



The Catholic Community of Divine Savior

Family Faith Focus

Volume 8, Issue 20

December 15, 2019

Dates to Remember

- December 15: **FCFF Liturgy and Formation Session, 8:00-10:00 AM**
- December 17: Confirmation Prep. Session, 6:30-7:45 PM
- December 21: Simbang Gabi Mass & Celebration, 4:00 PM
- December 22: Fourth Sunday of Advent — **Children's Liturgy of the Word, 10:30 AM Mass**
- December 24: Christmas Eve Family Liturgy, 3:30 PM
- December 25: Christmas Day, Masses at 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM

Let Us Pray

God of Love,
Your son, Jesus, is your
greatest gift to us.

He is a sign of your
love.

Help us walk in that
love during the weeks
of Advent,
As we wait and prepare
for his coming.

We pray in the name of
Jesus, our Savior.

Amen.

—Advent Family Prayer

Third Sunday of Advent

Matthew 11:2-11

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ,
he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question,

“Are you the one who is to come,
or should we look for another?”

Jesus said to them in reply,

“Go and tell John what you hear and see:

the blind regain their sight,

the lame walk,

lepers are cleansed,

the deaf hear,

the dead are raised,

and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.

And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me.”

As they were going off,

Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John,

“What did you go out to the desert to see?

A reed swayed by the wind?

Then what did you go out to see?

Someone dressed in fine clothing?

Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces.

Then why did you go out? To see a prophet?

Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

This is the one about whom it is written:

Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;

he will prepare your way before you.

Amen, I say to you,

among those born of women

there has been none greater than John the Baptist;

yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!

Indeed, the Lord is near!

Sunday Gospel Connection: December 15, 2019

Third Sunday of Advent, Cycle A

Matthew 11: 2-11

Gospel Background: The third Sunday of Advent is traditionally called *Gaudete Sunday*. *Gaudete* is the Latin word meaning “rejoice.” This Sunday is so named because “Rejoice” is the first word in the entrance antiphon for today's Mass taken from Philippians 4:4,5: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice! The Lord is near.” Some people mark this Sunday on their Advent wreath with a pink candle instead of a purple candle. This Sunday is a joyful reminder that our salvation is near.



This week's Gospel Reading continues our Advent reflection on the person and message of John the Baptist. Last week we heard John speak about his relationship to the coming Messiah, Jesus. This week, we hear Jesus' message to John the Baptist, now in prison, about the signs of the kingdom found in Jesus' ministry and Jesus' assessment of John's role in the Kingdom of God.

The Gospel of Matthew tells the story of John's arrest in chapter 14:3-12. In today's Gospel, John sends word to Jesus from prison, asking if Jesus is the Messiah for whom he has been waiting. Jesus responds by pointing to the miracles that he has worked and invites John and the other hearers to make their own determination. In his next breath, however, Jesus praises John for his role in preparing the way for Jesus. Then Jesus says that all of those who work for the Kingdom of God will be as great as John and even greater.

Jesus' message to John about the signs of the kingdom being performed recalls the salvation described by the prophet Isaiah. This passage is a reminder that the beginning of salvation is already mysteriously present to us, but also yet to be fulfilled. Salvation is already in our midst as manifest in the miraculous deeds of Jesus and in the Church. But salvation is also to be fulfilled in the coming reign of God. Even as we observe our world today, we can find glimpses of God's work among us. Even more, we help to prepare the way for God's kingdom by our words and our deeds. This message is indeed a cause for rejoicing.

Family Connection: It is easy to look at our world and become discouraged by the apparent absence of God and signs of God's salvation. Advent, however, is a season of hope, in which we acknowledge that salvation is both mysteriously present, even in our world, and yet to be fulfilled.

Read together today's Gospel. Think about John's question to Jesus: Are you the One? Jesus does not answer directly, but points to the signs of the kingdom present in his midst.

