

Daily Reflections

2020

Advent



St. Bernadette

Our Lady of Good Hope

St. Catherine of Alexandria



Sunday, November 29

First Sunday of Advent

But of that day or hour, no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come. Mark 13:32-33.

Advent is about more than our preparation for celebrating Christ's birth at Christmas. Advent is also about preparing ourselves for Christ's return in glory at the end of time. Although we are pulled in many different directions this time of year, we should be focused on the Lord and not allow ourselves to be distracted.

Let us repent of sins and receive God's forgiveness so we can be ready when Jesus comes. Only the Father knows of the timing so Be Watchful and Be Alert!

Sue Niemi, St. Catherine of Alexandria

Monday, November 30

Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from
heaven, and see; take care of this vine,

and protect what your right hand has planted
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

O LORD, God of hosts, restore us;
let your face shines upon us, and we shall be saved.

Psalm 80:15-16, 19-20.

Psalm 80 is a communal lament. God's people are suffering a great loss. Their community has been destroyed by forces beyond their control. They feel vulnerable and abandoned by God. They are asking for God to remember them and to return to help them in their time of distress so that they can have new life with God, who is their hope for the future. They want to enjoy the feeling of the presence of God in their lives again, like when the sun shines on your face again after a storm.

Jesus Christ showed us that, with God, the other side of suffering is new life. It is called the Paschal Mystery. In life there are ups and downs - lots of ups and downs - and we have faith that God is with us in the dyings and risings and in the times in between. Loss, and hope in the new life that follows, is the way of the Christian.

O Lord, God of hosts, restore us; let your face shines upon us, and we shall be saved.

Lorrie Maples, St. Catherine of Alexandria

Tuesday, December 1

At that very moment he rejoiced [in] the holy Spirit and said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will." Luke 10:21.

The truths of the Kingdom of God are hidden from the worldly wise and prudent but revealed to the spiritually humble and docile. Among these revealed truths is the uniqueness of God's kinship i.e., his equal power and perfection with the Father is among these revealed truths. The coming Lord as a babe in appearance is an equal and full measure of the eternal creative force of the universe.

Thank you Dear God for coming to us, In humility may we know of your power and saving grace as you ,in humility appeared to us as a child.

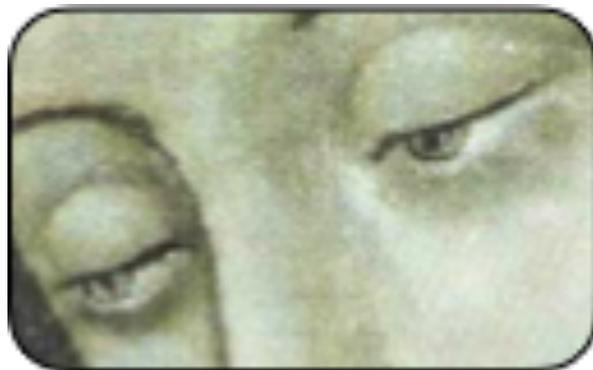
Richard Krueger, Our Lady of Good Hope

Wednesday, December 2

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. Psalm 23:1-3A.

The Lord is our Shepherd and we are his Flock. We but need to ask for his help and guidance during times of distress. He gives us repose and refreshes our soul. During this time of Advent, take time to seek him out from the busyness of our days and prepare to welcome his son, Jesus Christ, into our life once again.

Judy Dollhausen, St. Catherine of Alexandria



Thursday, December 3

*Trust in the LORD forever! For the LORD is an eternal Rock.
He humbles those who dwell on high, the lofty city he brings down,
Brings it down to the ground, levels it to the dust.
The feet of the needy trample on it — the feet of the poor. Isaiah 26:4-6.*

“Trust in the Lord forever! For the Lord is an eternal Rock.”

In the midst of a global pandemic and a global economic crises; in a time of unrest, of rioting, violence, and destruction; during a divisive presidential election: we are afraid, we are stressed and depressed and despairing. Isaiah tells us to trust in the LORD. Isaiah reminds us that the Lord is our Rock. Advent is the anticipation of and the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ; our Rock. If we cling to and follow the teachings of our LORD, we will come through this time of adversity. “Trust in the Lord forever!” Isaiah speaks to us across the ages; are we listening?

Linda Nugent, St. Bernadette

Friday, December 4

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life's refuge; of whom should I be afraid?

*For God will hide me in his shelter in time of trouble,
He will conceal me in the cover of his tent; and set me high upon a rock.*

*I believe I shall see the LORD's goodness in the land of the living.
Wait for the LORD, take courage; be strong of heart, wait for the LORD!*

Psalms 27:1, 5, 13-14.

