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# PREPARING for the *Joy* of CHRISTMAS

An Advent Resource to aid the faithful  
in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis

*A*s we begin a new year in the liturgical life of the Church, we find ourselves in a very different world from 12 months ago. For many of us, the month of December and the seasons of Advent and Christmas are filled with powerful memories. These coming weeks would always bring the sounds of laughter and conversation on top of classic Christmas carols, the smell of holiday treats and special meals, and of course the warm embrace of friends and family at many holiday gatherings. All of these happy memories still find their proper place when we recall why they are possible... why we gather together in joy: because a Light has shined into the darkness, the Savior has entered our world!

Yes, in many ways this year is markedly different than all other years. But at least in this way, it is the same: Jesus is Lord, and He is with us. Emmanuel. The message of Christmas is a message that always and forever rings true; God has chosen to enter into this messy and broken world to be with us and to love us. What a wonderful reason to rejoice!

In the proceeding pages, we have put together a few suggestions on how we can continue to rejoice and grow in love while reflecting on the saving message of our God: Emmanuel: God is with us! These pages were designed with many audiences in mind; families, single people, the young and the old. Please feel free to use some or all of the resource as it fits your needs. Know that you are in our prayers this Advent and Christmas Season and that as you use this resource you are connected to the body of Christ.

In this resource you will find:

## JESSE TREE ACTIVITY

pg. 3-13

## ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

pg. 14-19



# JESSE TREE

## Jesus is Coming! Prepare the Way!

By celebrating the season of Advent, Catholics participate in the ancient tradition of waiting for the Messiah to come and save his people. We remember important people from the Bible who waited for the coming of Jesus during Advent, because we are waiting for Jesus during Advent, too. We remember his birth in Bethlehem, and we wait for his second coming at the end of time.

“When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.” – Catechism of the Catholic Church #524

## An Advent Tradition – The “Jesse Tree”

During Advent, we remember important people from the Bible who waited for the coming of the Messiah, just like we are waiting for Jesus. We read a verse from Sacred Scripture, we learn about why each person is important, we pray for the coming of Jesus, and we do an activity. It’s a simple, fun, and prayerful way to actively participate in the season of Advent. The “Jesse Tree” helps us to do just that.

## What is a Jesse Tree?

The Jesse Tree is a title given to Jesus, because he came from the line of King David whose father was named Jesse. The prophet Isaiah says: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots” and “On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples” and “Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously; let this be known in all the earth. Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.” (Isaiah 11:1,10; 12:5-6)

## How to make a Jesse Tree:

- Use a branch from a tree or use your Christmas tree.
- Prepare ornaments to place on the Jesse Tree branches, or do a scavenger hunt of items in your home and place items at the foot of the Jesse Tree.
- You have some options for ornaments; use whatever works best for you:
  - Ornaments in color are provided for you to print, cut out, and place on your tree with string or a paper clip.
  - Blank ornaments are provided if you want to color your own symbols (be creative!)
  - Get crafty with art supplies – here are some suggestions: <https://www.myjessetree.com/diy-jesse-tree-ornaments/>
  - Use items found around your home and place them under the tree. Some suggestions are included in this resource.

## When and How to Use the Jesse Tree:

Choose from Three Options:

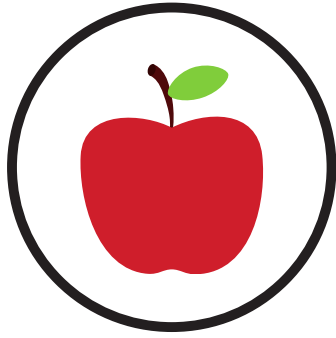
1. At the beginning of Advent, take an afternoon to read through all the Bible verses listed in the following pages and make your ornaments.
2. Each Sunday of Advent, choose one passage from each week on the following pages. Make and place your ornament each week.
3. Every Day of Advent, follow this Jesse Tree advent calendar and pray with a different Bible verse each day and place your ornament: <https://www.loyolapress.com/catholic-resources/liturgical-year/advent/the-jesse-tree/>

## A Note to Parents:

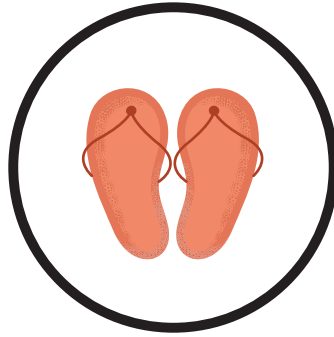
The reflection questions are meant to be a starting point. Feel free to adjust the questions to fit the ages of your families.