Together as a family, look through the newspaper for signs of hope that God is at work in our world. Pray that the world will know God's salvation by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

For more information and Sunday Connection resources visit:

<https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/sunday-connection/third-sunday-of-advent-cycle-a-sunday->

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Canticle of Mary (Magnificat)

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

From this day all generations will call me blessed: The Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name.

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation.

He has shown the strength of his arm, he has scattered the proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children forever.

Luke 1:46-55

O Antiphons

The O Antiphons are prayed on the seven days before Christmas Eve during Evening Prayer. Each antiphon begins with O and addresses Jesus by a title that refers to Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah. The Advent hymn, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" is based on the O Antiphons.



December 17: **O Wisdom of our God Most High,**
guiding creation with power and love:
Come to teach us the path of knowledge!

December 18: **O Leader of the House of Israel,**
giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
Come to rescue us with your mighty power!

December 19: **O Root of Jesse's stem,**
sign of God's love for all his people:
Come to save us without delay!

December 20: **O Key of David,**
opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
Come and free the prisoners of darkness!

December 21: **O Radiant Dawn,**
splendor of eternal light, sun of justice:
Come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.

December 22: **O King of all nations** and keystone of the Church:
Come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

December 23: **O Emmanuel,** our King and Giver of Law:
Come to save us, Lord our God!

—Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Lasting Joy

Loving God,
all that was broken, you bind up,
all that was lost, you restore.
We rejoice that you have come to save us,
but sometimes we weaken and lose heart.
When we grow tired, give us your strength.
When we grow fearful and uncertain,
give us your resolve.

When we forget you in times of pain
and sorrow,
inspire us anew with your love
and consolation.
Heal all that ails our hearts
so that we may walk with unwavering faith
into the everlasting joy of your kingdom.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 15, 2019

Come What May



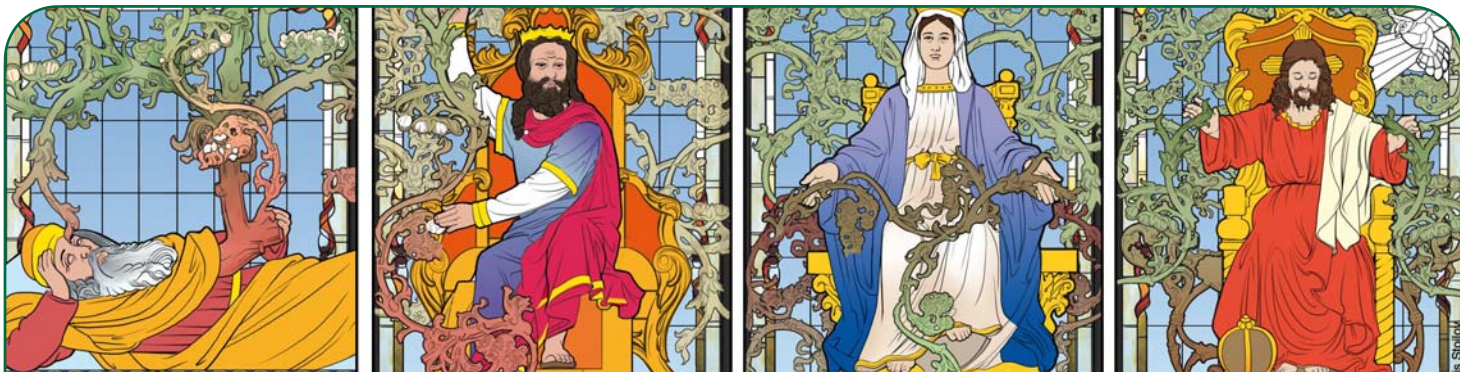
Today's Readings: Isaiah 35:1–6a, 10; Psalm 146:6–7, 8–9, 9–10; James 5:7–10; Matthew 11:2–11. On this Gaudete Sunday, we rejoice that we will soon celebrate the Incarnation. Our excitement increases as schools let out, Christmas parties begin, and stores ramp up their bargains. With so much going on, the joy of Christmas might feel effortless, but our readings remind us that true joy comes from commitment and perseverance.

