

Christmas,
the Feast of Love Incarnate



**Prayer for Living
Daily Reflections for
Liturgical Year A**

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Verbum Dei Missionaries

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

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Thursday, 1st December, 1st Week of Advent.

Isaiah 26:1-6, Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Jesus said to his disciples: 'It is not anyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock. But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had!'

God, my rock

In today's first reading from the prophet Isaiah, he proclaims, "*Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord is the everlasting Rock*". What is the message that the prophet wanted to convey? Like the rock, God is durable, stable, firm and reliable. This is the truth of faith that we need to cling to, especially in these times of political tensions in many parts of the world and economic crises. God is our rock. On Him, we can lean upon and find security.

In the gospel, Jesus speaks of two men building their houses. One on the sand and the other on the rock. When a storm comes, the only house standing is the one on the rock. Thus, the essential part of the whole building is the foundation. God is the firm foundation that enables us to stand amid the storms we face. When we listen to His word, keep it and put it into practice, we build our lives on solid ground.

Reflective question:

Do I build my life on God, my Rock?

Friday, 2nd December, 1st Week of Advent.

Isaiah 29:17-24, Matthew 9:27-31

As Jesus went on his way two blind men followed him shouting, 'Take pity on us, son of David.' And when Jesus reached the house the blind men came up to him and he said to them, 'Do you believe I can do this?' They said, 'Lord, we do.' Then he touched their eyes saying, 'According to your faith, let it be done to you.' And their sight returned. Then Jesus

sternly warned them, 'Take care that no one learns about this.' But when they had gone away, they talked about him all over the countryside.

Eyes of faith

In today's responsorial psalm, the psalmist declares, "*The Lord is my light and my help; whom shall I fear?*". Let us keep these words in our hearts as we go about the day. Jesus is our Light and help; thus, we go through life without fear.

In today's gospel, two blind men kept following Jesus and shouting at the top of their voices, "Take pity on us, son of David". When Jesus reached the house, He turned to them and asked a crucial question, "*Do you believe I can do this?*" These two men could neither see Jesus nor witness the wonders He did to others. However, their eyes of faith recognised that God was working powerfully in and through this person, Jesus. They replied, "*Lord, we do*". Today, Jesus invites us to see His presence of love with our eyes of faith. He asks us, "*Do you believe? Do you believe enough to recognise Me?*" May we echo the words of the blind men, "*Lord, I do*" and believe that He is our Light and help who always with us as we journey through life.

Reflective question:

Do I have a mature vision of faith to recognise Jesus' presence around me and in me?

Saturday, 3rd December, St. Francis Xavier.

1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23, Mark 16:15-20

Jesus showed himself to the Eleven, and he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover.' And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.'

God continues to call

"Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation". Today, we celebrate the feast of St. Francis Xavier, who responded to Jesus' command to "Go" by dedicating his life and exhausting himself to preach the gospel to Goa (India), Melaka (Malaysia), Borneo and Japan. His missionary journey ended in Shangchuan Island, where he died on 3rd December 1552. What compelled this Spanish Jesuit saint to preach the gospel with urgency and zeal? He went because, firstly, he experienced himself loved by God, and secondly, he saw that there were multitudes of people who had not experienced being loved by God.

Today, Jesus calls us, "Go". It is not for us to do what St. Francis did, but in our own ways, we can commit ourselves to be authentic witnesses of the gospel. We may bring many people to fall in love with God through our words and lives. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to revive our love for Christ and our passion for His people.

Reflective question:

Today, is there someone to whom I can witness God's love?

Sunday, 4th December, 2nd Sunday of Advent.

Isaiah 11:1-10, Romans 15:4-9, Matthew 13:1-12

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he proclaimed this message in the desert of Judaea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.' This was the man spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said: A voice of one that cries in the desert, 'Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.' This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather loin-cloth round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, 'Brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming retribution? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance, and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father," because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is being laid to the root of the trees, so that any tree failing to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who comes after me is more powerful than I, and I am not fit

to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.'

Repent and prepare the way for the Lord

As we light up the second candle of the Advent wreath, we are in the mood to celebrate Christmas by decorating the house with twinkling lights and going on shopping trips. Instead, the gospel today presents the figure of John the Baptist, who does not seem to go with the flow of the festive ambience with his garment made of camel hair and radical message of repentance. Let us not dismiss John the Baptist too quickly but pay attention to what he has to say to us.

"Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand". John the Baptist calls us for a change of our hearts, i.e. to turn away from all that prevents us from allowing Christ to live in us and act through us. It is a call to turn away from our selfishness and judgemental ways and prepare the way for the Lord, who is the source of true peace and joy. Let us make this inward journey as we draw closer to Christmas.

Reflective question:

What attitudes must I change in order to make room for Christ to live in me?