*Ornaments*

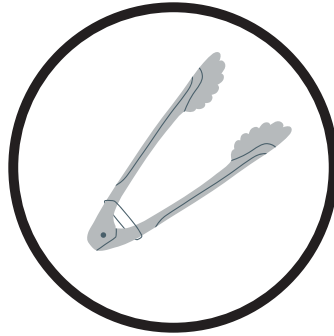
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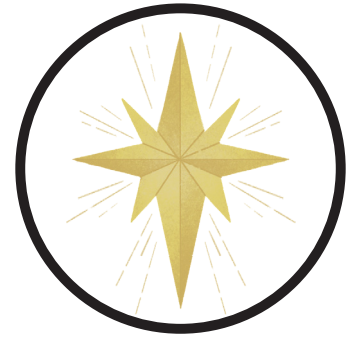
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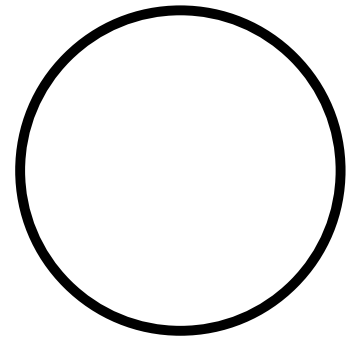
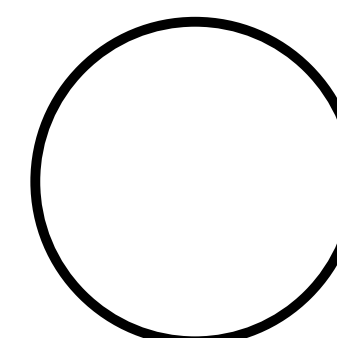
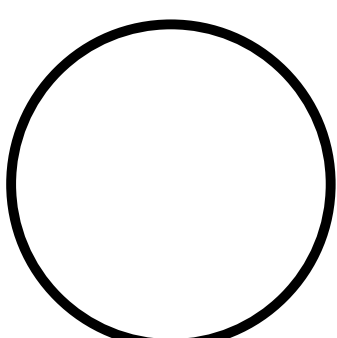
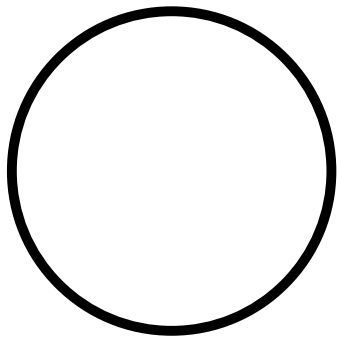
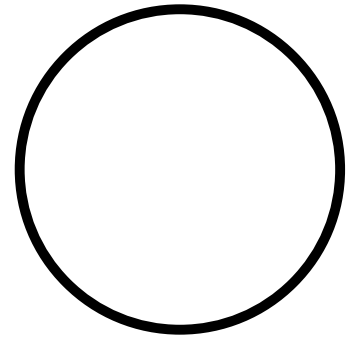
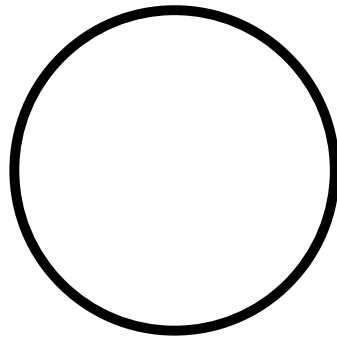
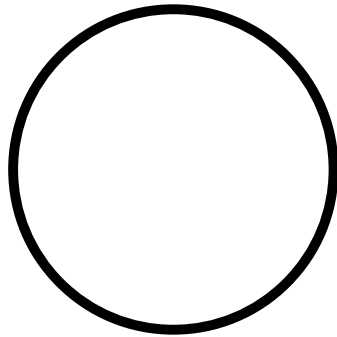
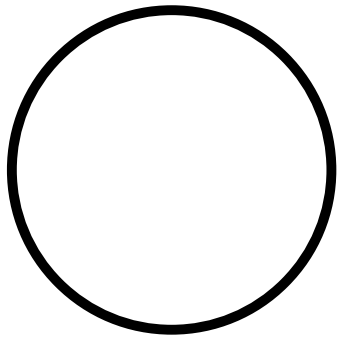
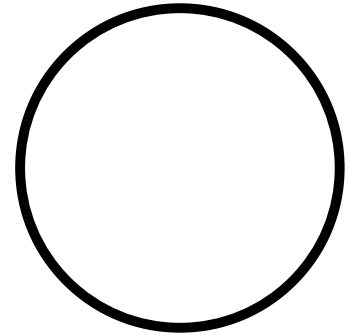
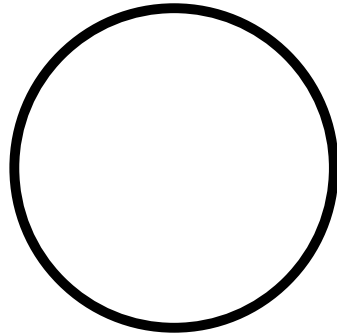
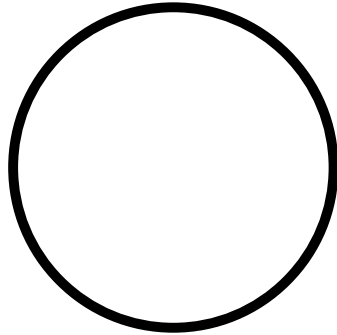
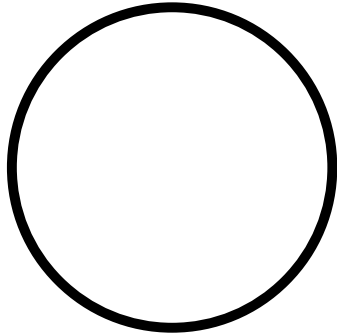
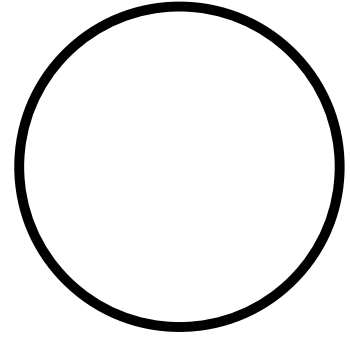
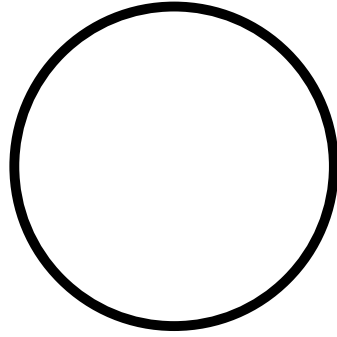
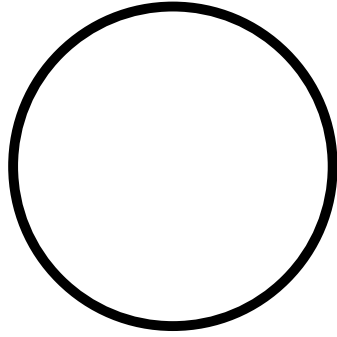
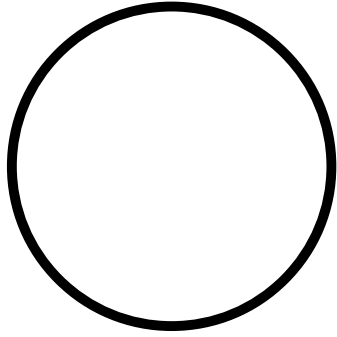