"Dear Lord,
You are our light, salvation and life's refuge. We lean on you for guidance in these troubled times, hoping that we and others can see your goodness in the world. We beseech you Oh Lord to intercede on our behalf and ask the Holy Spirit to shelter us all in the shadow of his wings. Help us find courage and a strong heart. We are waiting Lord!"

Peg & Mike Harloff, Our Lady of Good Hope

Saturday, December 5

Then he summoned his Twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness.

Jesus sent out these Twelve after instructing them thus, "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give." Matthew 10:1, 5A, 6-8.

What strikes me in this scripture passage is "without cost". What does my action or my inaction, cost? Jesus told his disciples to go out and proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. I may not be able to cure the sick or raise the dead, but as St. Mother Teresa said " Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love." Lord, let my actions today be those that start with love. Let my words be kind, my motives pure, and my actions sincere. Let me serve you by truly loving others. Amen

Jim Young, St. Catherine of Alexandria



Sunday, December 6

Second Sunday of Advent

John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed:

"One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will

People in the day were clamoring for the Messiah. Many of them were quite certain that the Messiah was John the Baptist. However, we hear in this Gospel reading how John the Baptist firmly rejects the notion of the masses. He clearly states that there is someone mightier coming after him – someone who will baptize believers with the Holy Spirit. Thank goodness that John the Baptist didn't have an ego and didn't claim recognition that was not his to claim. He warmly, but firmly encouraged the masses to look forward to someone else who he promised would be the one to feed their spiritual needs. Thanks be to God for the enlightenment of John the Baptist and Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah, our Savior.

Linda Radder, St. Bernadette

Monday, December 7

Say to those whose hearts are frightened:

Be strong, fear not! Here is your God,

He comes with vindication;

With divine recompense he comes to save you.

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened, the ears of the deaf be cleared;

then will the lame leap like a stag,

then the tongue of the mute will sing. Isaiah 35:4-6A.

Where has 2020 gone? For many of us our hearts have been frightened this year! As we begin this new church year, let us pray to our God fervently and share our fears with our LORD. As we pray, we need to remember more than ever "Be Strong, Fear Not." We should be grateful that our LORD came to us as a child and sacrificed for us on the cross. When we celebrate the solemnity of our LORD's earthly coming later this month, let us do so joyfully!

Erin Epping, Our Lady of Good Hope

Tuesday, December 8

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

*Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you;
blessed are you among women. Luke 1:28.*

Full of Grace... I think that's what Heaven is like. We will be entirely full of God's Grace. I may only have a small capacity or I might have a large capacity, but if I'm full I can't hold any more. It seems to me that Mary was the third person that came into the world without original sin. Adam and Eve were the first two. Unlike Adam and Eve, who said no to God's Grace when they ate the fruit, Mary said yes and continued saying yes throughout her life. Saint John of the Cross says, "The will of the soul is lost in the will of God and the two [wills] become one by Grace." If John of the Cross is correct, accepting God's Grace is the molding of our will to God's will. When our will is completely in line with God's will, we are "full" of Grace. Mary gave up her will so completely that her will and God's will for her were the same. She accepted God's will completely. She was full of Grace.

My dad was a truck mechanic and sometimes, on his day off, he would allow me to go with him if he had to stop at work for some reason. I remember how dingy the place looked even though there were many windows. Even though it was a sunny day, it just didn't feel bright in there. Then I noticed how dingy the windows were. They were full of dirt, grime and dust from the street. I think Grace is like the sunshine and sin is like the dust and dirt on the window. If we clean the grime out of our lives, God's grace can get through to us. If we conform our lives to God's will, His Grace will manifest in us. .

John Scholz, St. Catherine of Alexandria

Wednesday, December 9

Jesus said to the crowds:

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.” Matthew 11:28-30.

Mary's Comfort

God is seeking us in many ways. Like the warm words of comfort in the Gospel, God desires that each one of us be found by him. Each one of us is in God's plan and heart. So even when times become difficult for us, we can take comfort in knowing that God wants to be close to us.

Mary knew this. She would have known well the words of the prophet Isaiah, “The Lord is the eternal God...he gives strength to the fainting” (from Isaiah 40). As we spend Advent preparing for deeper communion with Christ, we take comfort in knowing, as Mary did, that God is always with us. We are never left alone. “They will run and not grow weary,” Isaiah reminds us.

It must have been true that for Mary, this comfort helped her as she came near to her time for the birth of Jesus. Surely the love she shared with Joseph and his strong care for her must have been the means through which God gave Mary this comfort. What gives you comfort?