Monday, 5th December, 2nd Week of Advent.

Isaiah 35:1-10, Luke 5:17-26

Jesus was teaching one day, and Pharisees and teachers of the Law, who had come from every village in Galilee, from Judaea and from Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was there so that he should heal. And now some men appeared, bringing on a bed a paralysed man whom they were trying to bring in and lay down in front of him. But as they could find no way of getting the man through the crowd, they went up onto the top of the house and lowered him and his stretcher down through the tiles into the middle of the gathering, in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith he said, 'My friend, your sins are forgiven you.' The scribes and the Pharisees began to think this over. 'Who is this man, talking blasphemy? Who but God alone can forgive sins?' But Jesus, aware of their thoughts, made them this reply, 'What are these

thoughts you have in your hearts? Which of these is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' -- he said to the paralysed man-'I order you: get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.' And immediately before their very eyes he got up, picked up what he had been lying on and went home praising God. They were all astounded and praised God and were filled with awe, saying, 'We have seen strange things today.'

"Seeing their faith"

Today's gospel speaks to us of the need and importance of community. This is because, in this journey of faith, we need to depend on the faith of one another. When we find ourselves paralysed with doubts and lack of fervour, the faith of others in our family, community, and parish can carry us and bring us closer to Jesus.

In the gospel, nothing could stop the four friends from their mission to bring the paralysed man to Jesus. Jesus saw their unwavering faith and healed the man. Our Christian faith is not a lonely journey where we walk alone. God gives people to journey with us and carry us with their prayer, love, wisdom and kindness. Likewise, we ,too, are called to carry others to encounter Jesus.

Reflective question:

Have I experienced carrying others to Christ and being carried to Christ by the faith and love of those around me?

Tuesday, 6th December, 2nd Week of Advent.

Isaiah 40:1-11, Matthew 18:12-14

Jesus said to his disciples:'Tell me. Suppose a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays; will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go in search of the stray? In truth I tell you, if he finds it, it gives him more joy than do the ninety-nine that did not stray at all. Similarly, it is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.'

Searching for the one lost sheep

In today's gospel, the shepherd did a seemingly illogical action. He left the ninety-nine to go and look for one lost sheep. What is the message

that Jesus wants to convey to us? God is like the shepherd who goes out searching for the one who is lost. In the heart of God, the one sheep, i.e. the one person, is important and precious.

In this time of Advent, let us dedicate time to be a shepherd to someone who is lost and has strayed from God. We can bring that concrete person closer to God through our words and actions of love. Each person is valuable to God; thus, he/she has to be valuable to us too. However, we need also to be mindful that the other person needs to be open to being found and led back to God. If he/she is not ready, we are invited to exercise patience and continue loving and being there for him/her. May God count on us to be faithful shepherds to His sheep.

Reflective question:

Is God inviting me to be a shepherd to someone who is lost?

Wednesday, 7th December, St. Ambrose.

Isaiah 40:25-31, Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus exclaimed: 'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'

Rest in Me

"Come to ME...learn from ME". In this Advent time, Jesus calls us again to draw closer to Him and enter into a personal relationship with Him. In the busyness of life, we must not forget to go to Him and find in Him the source of our rest. The word "rest" here does not mean prolonged hours of sleep. Instead, the rest that Jesus offers us is the renewal of our strength, the empowerment of our love, and the restoration of our peace.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah assures us that God "*gives strength to the wearied*" and "*strengthens the powerless*". Let us open ourselves to receive the rest God wants to share. Today, let us stay close to Jesus and find our rest in Him.

Reflective questions:

Do I feel tired and overburdened now? What is Jesus' message to me?

Thursday, 8th December, Immaculate Conception of Mary.
Genesis 3:9-15, 20, Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12, Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

Saying "Yes" to God

In today's gospel, God chose and called Mary to be the mother of Jesus. Despite her fears, Mary cooperated with God in total obedience. She said, "*You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said*". These words expressed her total trust in God, even though she did not fully understand what her 'Yes' to Him fully entailed. Mary trusted that the God who loved her would do marvellous things in her and through her.

Like Mary, God has chosen and called us because He has a mission for each one of us to fulfil. Each of us is entrusted, in big and small ways, to bring Jesus to others. Therefore, despite our weaknesses and struggles, may we speak Mary's words and pray to God, "*...let it happen to me as you have said. I trust in you*".

Reflective question:

How can Mary teach me to trust God more and let Him use my life for His purpose?

**Friday, 9th December, St. John Diego Cuauhtlatiatoatzin.
Isaiah 48:17-19, Matthew 11:16-19**

Jesus spoke to the crowds: "What comparison can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to each other as they sit in the market place: We played the pipes for you, and you wouldn't dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn't be mourners. 'For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He is possessed." The Son of man came, eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.'