*Week 3*



*Week 4*





# ADAM & EVE

## Genesis 3:1-7

“Now the snake was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the Lord God had made. He asked the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden?’” The woman answered the snake: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it or even touch it, or else you will die.’” But the snake said to the woman: “You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil.” The woman saw that the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eyes, and the tree was desirable for gaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.”

**Ornament:** Apple

**Items in your Home:** Apple, Rubber Snake

### Reflection:

Boundaries keep us safe and allow us to choose love. If God had not put the apple tree in the garden and asked Adam and Eve to not eat of it, there would be no way for them to show their fidelity to God. Without the ability to choose to love God or another we would be “hardwired” to love. That would mean that we no longer have free will but would be programmed to love.

We often think of love as an emotional response, but in fact it is a choice. Knowing love is a choice changes everything. We can choose to love even when we don’t feel the happy emotions that come along with love. Do you treat love as an emotion or a choice? How can you choose to love today?

## APPLE

# NOAH

## Genesis 8:15-22

“Then God said to Noah: Go out of the ark, together with your wife and your sons and your sons’ wives. Bring out with you every living thing that is with you—all creatures, be they birds or animals or crawling things that crawl on the earth—and let them abound on the earth, and be fertile and multiply on it. So Noah came out, together with his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives; and all the animals, all the birds, and all the crawling creatures that crawl on the earth went out of the ark by families. Then Noah built an altar to the Lord, and choosing from every clean animal and every clean bird, he offered burnt offerings on the altar. When the Lord smelled the sweet odor, the Lord said to himself: Never again will I curse the ground because of human beings, since the desires of the human heart are evil from youth; nor will I ever again strike down every living being, as I have done. All the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, Summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.”

**Ornament:** Rainbow

**Items in your Home:** Stuffed Animal

### Reflection:

God is faithful to us, even if we are not faithful to him. As humans we are imperfect. Even this passage tells us “the desires of the human heart are evil from youth.” And yet, God promises that he will never again flood the earth and his sign of fidelity to this covenant will be a rainbow (Gen 9:12-15). God’s mercy is boundless. As we see on the cross, his mercy goes even to the point of death. Do you offer mercy to others as freely as God offers it to you? Who can you offer mercy to today?

## RAINBOW

# ABRAHAM & ISAAC

## Genesis 22:10-13

“Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, “Abraham, Abraham!” “Here I am,” he answered. “Do not lay your hand on the boy,” said the angel. “Do not do the least thing to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you did not withhold from me your son, your only one.” Abraham looked up and saw a single ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering in place of his son.”

**Ornament:** Ram

**Items in your Home:** Sheep, Cotton Ball, Knife

### Reflection:

Abraham has complete dependence upon God, going as far as to follow God’s will and offer his son as a sacrifice. The beauty of reliance on God is that God always gives generously in return. When Abraham prepares to sacrifice his son, the Lord blesses him with a ram already caught in the thicket to offer instead. The Lord then tells Abraham that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky in return for his fidelity. It is tempting to think that if we give God our prized possession or our whole selves, we will be without anything. How may the Lord be asking you to give even where it hurts? Do you trust that the Lord will bless you beyond measure for your generosity?

