTMAS DAY
DECEMBER 25

SCRIPTURE

Is 52: 7-10
Ps 98: 1-6
Heb 1: 1-6
John 1: 1-18 or John 1: 1-5, 9-14

REFLECTION

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5)

Sometimes it feels like we are living through a time of particular darkness in our world today, as wars proliferate and ordinary people struggle, while the wealthy and powerful act with impunity and we wonder what will become of our planet and her people due to technological change and ecological crisis. While some of these signs of the times are new, others are old as humankind.

And yet, the message of Christmas is a message of hope for "all the ends of the earth," as God's love is made visible in human flesh and history. Of course, Christmas is not the end of the story: just as Jesus labored, suffered, and died, so it is with our world, which continues to experience corruption and violence in history, even as we await the fulfillment of God's promises

(cf. Rom 8). Until that time, we walk together in hope, guided by the light of God's love and truth, which no darkness on earth can overcome.

PRAYER

Christ, be my light in times of darkness and struggle, that I might radiate the light of your love to those around me. Strengthen me by your indwelling presence when I am discouraged, that I might be a beacon of peace and hope for others.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Try not to dwell in/on the darkness.
Take a media break and spend some extra time in scripture, prayer, or fellowship with others this holiday.

Jessica Wrobleski, CSJ Associate
Cleveland, OH

SATURDAY – DECEMBER 26
FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN

SCRIPTURE

Acts 6: 8-10 ; 7: 54-59
Ps 31: 3-4, 6, 8, 16, 17
Mt 10: 17-22

REFLECTION

"Into your hands I commend my spirit; You will redeem me, Lord, God of truth." Ps. 31: 6
"As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit'." Acts 7: 59

On this day after Christmas, it seems out of place and out of season to commemorate the martyrdom of St. Stephen and hear these words that are more typically associated with Holy Week. And yet, the Incarnation and birth of Christ begins the trajectory of redemption that is truly the "reason for the season." This scripture story today fast-forwards us to early Christianity and offers a glimpse of what might lie ahead for those who follow Jesus and witness to His teaching. Stephen gives us an early example of what it means to speak truth to power, calling on God for strength and resolve.

"Holy resistance" is a term used in social justice movements that both characterizes and challenges the beliefs of Christians today. It requires conviction and commitment to gospel values that often-run counter to the realities of our world, as well as an action response to the same. Using our voices is not always without risk, but placing ourselves in God's hands and relying on God's grace keep us grounded and firm in our beliefs.

PRAYER

I want to be a follower of Christ. I want to be one of His disciples.
I want to live in the newness of life. Tell me what does it cost
if I carry the cross?
Just let me be a follower of Christ.

from J.W. Harris, "Follower of Christ"

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Consider a way in which you can strengthen your voice
to better express a belief that you hold sacred.

Jim Boyd, CSJ Associate
Chicago, IL

SUNDAY – DECEMBER 27
FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF NAZARETH

SCRIPTURE

Sirach 3: 2-6, 12-14
Ps 128: 1-5
Col 3: 12-17
Lk 2: 22-40

REFLECTION

'And overall, put on love." Col 3: 14

The church presents the Holy Family as a model for Christian families. Don't let the word "holy" frighten you. Yes, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are holy and so are we because we are created to be in relationship with God as co-creators in this world.

Jesus came into this broken world by entering into the reality that all of us have experienced: family life. Jesus did not separate himself from the harsh realities of life by embracing a life of wealth and royalty: He, Mary, and Joseph faced real hardships including poverty, escaping as refugees, and anxiety while facing the challenges of the times.

The experience of the family of Nazareth brings to mind the many families today living in poverty or forced to leave their homes due to war and violence. We hear disturbing accounts of children and families facing deportation and separation from loved ones.

We have our own experiences of family: tense sometimes, open and honest, chaotic, kind…

Holy families, yes; not perfect, but holy.

The Holy Family lived a simple life shaped by prayer, work, and loving care. They faced uncertainties and responsibilities, relying always on God's guidance. May we be reminded that holiness grows with ordinary family life through patience, forgiveness, and steady love.

PRAYER

"And overall, put on love."

Holy Family, bless all households, strengthen relationships, and bring peace where it is needed most. May we build communities that reflect warmth and compassion.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

As you slip on your clothes this day,
imagine yourself putting on LOVE.

J.M.J.
Everywhere

MONDAY – DECEMBER 28
FEAST OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

SCRIPTURE

I John 1: 5-2:2
Ps 124: 2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8
Mt 2: 13-18

REFLECTION

"But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one." I John 2:1
"Our help is the name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." Ps 124:8
"Rachel wept for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more." Mt 2:18

While reading today's gospel when Herod ordered the killing of male Israelites under the age of two, I could hear Rachel weeping for her children since they were no more. And I replayed news photos of the Oct 7th massacre in Israel in 2024. I could hear the weeping of Hagar, the runaway slave woman in Genesis, as she pondered death for her son Ishmael and herself and the bombs falling in Gaza and the total destruction of the Palestinian lands. I remembered the ongoing murder of the people in Ukraine as Russia continues to bomb and destroy Ukrainian peoples, and I hear the Blessed Mother weeping. And these are only three stories happening in our world today. Death, destruction, depression surround me, but John gives encouragement, for we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Psalmist reminds us that our help is the Lord, maker of heaven and earth. I am called to care for my dear neighbor, one act at a time, and called to continue to pray that all may be one.

PRAYER

Come, dear Advocate, open my ears to the
cries of your children in need.
I ask for the grace to discern what I can do for my dear neighbor.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

As I begin my day, decide what act I can do
for God's children today.