In joy and sadness, God is present

In the gospel today, Jesus compared the people around Him to a group of children playing in the marketplace. Like the children in the marketplace, his contemporaries were not easy to please. John the Baptist preached repentance, but they refused to listen to Him and regarded him as "*possessed*". Jesus spoke about the joy of God's love, but they accused Him of being "*a friend of tax collectors and sinners*".

God comes to us in ways beyond our expectations. In moments of mourning and sadness, He is there. In happy moments of celebration and gladness, He is present to us. All we need is to be open and respond to His coming. As we pray, let us tell Jesus, "*Come, Lord Jesus. Come and stay with me in times of joy and sadness*".

Reflective question:

Am I open and attentive to God's presence in my life?

**Saturday, 10th December, Our Lady of Loreto.
Ecclesiasticus 48:1-4, 9-11, Matthew 17:10-13**

As they came down from the mountain the disciples put this question to him, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' He replied, 'Elijah is indeed coming, and he will set everything right again; however, I tell you that Elijah has come already and they did not recognise him but treated him as they pleased; and the Son of man will suffer similarly at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that he was speaking of John the Baptist.

People are gifts, not obstacles

The Jewish people believed that the prophet Elijah would return to earth to prepare the way for the Messiah's coming. Jesus identified John the Baptist as the "Elijah" in today's gospel. However, the people refused to welcome John the Baptist, treated him disdainfully and even had him beheaded. Jesus knew that He, too, would be treated the same because of His faithfulness in preaching the Good News of God's love. Both John the Baptist and Jesus were disregarded because the people around them failed to appreciate them as God's gifts to them and as persons with dignity.

Today, as we draw near Christmas, let us reflect on how we often fail to appreciate people and treat them as nobodies, as obstacles to be removed. May we learn from Jesus how to love each person we encounter with respect because they too are God's children.

Reflective question:

How do I live this day with awareness of each person's dignity as a child of God?

Sunday, 11th December, 3rd Sunday of Advent, Gaudete Sunday.

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10, James 5:7-10, Matthew 11:2-11

John had heard in prison what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin-diseases are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor; and blessed is anyone who does not find me a cause of falling.' As the men were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John, 'What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Look, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you to prepare your way before you. In truth I tell you, of all the children born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.'

Do not lose heart because God is here

In the gospel, John the Baptist, locked in prison, started questioning if Jesus was the Messiah. The way Jesus carried His mission with tenderness and love was not what John the Baptist expected. Thus, John sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "*Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?*". He expected the Messiah to come with power and bring judgement to all. Instead, Jesus came to show God's mercy to all, especially the weakest and the most vulnerable.

Like John the Baptist, we might be slow to recognise that God is at work in our lives, especially when things do not turn out as expected. Nevertheless, Jesus calls us to keep believing and trusting in God. We take comfort in the 2nd reading in which St. James says "*Be patient... You too have to be patient; do not lose heart, because the Lord's coming will be soon*". God indeed comes daily, and His coming brings deep joy to our hearts.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' invitation to me at this point of my Advent journey?

Monday, 12th December, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17, Matthew 21:23-27

Jesus had gone into the Temple and was teaching, when the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him and said, 'What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?' In reply Jesus said to them, 'And I will ask you a question, just one; if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my authority for acting like this. John's baptism: what was its origin, heavenly or human?' And they argued this way among themselves, 'If we say heavenly, he will retort to us, "Then why did you refuse to believe him?"; but if we say human, we have the people to fear, for they all hold that John was a prophet.' So their reply to Jesus was, 'We do not know.' And he retorted to them, 'Nor will I tell you my authority for acting like this.'

Authority of love

'What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?' Jesus had just driven away the people selling and buying at the Temple, overturning the money-changers and dove-sellers tables.

He then accused the Jewish leaders of turning the sacred place of God into a bandits' den. In today's gospel, the chief priests and the elders of the people demanded to know the source of Jesus' authority for doing what He did. Jesus spoke and acted with God's authority. In the Temple, Jesus exercised God's authority to renew the people's relationship with God.

We often associate authority with leaders who abuse their power. However, Jesus' authority is always life-giving and does things for our good. In this Advent season, Jesus wants to bring us to a renewed relationship of love with God and place Him as the centre of our lives again. Let us trust Jesus and allow Him to have authority in our lives.

Reflective question:

Am I open to Jesus' authority, and do I trust His authority is for my own good?

Tuesday, 13th December, St. Lucy.

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13, Matthew 21:28-32

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people, "What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not go," but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' They said, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'In truth I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, showing the way of uprightness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.'