**RAM**

# JACOB

## Genesis 28:10-15

“Jacob departed from Beer-sheba and proceeded toward Haran. When he came upon a certain place, he stopped there for the night, since the sun had already set. Taking one of the stones at the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. Then he had a dream: a stairway rested on the ground, with its top reaching to the heavens; and God’s angels were going up and down on it. And there was the Lord standing beside him and saying: I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you are lying I will give to you and your descendants. Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and through them you will spread to the west and the east, to the north and the south. In you and your descendants all the families of the earth will find blessing. I am with you and will protect you wherever you go, and bring you back to this land. I will never leave you until I have done what I promised you.”

**Ornament:** Ladder

**Items in your Home:** Ladder, Stone

### Reflection:

In Jacob’s dream he sees angels going up and down the ladder between heaven and earth. While it is hard to believe in things that we cannot see, it does not mean they do not exist. For example, air. You cannot see it and infrequently can you feel it. Yet it is necessary for life. The communion of angels and saints is just the same. Unseen, but no less real. Jacob’s dream urges us to consider the hidden reality around us. There are angels and demons that surround us each day. Each hoping to persuade or dissuade us from evil. Have you given thought to how your personal guardian angel helps you to love God and avoid evil? Call upon the protection and guidance of your guardian angel today!

*Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God’s love commits me here, ever this day, be at my side, to light and guard, rule and guide. Amen.*

**LADDER**



# JOSEPH

## Genesis 40:5-15

“The cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt who were confined in the jail both had dreams on the same night, each his own dream and each dream with its own meaning. When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they looked disturbed. So he asked Pharaoh’s officials who were with him in custody in his master’s house, “Why do you look so troubled today?” They answered him, “We have had dreams, but there is no one to interpret them.” Joseph said to them, “Do interpretations not come from God? Please tell me the dreams.” Then the chief cupbearer told Joseph his dream. “In my dream,” he said, “I saw a vine in front of me, and on the vine were three branches. It had barely budded when its blossoms came out, and its clusters ripened into grapes. Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand; so I took the grapes, pressed them out into his cup, and put it in Pharaoh’s hand.” Joseph said to him: “This is its interpretation. The three branches are three days; within three days Pharaoh will single you out and restore you to your post. You will be handing Pharaoh his cup as you formerly did when you were his cupbearer. Only think of me when all is well with you, and please do me the great favor of mentioning me to Pharaoh, to get me out of this place. The truth is that I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and I have not done anything here that they should have put me into a dungeon.”

**Ornament:** Tunic

**Items in your Home:** Baking Supplies, Cup

### Reflection:

Joseph trusted in God. Even when he was treated unfairly, he knew that God loves him, and that one way or another everything would turn out okay. As we wait for Jesus this Advent, we know that life doesn’t always go the way we want it to. But God loves you so much that He sends His Son, Jesus, to you—to be your Savior and friend. Let’s let this Advent and Christmas remind us that, like Joseph, we can always trust God. God loves you, and—one way or another—every struggle in your life will eventually turn out okay, according to God’s plan.

## TUNIC

# MOSES

## Exodus 3:1-2, 4-7, 10-12

“Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock beyond the wilderness, he came to the mountain of God, Horeb. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him as fire flaming out of a bush. When he looked, although the bush was on fire, it was not being consumed. God called out to him from the bush: Moses! Moses! He answered, “Here I am.” God said: Do not come near! Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father, he continued, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. The LORD said: I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry against their taskmasters, so I know well what they are suffering. Now, go! I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt. But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” God answered: I will be with you.”

**Ornament:** Sandals

**Items in your Home:** Sandals, Twig

### Reflection:

Moses was obedient when God called him to help in the mighty plan to free the Israelite people. He heard God’s word, and acted on it, even though he felt unsure of himself. Like Moses we might find ourselves asking “who am I that I should go?”

Jesus (“God Saves”) came to save us from a different type of slavery - the slavery of sin. One of the best ways we can not only prepare for His coming, but participate in his work now, is starting with ourselves by making a good examination of conscience and returning regularly to the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

## SANDALS



# JOSHUA

## Joshua 1:1-9

“After Moses, the servant of the LORD, had died, the LORD said to Moses’ aide Joshua, son of Nun: Moses my servant is dead. So now, you and the whole people with you, prepare to cross the Jordan to the land that I will give the Israelites. Every place where you set foot I have given you, as I promised Moses. All the land of the Hittites, from the wilderness and the Lebanon east to the great river Euphrates and west to the Great Sea, will be your territory. No one can withstand you as long as you live. As I was with Moses, I will be with you: I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and steadfast, so that you may give this people possession of the land I swore to their ancestors that I would give them. Only be strong and steadfast, being careful to observe the entire law which Moses my servant enjoined on you. Do not swerve from it either to the right or to the left, that you may succeed wherever you go. Do not let this book of the law depart from your lips. Recite it by day and by night, that you may carefully observe all that is written in it; then you will attain your goal; then you will succeed. I command you: be strong and steadfast! Do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD, your God, is with you wherever you go.”

**Ornament:** Map

**Items in your Home:** Medal of Honor or Award Ribbon

### Reflection:

God always remembers his promises. Just like Joshua was called to bring the Israelites to the Promised Land, so too, we will be called by God. Joshua was not exactly sure how to accomplish this task requested by God. Sometimes we do not know why God is calling on us. Let this Advent remind us of God’s promise, of God’s love, and that we will listen when God calls us. Although we may not understand fully what God has in mind, we can trust that God will lead us and keep his promise of love and salvation. Come Lord Jesus!