Leah Hinman, CSJ Associate
Lansing, MI

TUESDAY – FIFTH DAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS
DECEMBER 29

SCRIPTURE

1 John 2: 3-11
Ps 96: 1-3, 5-6
Lk 2: 22-35

REFLECTION

"…and the Holy Spirit was upon him." Lk. 2:25b

The Holy Spirit plays a conspicuous role in this passage. The Holy Spirit was upon Simeon…had revealed that Simeon would not die before encountering the Christ…was led to the temple at that particular time when Joseph and Mary brought their newborn son to be "consecrated to the Lord." The Holy Spirit further impelled Simeon to bless the parents of this child and to prophesy this child's vocation as Savior.

In my own prayer life over the years, the Holy Spirit has become more of my "go to" person of the Trinity. In times of discernment and when I need to contemplate the big picture of a situation,

I—like Simeon—have sensed the Holy Spirit within me, have had Spirit-inspired revelations, and have felt led to the right decision. May the Holy Spirit be this source of grace for all of us.

PRAYER

O Holy Spirit, be with me, inspire revelations within me, lead me. Help me to be open to your loving work in my life.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Come, Holy Spirit!

Janice Grochowsky, CSJ
Dodge City, KS

WEDNSDAY - SIXTH DAY IN THE OCTIVE OF CHRISTMAS
DECEMBER 30

SCRIPTURE

1 John: 2:12-17
Ps 96: 7-10
Lk 2: 36-40

REFLECTION

"I am writing to you because your sins have been forgiven… because you know God who is from the beginning… because you have overcome… because you are strong, and the word of God remains in you…" 1 John 2: 12-14 (paraphrased)

It sure seems that St. John wanted to remind, encourage, and drive home to this community of believers the many ways they have been anchored to God, by God's unyielding love, for no other reason than love itself. Forgiveness! Innate knowing! Overcoming! Strengthened by faith! Steadfastness of God's love!

Love is an absolute Superpower! And do you want to know a secret? Each of us possesses this awesome superpower! (Cape is optional!) Want to make the world a better, healthier, happier place? Find ways to forgive and ask for forgiveness. Tap the wisdom of inner knowing and stay rooted in "whose" you are! Don't let fear or uncertainty rob you of time and presence. Stand firm in adversity and shine your light and your love like only YOU can! These are difficult times. A little love pays big dividends! But then again, you knew that.

PRAYER

Loving God, help me to become a beacon of love that penetrates the darkness of division.
May my words and actions reflect the light and compassion of your omnipotent love.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Wield your superpower! Shine your light! Share your love!

Barb McCartney, CSJ
Charleston, WV

THURSDAY – SEVENTH DAY IN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS
DECEMBER 31

SCRIPTURE

1 John 2: 18-21
Ps 96: 1-2, 11-13
John 1: 1-18

REFLECTION

"Children, it is the last hour;" you do know the truth. 1 Jn 2 :18, 21
"…you have the anointing that comes from the Holy One," 1 Jn 2:20
"Sing! Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice!" Ps 96:11a
From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, Jn 1:16

"On the 7th day of Christmas, my True Love gave to me seven swans a swimming… "Isn't this "grace in place of grace?" Whether you think of it as the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven sacraments, God, One True Love gifts us with all we need to be/come who God created us to be. Truly "grace in place of grace!" Other translations say "grace upon grace." We have all received this gift of Christmas grace flowing in abundance: Jesus, Emmanuel.

As I write this in September, we have recently been told to forgive seventy-seven times. How? Because we receive grace upon grace. What about "Give what you have to the poor and follow me?" "Grace upon grace." Isn't this what we believe that enables us to profess our vows, we have received "grace upon grace?"

Many will indeed celebrate "the last hour" on this December 31st. We, who are God's children, instead celebrate the LIGHT, which shines and overcomes darkness. We, who are anointed by the Holy Spirit, will "Sing!" be glad, rejoice, be joyful, exult. "On the 7th day…"

PRAYER

You who gift us with grace in place of grace,
strengthen us, LIGHT, that we may give witness to grace upon grace through this darkness.
May we reflect You that Your truth and justice may prevail and peace will resound. Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

John, the Baptist, testified to the Light. John, the Evangelist, testified to Oneness.
To what are you called to testify? To sing?

Pat Warbritton CSJ
Kalamazoo,MI

Matthew West - Grace Upon Grace (Official Audio)
Grace Upon Grace | Official Lyric Video | Life.Church Worship

FRIDAY – JANUARY 1st
SOLEMNITY OF MARY

SCRIPTURE

Numbers 6: 22-27
PS 67: 2-3, 5-6, and 8
Gal 4: 4-7
LK 2: 16-21

REFLECTION

"And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." Lk 2: 19

Incarnation

Comfort, be comforted my people
for God's glad ecstasy
is new made flesh, by human yes.
Through earth's long mourning,
God waits again
near at hand, to birth the earth afresh
in celestial, millennial, unfolding
of Christ's transforming yes.
Yet all depends on still small voice:
"Be it done in me... as you would have it be."
Then God's glad life now gifts,
uplifts, heals, enfolds
newborn Christmas soul
In swaddling delight.
Come, beloved Jesus,
herald now God's just and kindly reign.
Teach us how we learn to live
inside our God again.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

How is it for you "to learn to live inside our God again?"

Christine Schenk, CSJ
Cleveland, OH

Notes

Notes



1515 W. Ogden Avenue • La Grange Park, IL, 60526-1721