The joy of being consistent

In the parable, when the father requested help, the second son told him he would go to the vineyard to work. However, it was just an empty promise to his father. Likewise, we often focus on saying the right things to God and people but do not follow them through with our actions. For example, we say: "Yes, Lord. I will change and try to be more patient with my family members", "I promise to pray daily...", but when the opportunities come our way, we do not do what we say.

What God wants is for our words and actions to be one. If we want to repent, then repent with words and actions. If we want to love, then love with words and actions. One without the other is incomplete. As we draw closer to Christmas, let us desire that our words would not just be empty but that we would have the strength to do what we say.

Reflective question:

Is being consistent in word and deed important for me?

Wednesday, 14th December, St. John of the Cross.

Isaiah 45:6-8, Luke 7:19-23

John, summoning two of his disciples, sent them to the Lord to ask, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?' When the men reached Jesus they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, "Are you the one who is to come or are we to expect someone else?" ' At that very time he cured many people of diseases and afflictions and of evil spirits, and gave the gift of sight to many who were blind. Then he gave the messengers their answer, 'Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see again, the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin-diseases are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, the good news is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'

Keep the faith even when it gets dark

When we experience challenging moments in life, and things seem out of our control, we often doubt that God loves us. We question, "*Where is God? How can He allow this crisis to happen to me, to my family?*". As a result, our faith tends to grow weak by the storms we face. In today's gospel, John the Baptist, a man of faith, doubted his mission. Did he do the right thing? Did he point the people to the right person?

"...*happy is the man who does not lose faith in me*". Jesus reminded John to keep on believing. Today, He calls us to keep our faith in Him and to see His presence with us and His actions working in and through us. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to renew our faith in Jesus in this moment of prayer.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message as I pray with today's gospel passage?

Thursday, 15th December, 3rd Week of Advent.

Isaiah 54:1-10, Luke 7:24-30

When John's messengers had gone Jesus began to talk to the people about John, 'What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No! Then what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? Look, those who go in magnificent clothes and live luxuriously are to be found at royal courts! Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you to prepare your way before you. 'I tell you, of all the children born to women, there is no one greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he. All the people who heard him, and the tax collectors too, acknowledged God's saving justice by accepting baptism from John; but by refusing baptism from him the Pharisees and the lawyers thwarted God's plan for them.'

Driven by love, to love

In the first reading, God promised Israel and continues to echo these words to us today, "...for the mountains may depart, the hills be shaken, but my love for you will never leave you and my covenant of peace with you will never be shaken". God's love for us is faithful. Even if we are unfaithful to Him, He remains faithful to us.

In today's gospel, Jesus asked the people around Him, "*What did you go out into the desert to see?*" They went to the desert to see John the Baptist, who was not there to please them by dressing well or speaking words they wanted to hear. Instead, John the Baptist lived his mission motivated by his faithfulness to God and no one else. For being true to his mission, Jesus declared, "*I tell you, of all the children born to women, there is no one greater than John*". Today, we too are called to be great in God's sight by allowing His love to motivate us to be His messengers of the good news.

Reflective question:

Does the experience of God's love motivate me to love and give of myself to others?

Friday, 16th December, 3rd Week of Advent.

Isaiah 56: 1-3, 6-8, John 5:33-36

Jesus said to the Jews: "You sent messengers to John, and he gave his testimony to the truth- not that I depend on human testimony; no, it is for your salvation that I mention it. John was a lamp lit and shining and for a time you were content to enjoy the Light that he gave. But my testimony is greater than John's: the deeds my Father has given me to perform, these same deeds of mine testify that the Father has sent me. Besides, the Father who sent me bears witness to me himself. You have never heard his voice, you have never seen his shape, and his word finds no home in you because you do not believe in the one whom he has sent."

Shining for Jesus

"John was a lamp lit and shining...". John the Baptist was the lighted lamp that illuminated the way for others to Jesus, who is the one and only true Light of the World. He was contented to be who he was, i.e. the lamp and not the primordial source of Light. Throughout his life, John the Baptist bore witness to the Light by testifying who Jesus was and what He came to do. John 1: 6-9 states: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives Light to every man coming into the world".

Like John the Baptist, let us allow ourselves to be used by God. We are God's lamps that illuminate Christ to others this Advent. By looking at our actions and listening to our words, may people encounter Jesus, the Light of the world.

Reflective question:

How can I be a lamp that shines brightly for Jesus?

Saturday, 17th December, 3rd Week of Advent.

Genesis 49:2,8-10, Matthew 1:1-17

Roll of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers, Judah fathered Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered

Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse; and Jesse fathered King David. David fathered Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa, Asa fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, Joram fathered Uzziah, Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah, Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah; and Josiah fathered Jechoniah and his brothers. Then the deportation to Babylon took place. After the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor, Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud, Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob; and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ. The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Abraham to David; fourteen from David to the Babylonian deportation; and fourteen from the Babylonian deportation to Christ.