## MAP

# DAVID

## 1 Samuel 1, 4-7, & 10-13

“The LORD said to Samuel: How long will you grieve for Saul, whom I have rejected as king of Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for from among his sons I have decided on a king... Samuel did as the LORD had commanded him. When he entered Bethlehem, the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and asked, “Is your visit peaceful, O seer?” He replied: “Yes! I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. So purify yourselves and celebrate with me today.” He also had Jesse and his sons purify themselves and invited them to the sacrifice. As they came, he looked at Eliab and thought, “Surely the anointed is here before the LORD.” But the LORD said to Samuel: Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The LORD looks into the heart. In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any one of these.” Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” Jesse replied, “There is still the youngest, but he is tending the sheep.” Samuel said to Jesse, “Send for him; we will not sit down to eat until he arrives here.” Jesse had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth with beautiful eyes, and good looking. The LORD said: There—anoint him, for this is the one! Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers, and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David.”

**Ornament:** Harp

**Items in your Home:** Candy Cane, Musical Instrument

### Reflection:

Holiness can sometimes seem unattainable, a call for only a few extraordinary people. However, the call of David reminds us that holiness is not only about our outward appearance and actions, but also the disposition of our hearts. “God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The LORD looks into the heart.” Holiness is not so much about what we can do for God, but what God can do in and through us. Therefore, we are all called to be holy. David was certainly not perfect, but his heart was open to God’s plan. This Advent let us open our hearts to the Lord, that we might be anointed and led by His Spirit, trusting in what God wants to do in our lives.

## HARP

# ELIJAH

## 1 Kings 17:8-16

“So the word of the LORD came to him: Arise, go to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow there to feed you. He arose and went to Zarephath. When he arrived at the entrance of the city, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called out to her, “Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink.” She left to get it, and he called out after her, “Please bring along a crust of bread.” She said, “As the LORD, your God, lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a few sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die.” Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid. Go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake and bring it to me. Afterwards you can prepare something for yourself and your son. For the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.” She left and did as Elijah had said. She had enough to eat for a long time—he and she and her household. The jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD spoken through Elijah.”

**Ornament:** Jar

**Items in your Home:** Jar, Small Cake

### Reflection:

Sometimes it feels like everything is out of control and there is nothing we can do when we are faced with difficulties. The widow of Zarephath must have felt the same way. But God sent Elijah to remind her that God is with us in our suffering and what he says will always come to pass. This advent, we are challenged to have faith that God keeps his promises. When we are tempted to overlook helping others because we are too worried about our problems, or when we forget to lean on God in prayer, let us remember the faith of the widow of Zarephath and the prophet Elijah and turn to God and neighbor in faith and charity.

## JAR

# ISAIAH

## Isaiah 6:1-8

“In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, with the train of his garment filling the temple. Seraphim were stationed above; each of them had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they hovered. One cried out to the other: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts! All the earth is filled with his glory!’ At the sound of that cry, the frame of the door shook and the house was filled with smoke. Then I said, ‘Woe is me, I am doomed! For I am a man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me, holding an ember which he had taken with tongs from the altar. He touched my mouth with it. ‘See,’ he said, ‘now that this has touched your lips, your wickedness is removed, your sin purged.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?’ ‘Here I am,’ I said; ‘send me!’”

**Ornament:** Tongs

**Items in your Home:** Coal, Tongs

### Reflection:

When we were baptized, we became part of God’s family. Part of our job as baptized Christians is to be prophets who spread the Good News of the Gospel to anyone and everyone. We should always be ready to share the love of God with our words and actions, but especially during times of difficulty when people need the love and guidance of God the most. Next time you have an opportunity to share God’s truth and love in your daily life, say to the Lord in your heart: “Send me!”

## TONGS

# JEREMIAH

## Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7, 11-14

“These are the words of the scroll which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, to the priests, the prophets, and all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their fruits. Take wives and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters. Increase there; do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city to which I have exiled you; pray for it to the LORD, for upon its welfare your own depends. For I know well the plans I have in mind for you—oracle of the LORD—plans for your welfare and not for woe, so as to give you a future of hope. When you call me, and come and pray to me, I will listen to you. When you look for me, you will find me. Yes, when you seek me with all your heart, I will let you find me—oracle of the LORD—and I will change your lot; I will gather you together from all the nations and all the places to which I have banished you—oracle of the LORD—and bring you back to the place from which I have exiled you.”

**Ornament:** Scroll

**Items in your Home:** Paper Scroll, Garden Tools

### Reflection:

The prophet Jeremiah was sent to the people of God to give them some good news that was also surprising! The Israelites had been banished from their home and scattered far and wide. They prayed asking God to change their circumstances and let them go back to the way things were. But instead, God told them that he had plans for them, right where they were! God did not want them to go back. He was doing something new, and it was good: for their welfare, and a future full of hope. Is God doing something new in your life?