Bill Huebsch, Spending Advent with Mary, the Mother of Jesus

Thursday, December 10

*I am the LORD, your God, who grasp your right hand;
It is I who say to you, "Fear not, I will help you." Isaiah 41:13.*

Lord I hear your voice saying, I am your shepherd I hear your cry and I say to you I am with you, I am with you no matter how dark the way may be I am with you, put all your trust in me and I will be with you.

Valeria Spinner-Banks, Our Lady of Good Hope



Friday, December 11

Jesus said to the crowds:

“To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children who sit in marketplaces and call to one another, ‘We played the flute for you, but you did not dance, we sang a dirge but you did not mourn.’ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they said, ‘He is possessed by a demon.’ The Son of Man came eating and drinking and they said, ‘Look, he is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is vindicated by her works.” Matthew 11:16-19.

Don't judge a book by its cover!

It is a common phrase that we hear every day. The leaders of faith, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, were arrogant, judgmental, and self-centered. Strict adherence to the rules superseded their desire to bring people closer to God. John was different from them. John knew his purpose; it was not to glorify himself, but instead, to glorify the Son of Man. John had a lot of courage and integrity. Though attacked, John continued to call the Pharisees and Sadducees out on their behavior.

Likewise, Jesus came and told them they needed to be Children of God and not Children of the World. They needed to love one another as they love themselves. They needed to love God.

How often do we “judge a book by its cover?” How often do we make judgments without having all the facts? Are you a Child of the World or a dedicated, purpose-driven follower of Christ? “Wisdom is vindicated by her works.”

Jon Gabik, St. Catherine of Alexandria

Saturday, December 12

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Most blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior." Luke 1:39-47.

Who is that special person that God put in your life with whom you share your gifts from God? The person who listens, who understands, who shares the gifts they receive from God with you?

Sue Morgan, St. Bernadette





Sunday, December 13

Third Sunday of Advent – *Gaudete* Sunday

I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the LORD God make justice and praise spring up before all the nations. Isaiah 61:10-11.

Having nine children, my parents worked very hard to make each one feel special. Most of the time we were just "one of the kids," but on certain occasions, like birthdays or graduations, they would save a few extra dollars and we were taken to a restaurant to celebrate. I remember the feeling... just me with mom and dad. Wearing special clothes (our own "robe" or "mantle"). Ordering a kiddie cocktail and sharing the relish tray, having a conversation about what interested me. Just me with mom and dad. Wow, I really enjoyed my special time, as did each of my siblings when they had their turn. So too does our heavenly Father / Mother take extra care to make each of us feel special. Just me. Just you. We may not always recognize the "robe of salvation," but it is incumbent upon us to think about how we have been offered salvation; to accept it and rejoice in it. Feel the "mantle of justice," see and appreciate the justice in our own lives, and work for justice in the lives of others. Sit back, enjoy your own special time. God will give you what you need to flourish. Just me... Just you...

So special...Rejoice heartily!

Margie Kaczmarek, Our Lady of Good Hope

Monday, December 14

Then Balaam gave voice to his oracle:

The utterance of Balaam, son of Beor, the utterance of the man whose eye is true, the utterance of one who hears what God says, and knows what the Most High knows, of one who sees what the Almighty sees, enraptured, and with eyes unveiled.

I see him, though not now; I behold him, though not near: A star shall advance from Jacob, and a staff shall rise from Israel. Numbers 24:15-17A.

At the end their forty year Exodus from Egypt, the Hebrew nation encamped east of the Jordan River on The Plains of Moab ready to enter The Promised Land. Worried his nation would be annihilated by the Jews, Balak, King of Moab, summoned the gentile prophet Balaam to curse the Hebrew multitude to defeat it. The prophet inquired of God and instead of a curse, Balaam gave voice to his oracle about the coming of a savior.

This was a Messianic prophecy fulfilled more than 1,200 years later. The star coming out of the Hebrew Nation/Israel will be Jesus Christ. He will wield a shepherding tool, a pole, referred to as a staff. Shepherds use staffs to lead their sheep keeping them together guiding all to safety. In our case, Jesus was born to lead us where we should go, counseling what we should do and believe for the gift of salvation in our own future Promised Land.

Bill Protz, St. Catherine of Alexandria

Tuesday, December 15

Jesus said to them,

“Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him.” Matthew 21:3B-32.

Our faith calls us to believe in Christ's words even when reason cannot completely explain them. A child knows that his mother loves him, so he trusts that she will care for him. The Pharisees trusted only in themselves, so they closed their minds first to John the Baptist's preaching, and then to Christ's.