God's power is at work in our weakness

As we draw closer to Christmas, St. Matthew the evangelist presents us with the genealogy of Jesus to give us hope that God is always at work. In Jesus' family tree, some people are good and saintly, and also, there are others who are anything but models of virtue. Yet, each person, whether he/she is a saint or a sinner, is used by God to bring about the life of Jesus. Therefore, nobody is irrelevant to God.

The temptation for us is to brush aside the list of names. Let the Holy Spirit open our hearts to reflect on our own lives. Mistakes, failures and brokenness might darken our own story. Yet, God is at work in our lives and can bring good out of negative experiences. Like the ancestors of Jesus' genealogy, we too can play a part in bringing Jesus, Emmanuel, to our world today.

Reflective question:

In the Light of the genealogy of Jesus, how do I see my call to bring Christ to those around me?

Sunday, 18th December, 4th Sunday of Advent.
Isaiah 7:10-14, Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: Look! the virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

God's ways are not ours

Today, we are invited to stay with Joseph, a man of faith and obedience. He was engaged to Mary. But when he discovered that Mary was pregnant and knew the baby was not his, he wanted to call off the engagement privately. He was sure of what he wanted to do. However, God spoke to Joseph in a dream and invited him to participate in a larger story. Joseph looked beyond his own logical and practical plan and did what God told him to do. He took Mary home as his wife.

Today, we often act according to what we think is logical. Yet, sometimes, we know that God is asking us to take a step of faith to go beyond our plans and allow Him to guide us to go His ways, to do what He wants us to do. Like St. Joseph, may we trust God more and let our plans to be unravelled. When we take the risk to follow God's ways, we open ourselves up to His presence and be part of His life-giving mission.

Reflective question:

Do I dare to follow in the footsteps of St. Joseph?

Monday, 19th December, 4th Week of Advent.

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25, Luke 1:5-25

In the days of King Herod of Judaea there lived a priest called Zechariah who belonged to the Abijah section of the priesthood, and he had a wife, Elizabeth by name, who was a descendant of Aaron. Both were upright in the sight of God and impeccably carried out all the commandments and observances of the Lord. But they were childless: Elizabeth was barren and they were both advanced in years. Now it happened that it was the turn of his section to serve, and he was exercising his priestly office before God when it fell to him by lot, as the priestly custom was, to enter the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense there. And at the hour of incense all the people were outside, praying. Then there appeared to him the angel of the Lord, standing on the right of the altar of incense. The sight disturbed Zechariah and he was overcome with fear. But the angel said to him, 'Zechariah, do not be afraid, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son and you shall name him John. He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord; he must drink no wine, no strong drink; even from his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring back many of the Israelites to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah, he will go before him to reconcile fathers to their children and the disobedient to the good sense of the upright, preparing for the Lord a people fit for him.' Zechariah said to the angel, 'How can I know this? I am an old man and my wife is getting on in years.' The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel, who stand in God's presence, and I have been sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. Look! Since you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time, you will be silenced and have no power of speech until this has happened.' Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and were surprised that he stayed in the sanctuary so long. When he came out he could not speak to them, and they realised that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. But he could only make signs to them and remained dumb. When his time of service came to an end he returned home. Some time later his wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months she kept to herself, saying, 'The Lord has done this for me, now that it has pleased him to take away the humiliation I suffered in public.'

A trusting faith

Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous people in God's sight. They were good people who loved God with their hearts, minds and strength. However, Zechariah was afraid when he saw the angel in the Temple and doubted God's message. He allowed his and his wife's physical limitations to prevent him from rising to greater faith in God's promise.

We can often be diligent in observing rituals and commandments and live a good Christian life. Yet, like Zechariah, we struggle with many fears and doubts. In such moments, we need to hear the reassuring words that the angel told Zechariah, "*Do not be afraid*". They are words reminding us that God, who is with us, wants to bring us to a deeper faith and a greater trust.

Reflective question:

Do my fears and doubts stop me from trusting God more?

Tuesday, 20th December, 4th Week of Advent.

Isaiah 7:10-14, Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favor! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

Mary's "Yes"

In today's gospel, God spoke to Mary through the angel Gabriel and presented her to be the mother of His son, Jesus. Her "Yes" to God did not come easy for her. Mary's heart was troubled, so the angel Gabriel told her, "*Mary, do not be afraid*". She also questioned, "*How can this come about?*". The angel Gabriel invited Mary to trust in God more than herself, as He said, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you...*". She then understood that being the mother of Jesus would not depend on her strength and resources alone but God working in and through her. With this assurance, Mary gave her "Yes" to God.