**SCROLL**

# JOHN THE BAPTIST

## Matthew 3: 1-6, 13-17

“In those days John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: “A voice of one crying out in the desert, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’” John wore clothing made of camel’s hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?” Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

**Ornament:** Scallop Shell

**Items in your Home:** Sea Shell, Furry Coat, Honey

### Reflection:

People came to John the Baptist seeking forgiveness for their sins. But when Jesus asked to be baptized, John the Baptist said that Jesus should be baptizing him! John knew his own sinfulness, even though he was also doing good by baptizing everyone. As Christians we try to do good, but we also know that we don’t always love God and our neighbor the way that we should. John the Baptist was a great man, and he knew he needed God’s mercy and forgiveness for his sins just like everybody else. Is there anything you need to ask forgiveness for before welcoming Jesus into your heart on Christmas day?

**SCALLOP SHELL**

## ZECHARIAH & ELIZABETH

### Luke 1:5-16

“There was a priest named Zechariah; his wife was from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both were righteous in the eyes of God observing all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren and both were advanced in years. Once when he was serving as priest in his division’s turn before God, according to the practice of the priestly service, he was chosen by lot to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense. Then, when the whole assembly of the people was praying outside at the hour of the incense offering, the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right of the altar of incense. Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall name him John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of [the] Lord. He will drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the holy Spirit even from his mother’s womb, and he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.”

**Ornament:** Baby Footprints

**Items in your Home:** Baby Doll

### Reflection:

Zechariah and Elizabeth were people who remained strong in their faith in the face of disappointment. They lived to old age without receiving what would have been the primary desire of any Jewish couple in that time and place: the birth of a child. However, God rewarded their faithfulness through the birth of their son, John the Baptist. John was worth the wait, for as the angel told Zechariah, he would “turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.” As we await the birth of Jesus this advent season, let us seek to imitate the faith of Zechariah and Elizabeth, who were rewarded with joy and gladness in the birth of their son.

**BABY FOOTPRINTS**

## VIRGIN MARY

### Luke 1:46-55

“And Mary said: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior. For he has looked upon his handmaid’s lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

**Ornament:** Mirror

**Items in your Home:** Statue or Image of Mary, Mirror

### Reflection:

Mary said: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord.” She did not say, “Look at me, God thinks I’m the best!” Mary focused on what God was doing for all of humanity and how great and merciful God is: “remembering his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.” This advent, we have looked at many people from Adam and Eve to Abraham and now Mary, who point the way to Jesus. As we prepare for Christmas, let’s talk less about us and more about Jesus, remembering to be joyful and give thanks for the great deeds that God has done.

**MIRROR**

# JOSEPH

## Matthew 1:20-24

“Behold, 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 be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us.’ When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.”

**Ornament:** Moon

**Items in your Home:** Pillow, Angel

### Reflection:

Joseph had a very important role in God’s plan to save us from our sins. He didn’t have all the answers, but he listened carefully for God to show him what he should do. Even when he was fast asleep, his heart was listening for instruction from God. So when the angel of the Lord told him to not be afraid, to take care of Mary as his wife and to name the baby Jesus, he did just that. When you are afraid or uncertain, do you listen for God’s direction like Joseph did? When Joseph followed God’s plan, it changed the world; it changed eternity! When we celebrate the birth of Jesus, will you let him change your life?

## MOON

# JESUS

## John 1:1-17

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

**Ornament:** Star

**Items in your Home:** Candle, Advent Wreath

### Reflection:

It was dark on the silent night when Jesus was born in the little town of Bethlehem. The star shone brightly on the manger where he lay, next to Mary his mother, with Joseph watching over them. We rejoice like the angels and shepherds because Jesus is the light of the world! He is God the Father’s only Son, and he came to give us grace and truth. Jesus was born to save us from sin and death, so we could have eternal life with God in Heaven. Pray a Christmas prayer today, and say thank you to Jesus for coming to save us.

## STAR



# ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

We often think of the scene of Jesus' birth in sentimental terms. The animals were cute and cuddly, there were some shepherds with gifts, there is a star, maybe some singing. But if we really stop and ponder, what a sight it would have been. It was essentially in a barn. Have you ever been in a barn? Imagine the cold, the smells (oh the smells!), and the noises. It is not a particularly pleasant place. After being turned away by so many in her hour of need, this is where Mary gave birth.

And then Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, the Messiah that everyone had been waiting and praying for, without a bed to lay in, took his first breaths in a feed trough.

This is how much God loves you.