St. James urges us to be patient and steadfast in our faith despite whatever unkindness or injustice assails us. It is easy to be joyful when things are going well; it shows true faith to remain uplifted when life gets hard. The prophet Isaiah knows this, too. He prophesied that God would bring

back those who were forced to leave their homes because of war. Any who wish to share in this glorious future, however, must remain strong and steadfast for the long journey home.

For John the Baptist and others, remaining steadfast in joyful hope meant accepting that God's plan of salvation was unfolding differently than they thought it would. Although Jesus revealed God's compassion, in other ways he was not the messiah they wanted. Some people were even offended by Jesus. It took effort for people to set aside their expectations and receive Jesus with joy.

This Sunday we ask ourselves what could steal our joy away, and we recommit ourselves to being strong, patient, and steadfast in faith, come what may.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 16

Speaking Truly

Balaam, who was not an Israelite, was called upon by a foreign leader to curse God's people. Instead, Balaam blesses Israel. Despite what others want, Balaam obeys God. Despite challenges to his authority, Jesus also persists in proclaiming God's word. Make a list of people who have bravely spoken God's word in the face of opposition. Reflect on what they teach you about staying true to God's word. *Today's Readings: Numbers 24:2–7, 15–17a; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8–9; Matthew 21:23–27.*

Tuesday, December 17

Jewish Savior

Judah was one of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel. Because it was the only tribe to survive a series of foreign attacks, other nations came to refer to the region this tribe inhabited as Judea and to its people as Jews. In his genealogy of Jesus, Matthew is careful to show that Jesus is both Jewish and of the tribe of Judah. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to his people. The Catholic Church's use of the O Antiphons highlights Jesus' Jewish roots. List the O Antiphons and pray with them until Christmas. *Today's Readings: Genesis 49:2, 8–10; Psalm 72:1–2, 3–4ab, 7–8, 17; Matthew 1:1–17.*

Wednesday, December 18

The Ultimate Salvation

While prophesying that God would save his people, Jeremiah refers to the people's enslavement in Egypt and then to the invasion of Assyria centuries later. During both of these times God's people experienced enslavement and suffering. When the angel appears to Joseph, he announces that Jesus will save all people from the greatest of all enslavements: sin and death. Make a paper chain and hang it on your tree as a reminder of the bondage from which Christ has freed us. *Today's Readings: Jeremiah 23:5–8; Psalm 72:1–2, 12–13, 18–19; Matthew 1:18–25.*

Thursday, December 19

Conceptions

We might not know the story of the wife of Manoah, but Zechariah definitely would have heard of her. He also would know the stories of Sarah and Hannah, two other women in the Old Testament who unexpectedly conceived a child. Despite knowing such stories from his own religious heritage, Zechariah questions Gabriel's prophecy. Help people to celebrate God's gift of life by bringing donations to a local pregnancy center or by volunteering at a shelter for women and children. *Today's Readings: Judges 13:2–7, 24–25a; Psalm 71:3–4a, 5–6ab, 16–17; Luke 1:5–25.*

Friday, December 20

Trust

King Ahaz did not want to ask for a sign because a sign would require his doing something that would probably cost him. God asks Mary to do something that will also significantly change her life, but she obeys. Nothing like this had ever happened in the history of her people, yet Mary entrusts herself to God's extraordinary plan. Surprise someone with an unexpected act of kindness today as a way of sharing God's wondrous goodness. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; Psalm 24:1–2, 3–4ab, 5–6; Luke 1:26–38.*

Saturday, December 21

Leaping for Joy

Our hearts leap for joy at the Incarnation, as we hope they'll leap again for joy at our Lord's return in glory. All of the readings for today remind us that our God in whom we place our hope and trust will work wonders in our lives. Read both options for the First Readings, then compose your own joyful song of praise to God. *Today's Readings: Song of Songs 2:8–14 or Zephaniah 3:14–18a; Psalm 33:2–3, 11–12, 20–21; Luke 1:39–45.*