Jesus, You went out of your way to convince the Pharisees and chief priests to follow you. Throughout your whole ministry they resisted, and yet you never stopped reaching out to them.

Have you been trying to tell me something, Lord? Have I been deaf to your message, like the Pharisees, because I am too attached to my own ideas, my own desires? I want to follow you. I want to love you. I want to know you better. Teach me to do your will . . .

Patti Keller, St. Bernadette

Wednesday, December 16

*I am the LORD, there is no other;
I form the light, and create the darkness,
I make well-being and create woe;
I, the LORD, do all these things.
Let justice descend, O heavens, like dew from above,*

*like gentle rain let the skies drop it down. Let the earth open and
salvation bud forth;*

*let justice also spring up!
I, the LORD, have created this. Isaiah 45:6C, 7-8.*

December brings the time of awaiting the promise of Your birth. The innocence and beauty of a newborn and the hope for the future. Yet, I am so confronted by all the injustice and strife I feel right now. Families and friendships are being torn apart because of political views. The COVID-19 pandemic is creating a loneliness as we are pulled apart from each other instead of together. Riots, hunger and homelessness are in our streets. Where is the justice? Driving home today I saw a bumper sticker on a car with a quote by Jimi Hendrix that hit home.

“When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace.”

Lord, I am looking to you as the Power of Love to help me be part in overcoming the injustice in our world right now. “I am the Lord, there is no other,”

Mary and Mike Jansen, Our Lady of Good Hope

Thursday, December 17

*O Wisdom of our God Most High,
guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge. O Antiphon.*

The prayer is clear; the decision is ours. We are asking for the awareness to hear and accept accept the challenge of living our earthly lives in preparation for the promos of eternal blessings in the presence of God the Father.

Ginny Chmiel, St. Catherine of Alexandria



Friday, 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! O Antiphon.*

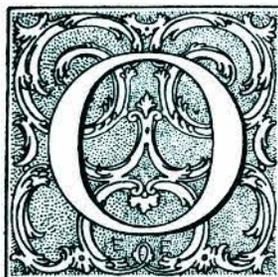
The mountain of God is the House of Israel. (Is 2) And, since we are members of the body of Christ, we too belong on God's holy mountain, where a covenant was made and a relationship was established.

Mountains are stable and strong, welcoming and challenging, dotted with caves that wrap-us-round to comfort and protect us. With roots reaching to the core of the earth, mountains can be wonder-full, but can also be dangerous. As we climb to the summit of God's mountain, we need someone to lead us, someone who can guide us along the safest pathways, someone who knows the rules of the climb.

We need a leader who loves the mountain and is willing to employ all the virtues needed to reach the crest. He must understand the human needs of the journey, be firm yet generous with advice, always open to listen to those he guides, strong to protect and correct when necessary. He must share the power of the mountain as he shields his companions from death.

We have such a Leader. He leapt down from heaven one midnight to the voices of angels and the awe of shepherds. His power is the power of love. And, best of all, he promised to remain with us always. O Adonai, O Emmanuel, come again to lead us home!

Sr. Patricia Obremski, St. Bernadette



Saturday, December 19

*O Root of Jesse's stem,
sign of God's love for all his people:
come to save us without delay! O Antiphon.*

Come Lord Jesus, King of Glory, restore us, make us anew, let your face shine upon us, that we may be Saved. May the Holy Spirit fill our hearts with your love, that we know the peace that passes understanding and the joy that never ends. Hope is in you our light and our salvation. For after just a brief moment he who is to come shall come: he shall not delay.

Edward and Marlene Abadie, Our Lady of Good Hope





Sunday December 20

Fourth Sunday of Advent

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

“The movie was awesome,” says the teenager. Wrong. Awesome is used when the sun falls to the earth. Now begins using the Advent word of all Advent words, “Behold.”

Alarmingly attentive. Takes your breath away. A one-time event, never to be repeated. (A redundant sentence meant for emphasis.) Behold is looking at something and being found speechless. Behold cannot be held, placed on a shelf, or stored away for safekeeping. Behold stands proudly in front of you, soon to be living within every fiber of your being. “Behold.”

I preached about “behold” and after Mass, a parishioner held a door for me. “I beholding the door for you.” I didn’t laugh but it was cute. A reserved word for our special Advent season.

What childlike eyes and ears can we readapt to behold once again this beautiful season of anticipation, wonder, and hope? In 2020, what can we behold from our pasts and confidently wonder what lies next in our lives? That is the birth of Jesus Christ. Said by the Blessed Mother’s “Behold,” to the priest holding up the host at Mass saying, “Behold the Lamb of God.” No matter the age of our eyes, can we properly use this wonderful word and say to ourselves and share with others throughout this very holy season, “Behold?”