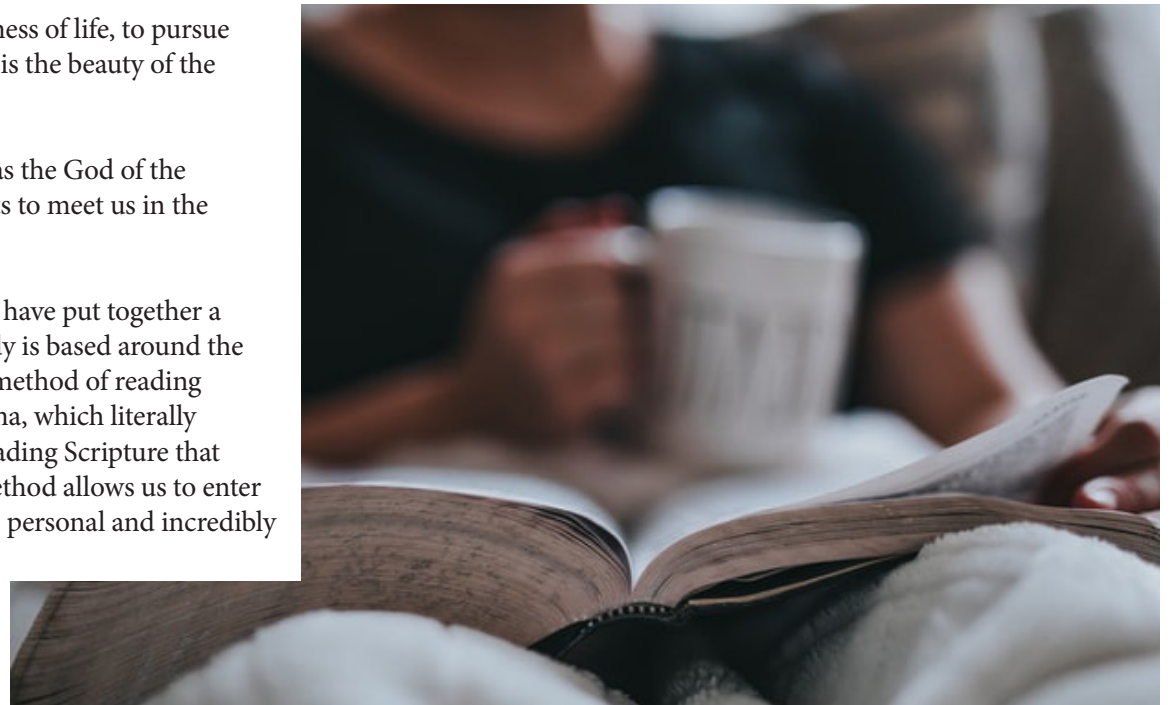
He came in relative secret, into the unpleasantness of life, to pursue you and show you the way back to His heart. This is the beauty of the Advent Season.

And the good news is, He keeps coming. Just as the God of the Universe comes to meet us in the manger, He waits to meet us in the Living Word of Sacred Scripture.

To accompany you during this holy season, we have put together a Scripture study for each week of Advent. This study is based around the readings at each Sunday Mass and the three-step method of reading Sacred Scripture called Lectio Divina. Lectio Divina, which literally means divine reading, is the ancient method of reading Scripture that dates all the way back to the 4th Century. This method allows us to enter into communion with the Word of God in simple, personal and incredibly fruitful ways.

I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of Lectio Divina: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart. If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church – I am convinced of it – a new spiritual springtime.  
-Pope Benedict XVI, (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n.25)

We invite you to use this four-week resource to pray and prepare with a small group Bible Study, large group, family, discipleship partner or individually. We have also prepared a few questions and quotes to help inspire more prayer and discussion in addition to Lectio each week.





# LECTIO DIVINA METHOD

## First, Let's Pray...

- **Take** some time in silence. Allow distractions and concerns to pass by.
- **Rest** in the silence of God's presence. Imagine God looking down upon you praying and sending the Holy Spirit to direct you and draw you close.
- **Pray** out loud for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

## First Reading: (Imagination)

- **Read** the passage slowly once.
- **Questions for reflection:** what sticks out from this passage? A word, a phrase, a verse, an image?
- After reading the passage, **take a few minutes of silent prayer to continue reflecting on the passage.**
- After prayer, take some time to **share** your responses to the reflection questions if you are with a group or journal if this is self-study.

## Second Reading: (Intellect)

- **Read** the passage again and this time think about the word or image that stuck out to you or anything else the Holy Spirit may present to you and “chew” on the words, turning them over in your minds and hearts.
- **Questions for reflection:** What does the passage say about God? What does it say about you? What is happening in your life that these words have importance? What feelings does it evoke within you?
- After reading the passage, **take a few minutes of silent prayer to continue reflecting on the passage.**
- After prayer, take some time to **share** your responses to the reflection questions if you are with a group or journal if this is self-study.

## Third Reading: (Will)

- **Read** the passage one more time.
- **Questions for reflection:** How does this relate to my life? What invitation do I experience from the Lord? What resistance do I feel within myself?
- After reading the passage, **take a few minutes of silent prayer to continue reflecting on the passage.**
- After prayer, take some time to **share** your responses to the reflection questions if you are with a group or journal if this is self-study.



# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## Mark 13:33-37

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit. Renew my heart and mind. Prepare me for the coming of the Lord during this Advent Season, most especially in this time of prayer with the living Word of God.

*Please refer to **page 15** for your guide on reading and reflecting on this week's passage.*

"Jesus said to his disciples:

'Be watchful! Be alert!

You do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man traveling abroad.

He leaves home and places his servants in charge,

each with his own work,

and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore;

you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming,

whether in the evening, or at midnight,

or at cockcrow, or in the morning.

May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.

