

Prayer

Dawn upon our hearts and minds, Lord Jesus, that we may see more clearly the road that leads to anew day.

Christmas Eve

Madonna and Child – The Birth of Jesus

Read Luke 2:1-20

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord, Late in time behold him come, Offspring of a Virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh the God head see; Hail, the incarnate Deity, Pleas'd as Man with man to dwell,

Jesus, our Immanuel.

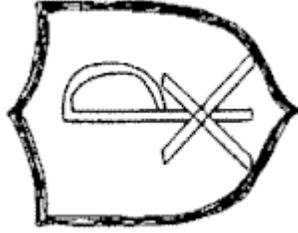


Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail, the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, Risen with healing in his wings. Mild he lays his glory by, Born that we no more many die, Born to raise the sons of earth, Born to give them second birth.

Charles Wesley

Prayer

Heavenly hosts and humble men – Who but these can greet the Lord? Later, perhaps, the kings will come, After the humble have made him a home.



Christmas Day

Chi Rho – Christ Our Lord

Read John 1:1-18

Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming From tender stem hath sprung! Of Jesse's lineage coming As men of old have sung. It came, a floweret bright, Amid the cold of winter, When half spent was the night.

Isaiah 'twas foretold it, The rose I have in mind, With Mary we behold it, The Virgin Mother kind. To show God's love aright, She bore to men a Saviour, When half spent was the night.

16thCentury,
translated by Theodore Baker

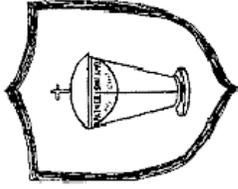
Prayer

We worship thee, Lord Jesus, Our Savior and our Friend. We yearn to know you better, And love you without end. Amen.

Prayer

There is none holy like the Lord,
There is none besides you;
There is no rock like our God.

From Hannah's prayer



Fourth Wednesday of Advent Baptismal Font – Birth of John the Baptist

Read Luke 1:57-80

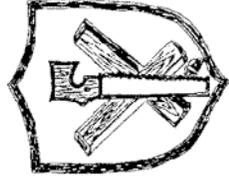
The birth of John the Baptist was an event of great joy to his parents and their friends. His parents were quite elderly, and they had no other children. So we can understand their joy. But there was a second reason for rejoicing – theirs was a child of promise. Vividly recalling his vision at the altar, Zechariah publicly gave credit to God.

John the Baptist was about six months older than Jesus. When both were about thirty years of age, John began to preach in the Jordan River Valley. His message led people to repentance, and they would wade into the river with him to be baptized.

What value is in a name?
What are the meanings of your names?
Why were you baptized?

Prayer

Make us more grateful for homes and families and for the opportunities we have to serve you, O God.



Fourth Thursday of Advent Carpenter's Tools – Joseph of Nazareth

Read Matthew 1:18-25

The crises of life often reveal a person's real character. Certainly the character of Joseph is revealed in this story which relates his first impulse, then his more mature response – first

his concern for self, then his overpowering concern for Mary. First came his own inner struggle, then came his acceptance of the angel's voice in a dream. One could reconstruct the thoughts of Joseph and find every justification for him had he followed the first impulse. But how much greater our admiration for him because of the tenacity of his love for Mary and of his trust in God.

What qualities does Joseph symbolize?

How can Joseph help us see the relationship of a father to to his family in a new light?

Why do people adopt children?

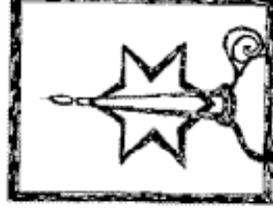
Prayer

Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder.

From Isaiah 9:6

Fourth Friday of Advent Bethlehem Star – the Wise Visitors

Read Matthew 2:1-12



The poetic imagery of the Christmas story is too full of wonder for more prosaic analysis. We do it an injustice, indeed we distort it, when we try to turn it into something it was never meant to be. The Star of Bethlehem, rightly a part of the Epiphany story, illustrates this tendency. The significance of the star is not what it was – a comet? – but what it did in the story. It guided the wise men to Christ. They acknowledged him as a king and offered him gifts.

So, most gracious God, may we
Evermore be led to you.

What should be the chief motive for giving a gift?

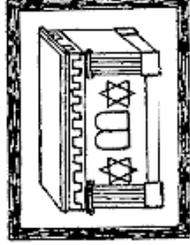
Compare this with lesser motives: obligation, fear of offending, expectation of a return, etc.

Should we limit our expenditures for gifts?

Week Four of Advent Jesse Tree Scripture & Reflections

Fourth Sunday of Advent Altar – Zechariah and Elizabeth

Read Luke 1:5-25



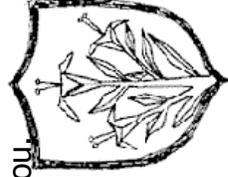
The father of John the Baptist was a priest, conscientious and sincere. Yet he found it difficult, as we often do, to accept the “inner voice” that had promised something so hard to believe.

Such experiences are not as rare as we may thin. God comes to people, in many ways, inspiring them to noble thoughts and deeds. Because we give so little time to earnest reflection, we may be unaware of God’s coming. Vain thought and clanging noises – even in church – are allowed to drown out God’s quiet voice. We need to listen for God speaking to us through his Word.

Why do we look upon children as gifts of God?
What blessings do children bring into a home?
How can we help parentless children? Childless adults?

Prayer

For the gift of life, for the joys of childhood, for the blessings of family, and for your promised salvation we thank you.



Fourth Monday of Advent Lily – Virgin Mary

Read Luke 1:26-38

The time haws come for the prophecies of old to be fulfilled. God’s promise to send the Savior is about to occur. As Isaiah had said, “The Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (that is, “God with us”).

For her part as the mother of Jesus we give special honor to the Virgin Mary. From earliest Christian days she has been called blessed. Her example of motherhood, the training

she gave her child, her patience and love, the way she encouraged Jesus, and the manner in which she bore her later grief – all this has influenced all who love her.

How should Christians regard the Virgin Mary?
Does she have a special appeal for you? If so, why?

Prayer

My soul magnifies you, O Lord, my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

From the Magnificat

Fourth Tuesday of Advent Mary – Magnificat – Mary and Elizabeth

Read Luke 139-56



We call Mary’s beautiful song the “Magnificat.” In a moment of exalted inspiration she broke into a song of praise to God. Her song is akin to the one sung by Hannah when she presented her child, Samuel, to serve the Lord with Eli (1 Samuel 2:1-10). In each we find the aspirations of all humankind for justice, equality, mercy, righteousness, strength and abundance. This is the salvation or which we pray. In Christ these aspirations are fulfilled for us as they were for Mary, partly in this present life and completely in the life to come.

Think what salvation means. It means that God, the source of our very being, provides all that is needed for continued renewal.

Why do people reject God’s helping hand?
Compare Mary’s anticipation with your own.