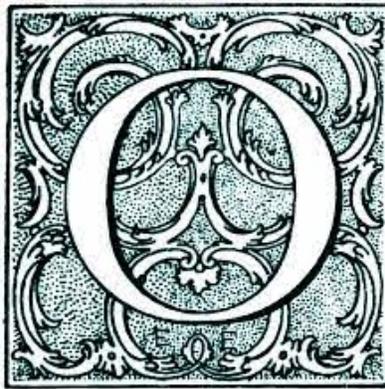
Fr. Joe Jagodensky, SDS, St. Catherine of Alexandria

Monday, 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. O Antiphon.*

Today is the Winter Solstice, the shortest day and the longest night of the year. It is winter time and it is cold. The shadow of death and injustice covers the earth. Fear not! There is hope! God is coming with the light of justice to lead us out of the darkness of sin and into the light of Christ. While being fair is good, being just is better because God's justice is going beyond fair and into making sure everyone has enough. God's justice is providing for our neighbors who cannot provide for themselves. It is the Winter Solstice and it is cold outside, so let's have warm hearts toward one another and be the light of justice in the world.

Lorrie Maples, Northwest Milwaukee Catholic Parishes

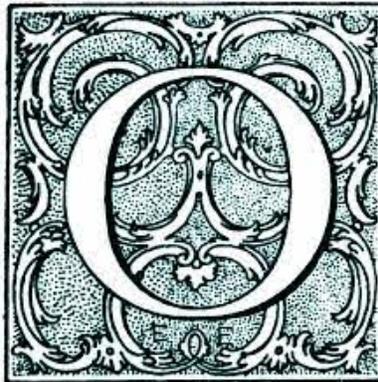


Tuesday, December 22

*O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:
come and save man, whom you formed from the dust! O Antiphon.*

The phrase keystone of the church means the wedge-shaped piece at the summit of a church arch, regarded as holding the other pieces in place. We are waiting patiently for our Savior to come and teach us how to be the beacon of hope for God's people. We need to be the support for those people around us as we wait for the King of all nations to come.

Lynn Reeves, Our Lady of Good Hope



Wednesday, December 23

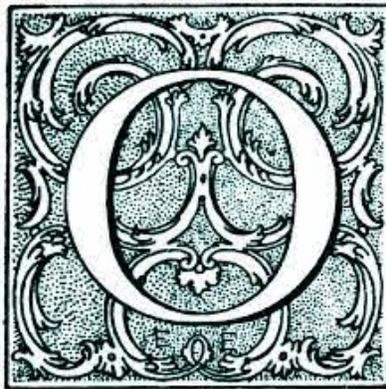
*O Key of David,
opening the gates of God's eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness! O Antiphon.*

To have a key can mean several things to us. We can 'open a door', get into' a locked house, 'secure' our possessions by locking them away, 'start' a car... among a few things. However, an ancient key was very cumbersome. It was carried over the shoulder by the one who had the power and authority to 'lock' and 'unlock'.

In this 'O ANTIPHON' Jesus is named the *Key of David*, with the authority to open the gates of God's kingdom and to free prisoners from darkness. He wears this sign of our salvation, saving us from the darkness of our sin and ignorance, and opening the door to eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

During this Advent, let us trust that Jesus will OPEN the way to our liberation from sin, with the key of his love.

Sandra Ann Weinke, St. Bernadette

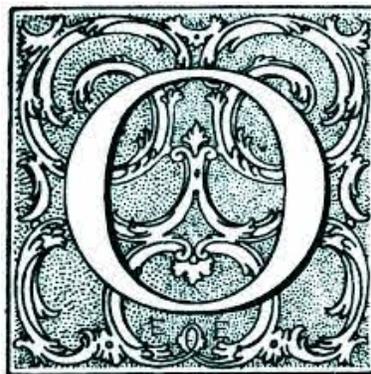


Thursday, December 24

*O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God! O Antiphon.*

The commandments of God are written upon our very hearts. Deep within us, we humans discover a law which we have not laid upon ourselves, but which we must obey. The voice of this law sounds in our hearts at the moments in life when we most need it. It calls us always to do what is good and to avoid evil. For we have in our hearts a law inscribed by God.

Bill Huebsch, Spending Advent with Mary, the Mother of Jesus





Friday, December 25

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the LORD had said through the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." Matthew 1:20B-23.

O God of David and Joseph, you speak to me in the people and events of my life. Help me to hear you, and to respond in faith when I do. Amen.

Bill Huebsch, Spending Advent with Mary, the Mother of Jesus