Like Mary, God always has something for us to do. He invites us to be more generous, loving, willing to give ourselves to serve others, etc. When the call seems demanding, we trust that we can turn to God and depend on Him to work powerfully in and through us. In this time of prayer, let us ask Mother Mary to help us say "Yes" to God.

Reflective question:

What prevents me from saying "Yes" to the promptings of God?

Wednesday, 21st December, 4th Week of Advent.

Song of Songs 2:8-14, Luke 1:39-45

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

Being present to others

In today's Gospel, Mary, carrying Jesus in her womb, set out on a journey to visit her cousin, Elizabeth, who was having a child in her old age. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, she was filled with the Holy Spirit, and her child in her womb leapt for joy. It was a moment of blessing for both Mary and Elizabeth.

At Christmas time, we will be visiting family and friends. More than the gifts of chocolates and gadgets we buy for them, our presence is the best gift we can give. Like Mary, we, too, are carriers of God to others. We can make a difference to those we meet when we channel God's life-giving presence to them.

Reflective question:

Today, who is the one person whom I can bless him/her with God's presence?

Thursday, 22nd December, 4th Week of Advent.

1 Samuel 1:24-28, Luke 1:46-56

Mary said: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour; because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant. Yes, from now onwards all generations will call me blessed, for the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name, and his faithful love extends age after age to those who fear him. He has used the power of his arm, he has routed the arrogant of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and raised high the lowly. He has filled the starving with good things, sent the rich away empty. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his faithful love - according to the promise he made to our ancestors -- of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever. Mary stayed with her some three months and then went home.

God who helps His people

In the Magnificat, Mary praised God for all He had done for her. She recognised that He had looked kindly on her, His lowly servant. For the rest of her song of praise, Mary celebrated the work God had done for the people of Israel. She recognised God's active and loving presence in the history of humanity. He defends the lowly and feeds the hungry. He shows strength by pulling down the powerful and wealthy by removing their arrogance and teaching them to love their neighbours and work for justice and truth.

In this prayer time, let us praise God for the good work He has done in our lives. We often focus on our mistakes and failures and forget to welcome the good things He is doing in us. At the same time, let us rejoice that we have a God who is close to us and works for the good of

all. Today, may we commit to collaborating with God to help build a just society and work for the good of all.

Reflective question:

How can I allow the loving power of God to work in and through me?

Friday, 23rd December, 4th Week of Advent.

Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24, Luke 1:57-66

The time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son; and when her neighbours and relations heard that the Lord had shown her so great a kindness, they shared her joy. Now on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother spoke up. 'No,' she said 'he is to be called John.' They said to her, 'But no one in your family has that name', and made signs to his father to find out what he wanted him called. The father asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John'. And they were all astonished. At that instant his power of speech returned and he spoke and praised God. All their neighbours were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judaea. All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. 'What will this child turn out to be?' they wondered. And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.

Being open to joy and newness

"*They shared her joy*". The neighbours and relations of Elizabeth shared her joy because they shared her pain of being barren for so many years. Now, at last, they celebrated with her and her family. Do we share the joy of others? We can only share the joy of others when we share the pain of others. Christmas is a time to be with our friends and family; it is the season of sharing, not just gifts and good food, but sharing our lives with each other.

In the gospel, the people were amazed when the baby was not named after the father, following the Jewish tradition. Instead, both parents confirmed that the baby would be called, John, which was the name given by the angel Gabriel to Zechariah. This break from the Jewish tradition signifies that God was going to do something new in this baby's life. As we stand at the threshold of Christmas, may we be open to the

new things God wants to do in our lives and may we never cease to be amazed and grateful.

Reflective question:

How is God inviting me to live this coming Christmas season?

Saturday, 24th December, 4th Week of Advent.

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16, Luke 1:67-79

John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel for he has visited his people, he has come to their rescue and he has raised up for us a power for salvation in the House of his servant David, even as he proclaimed, by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times, that he would save us from our enemies and from the hands of all who hate us. Thus he shows mercy to our ancestors, thus he remembers his holy covenant the oath he swore to our father Abraham that he would grant us, free from fear, to be delivered from the hands of our enemies, to serve him in holiness and virtue in his presence, all our days. And you, little child, you shall be called Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way for him. To give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins; this by the tender mercy of our God who from on high will bring the rising Sun to visit us, to give Light to those who live in darkness and the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

Jesus, the rising Sun, is here

In the passage, Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied about the rising Sun coming to visit us from on high. This rising Sun refers to Jesus the Son, who descends to earth to be with His people. He is the Light that illuminates the way for those who live in darkness and the shadow of death. He is the Prince of peace that guides our feet into the way of peace. This is the true meaning of Christmas. We celebrate that Jesus, the Light of the world, the Prince of peace, continues to come to our world and lives to bring us God's light and love.