What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"

### Additional Questions for Reflection

1. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage (a word, a phrase, a verse)? Why does this stand out?
2. What do you think it means to watch for the Lord? What does it mean to watch for the Lord for you right now in your life?
3. Advent, and this passage in particular, is a great reminder of our innate, hopeful longing. As Christians, what is it that we long for? How does God meet us in that longing? What are you longing for? How can you invite God into that space?
4. What perceptions do you have of Heaven?

### Quotes

There is no escape from the burning desire within us for the true, the good, the beautiful. Each of us lives with the unextinguishable expectation that life is supposed to make sense and satisfy us deeply. The basic proposal of Christianity is that there is a glorious and infinitely satisfying banquet that corresponds to the deep hunger we feel at our core.

- Christopher West

### Closing Prayer

Lift up whatever has moved your heart from today's Scripture with an extemporaneous prayer.

# SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## Mark 1:1-8

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit. Renew my heart and mind. Prepare me for the coming of the Lord during this Advent Season, most especially in this time of prayer with the living Word of God.

*Please refer to **page 15** for your guide on reading and reflecting on this week's passage.*

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.  
 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:  
 Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;  
 he will prepare your way.  
 A voice of one crying out in the desert:  
 "Prepare the way of the Lord,  
 make straight his paths."  
 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 baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

### Additional Questions for Reflection

1. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage (a word, a phrase, a verse)? Why does this stand out?
2. What does it mean to prepare the way for Jesus?
3. How can you prepare the way of Jesus in your own life? How can you prepare the way of Jesus in the lives of those you know and love?
4. Like John the Baptist, has there been a witness in your life that has prepared the way for you to encounter Jesus? If so, how did they witness to the love of Jesus? How can you emulate their witness?

### Quotes

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for. - *Catechism of the Catholic Church 27*

### Closing Prayer

Lift up whatever has moved your heart from today's Scripture with an extemporaneous prayer.

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit. Renew my heart and mind. Prepare me for the coming of the Lord during this Advent Season, most especially in this time of prayer with the living Word of God.

*Please refer to **page 15** for your guide on reading and reflecting on this week's passage.*

"Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.  
In all circumstances give thanks,  
for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.  
Do not quench the Spirit.  
Do not despise prophetic utterances.  
Test everything; retain what is good.  
Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfectly holy  
and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body,  
be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
The one who calls you is faithful,  
and he will also accomplish it. "

### Additional Questions for Reflection

1. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage (a word, a phrase, a verse)? Why does this stand out?
2. What does it mean to rejoice in all circumstances? Is that a difficult task? How can you put this into practice each day this Advent?
3. How can we pray without ceasing?
4. Can you recall a moment where the goodness of God was apparent in your life? Share with your group or spend time writing this down.

### Quotes

A Christian is one who is invited to join in the feast, to the joy of being saved, to the joy of being redeemed, to the joy of sharing life with Christ. This is a joy! You are called to a party! - *Pope Francis*

God made us for joy. God is joy, & the joy of living reflects the original joy that God felt in creating us. - *St. John Paul II*

### Closing Prayer

Lift up whatever has moved your heart from today's Scripture with an extemporaneous prayer.

# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## Luke 1:26-38

### Opening Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit. Renew my heart and mind. Prepare me for the coming of the Lord during this Advent Season, most especially in this time of prayer with the living Word of God.

*Please refer to **page 15** for your guide on reading and reflecting on this week's passage.*

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God  
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,  
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,  
of the house of David,  
and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming to her, he said,  
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."  
But she was greatly troubled at what was said  
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Then the angel said to her,  
"Do not be afraid, Mary,  
for you have found favor with God.

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,  
and you shall name him Jesus.  
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,  
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,  
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,  
and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel,  
"How can this be,  
since I have no relations with a man?"  
And the angel said to her in reply,  
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore the child to be born  
will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,  
has also conceived a son in her old age,  
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;  
for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.  
May it be done to me according to your word."

Then the angel departed from her."

### Additional Questions for Reflection

1. What is one thing that stands out to you from this passage (a word, a phrase, a verse)? Why does this stand out?
2. What role does Mary play in your life as a Christian? How can you grow in deeper relationship with her?
3. Mary demonstrated her trust in the Lord by her acceptance of His invitation. Do I say "yes" to God in the small, everyday situations of my life? When the yes is hard, do I ask God for the grace to respond to his call?
4. We are all encouraged to bring Jesus into the world. How do I respond to that invitation? In what ways can I help bring Jesus into the world?
5. Where are the places I have difficulty saying yes to God? How can Mary help me in those places?

### Quotes

Our Lady was the first person to hear Jesus' cry "I thirst" with St. John, and I am sure Mary Magdalen. Because Our Lady was there on Calvary, she knows how real, how deep is His longing for you and for the poor. Do we know? Do we feel as she? Ask her to teach. Her role is to bring you face to face, as John and Magdalen, with the love in the Heart of Jesus crucified. - *St. Mother Teresa*

### Closing Prayer

Lift up whatever has moved your heart from today's Scripture with an extemporaneous prayer.

*Thank You* for  
**PREPARING**  
for the *Joy* of  
**CHRISTMAS**  
with us!



ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS

*The Church in Central and Southern Indiana*

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