Let us not miss the real meaning of Christmas. Today, we open our hearts again and welcome Jesus, the rising Sun, who is here to visit and be with us. In Him, we find our peace.

Reflective question:

What does celebrating Christmas mean to me?

Sunday, 25th December, Nativity of the Lord.**Isaiah 52:7-10, Hebrews 1:1-6, John 1:1-18**

In the beginning was the Word: The Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower. The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world. He was in the world that had its being through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him. But to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to all who believe in the name of him who was born not out of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man but of God himself. The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the Only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

The Word was made flesh

On this Christmas day, we are presented with one of the most dramatic and profound statements in the whole Bible, "*The Word was made flesh, he lived among us...*". The eternal, invisible, immaterial God took on human form in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. This is the reason for our celebration today. Christmas is neither simply the celebration of the birth of Jesus nor the time to just party with good food and presents. Instead, it is to appreciate the amazing mystery of the Incarnation of God.

Jesus, God Incarnate, entered into human history and our personal story to show us that God is our Father who loves us unconditionally. By revealing who God is, He also reveals who we are and what it means to live a fully human life. We are God's children who have the capacity to live a life of loving service. Today, let us meet Jesus in the silence of our hearts and be with Him.

Reflective question:

What word or message does Jesus want me to take with me as I celebrate this Christmas season?

**Monday, 26th December, St. Stephen.
Acts 6:8-10, 7:54-59, Matthew 10:17-22**

Stephen was filled with grace and power and began to work miracles and great signs among the people. Then certain people came forward to debate with Stephen, some from Cyrene and Alexandria who were members of the synagogue called the Synagogue of Freedmen, and others from Cilicia and Asia. They found they could not stand up against him because of his wisdom, and the Spirit that prompted what he said. They were infuriated when they heard this, and ground their teeth at him. But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand. 'Look! I can see heaven thrown open,' he said, 'and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.' All the members of the council shouted out and stopped their ears with their hands; then they made a concerted rush at him, thrust him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses put down their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul. As they were stoning him, Stephen said in invocation, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and said aloud, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them', and with these words he fell asleep. Saul entirely approved of the killing.

St. Stephen: Imitating Jesus, His master

The day after Christmas, we celebrate the Feast of St. Stephen, who imitated Jesus, even in death. It reminds us that Christianity is not simply celebrating the birth of Jesus but a daily call to imitate Him, like St. Stephen. The first reading shows how St. Stephen was violently stoned to death. He neither defended himself nor retaliated against his attackers. Instead, he uttered, "*Lord, do not hold this sin against them*". His words bring to mind Jesus' words on the cross, "*Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do*". St. Stephen imitated Jesus' heart of merciful love in the face of violence and death. Moreover, just before he breathed his last, he said, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*", and thus, echoing Jesus' cry to God the Father, "*Father, into your hands, I commend my spirit*". The way St. Stephen died reflected how He lived, i.e. he constantly entrusted himself to God's loving care.

As we celebrate this feast, let us ask Jesus for the grace to imitate Him faithfully to the end.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' invitation in this time of prayer?

Tuesday, St. John, Apostle and Evangelist.**1 John 1:1-4, John 20:2-8**

On the first day of the week Mary of Magdala came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb' she said 'and we don't know where they have put him.' So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed.

He saw and he believed

In today's gospel, there was a lot of running taking place. First, we see Mary ran, Peter did the same, and the other disciple also ran to the tomb. St. John the evangelist wanted to highlight their love for Jesus provoked this urgency that propelled them towards finding Jesus. In this Christmas season, let us ask ourselves, do we have this love for Jesus that provokes the urgency to run towards Him?

The gospel passage states that the disciple saw the empty tomb and believed. He saw the emptiness with eyes of faith. He remembered the words of Jesus saying that He would die but would rise on the third day. That memory of Jesus' words lit up and filled his heart with renewed hope. Though we are in the midst of Christmas, we sometimes face our empty tomb of difficulties, fears and uncertainties. Today, Jesus invites us to open our eyes and look at the situations with the eyes of the beloved disciple, i.e. with eyes of faith. We are not alone because Jesus is with us.

Reflective question:

Do I look at the situations I live with eyes of faith or despair?

Wednesday, 28th December, Holy Innocents.

1 John 1:5-2:2, Matthew 2:13-18

After the wise men had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.' So Joseph got up and taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I called my son out of Egypt.

Herod was furious when he realised that he had been outwitted by the wise men, and in Bethlehem and its surrounding district he had all the male children killed who were two years old or under, reckoning by the date he had been careful to ask the wise men. It was then that the words spoken through the prophet Jeremiah were fulfilled: A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loudly lamenting: it was Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they were no more.

Choose life

Herod continues to exist in today's world through senseless violence, addiction, indifference, war, poverty, etc., that destroy innocent lives and cause misery to many people. We can play our part in increasing violence, indifference and hatred when we choose to be unloving and unforgiving and allow anger and pride to take root.

In the same way that Herod lives, "Joseph" and the "three wise men" continue to live on. When there is care, protection, sacrifices and love, the "Joseph" of today continues to bring God's hope into the world. When there is a desire for truth and openness to be guided by love, the "three wise men" continue to illuminate the long journey towards God. Herod killed and annihilated while Joseph looked after and protected. The three wise men encountered and believed. Today, God invites us to choose to walk the path of Joseph and the three wise men and bring His love and life to those around us.

Reflective question:

How can I live my life for Christ?

Thursday, 29th December, 5th Day within Octave of Christmas.

1 John 2: 3-11, Luke 2: 22-35

When the day came for them to be purified in keeping with the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord- observing what is written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord- and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is prescribed in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to the restoration of Israel and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said: Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised; for my eyes have seen the salvation which you have made ready in the sight of the nations; a light of revelation for the gentiles and glory for your people Israel. As the child's father and mother were wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'Look, he is destined for the fall and for the rise of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is opposed- and a sword will pierce your soul too -- so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

Guided by the Spirit

"Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple...". Simeon was prompted to go to the Temple by the Holy Spirit. He listened to the inner stirring in his heart and responded by taking steps to the Temple. He encountered the baby Jesus there and recognised that this child was God's promised Messiah. Indeed, Simeon was an upright and devout man who trusted God and was open to the Spirit's promptings.

The Holy Spirit is alive and active in us. He constantly prompts us to go to Jesus and live the life of love we have been created for. Let us be aware of the presence of Jesus' Spirit, as He is the one who can guide us to have more of Jesus in our lives. Sometimes, we struggle to trust God when we find that He does not seem to answer our prayers or we feel overwhelmed with life's problems. As we pray, let the Holy Spirit rest

on us and let us ask Him to help us have the daily openness to keep trusting in God.

Reflective question:

Is the Holy Spirit my daily guide and constant companion?

Friday, 30th December, The Holy Family.

Ecclesiasticus 3:3-7, 14-17, Colossians 3:12-21, Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

After the wise men had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you, and escape into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, because Herod intends to search for the child and do away with him.' So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, left that night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod was dead. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: I called my son out of Egypt.

After Herod's death, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother with you and go back to the land of Israel, for those who wanted to kill the child are dead.' So Joseph got up and, taking the child and his mother with him, went back to the land of Israel. But when he learnt that Archelaus had succeeded his father Herod as ruler of Judaea he was afraid to go there, and being warned in a dream he withdrew to the region of Galilee. There he settled in a town called Nazareth. In this way the words spoken through the prophets were to be fulfilled: He will be called a Nazarene.

The Holy Family

Today, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family – the bond of love that surrounded and invaded Mary, Joseph and Jesus. In today's gospel, we see it was not a 'happy- ever- after' for Joseph, Mary and Jesus. They were refugees who had to escape from Herod and later from his son, Archelaus. Joseph, Mary and Jesus experienced suffering, loneliness in a foreign land, the anxiety of not knowing what would happen next, etc. Yet, they lived deeply trusting God because they knew He would never abandon them. Living with this deep trust in God, Mary and Joseph did not let the circumstances of their lives harden them.

In life, we are constantly challenged with new problems, uncertainties of the future and the everyday demands of life. In the face of these

circumstances, let us learn from the Holy Family how we can trust in God's loving care.

Reflective question:

How do I live through difficult moments in life?

Saturday, 31st December, 7th day within Octave of Christmas.

1 John 2:18-21, John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word: and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower. A man came, sent by God. His name was John. He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light, so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light. The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world. He was in the world that had its being through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him. But to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to all who believe in the name of him who was born not out of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man but of God himself. The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth. John appears as his witness. He proclaims: 'This is the one of whom I said: He who comes after me ranks before me because he existed before me'. Indeed, from his fullness we have, all of us, received - yes, grace in return for grace, since, though the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

A light that shines in the dark

As we stand at the threshold of a New Year, we look back at the past year and recall the happy and painful times we had. We also look forward to the New Year with excitement and wonderment, but also with anxiety and fear. In today's gospel, we ponder the words of St. John the evangelist and seek comfort in these words, "a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower". Jesus, the Word made

flesh, is the Light that shines in our experiences of darkness. We are invited to live today and each new day of the New Year in the light of Christ's presence of love.

Let us keep these words in our hearts, "*a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower*" and find peace in this reality that Jesus is with us. With Him, we are ready to face the New Year.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' message for me today?

