

PRAYER FOR LIVING

“THE WORD BECAME FLESH”

DECEMBER
YEAR A



BY SR SANDRA SEOW
VERBUM DEI MISSIONARIES

PRAYER FOR LIVING YEAR A

Copyright © 2025 Sr. Sandra Seow

All rights reserved. This book or any portion thereof may not be reproduced or used in any manner whatsoever without the author's written permission.

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

Isaiah 4:2-6, Matthew 8:5-11

When Jesus entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully." He said to him, "I will come and cure him." The centurion said in reply, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof, only say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a man subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith. I say to you, many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the Kingdom of heaven."

A trusting faith

In today's gospel, a Roman centurion approached Jesus and requested healing for his servant, who was ill. The centurion believed that Jesus did not need to be physically present in his home to heal; he had faith that just His word alone was enough to restore and heal. This reflects a simple yet profound faith that resulted in complete trust in Jesus.

As we embark on this Advent season, let us intentionally turn our hearts toward Jesus, who is the source of our love, peace, and hope. It is easy to become overwhelmed with the problems and concerns of each day, and we feel anxious about what to do next. Today, Jesus reminds us to put our faith in Him, even when we are uncertain about what the future holds. Like the Roman centurion, let us redirect our gaze towards Jesus and bring our needs and concerns to Him with trust.

Reflective question:

How can I have a trusting faith in Jesus, even when I cannot see or understand everything that is happening around me?

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

Isaiah 11:1-10, Luke 10:21-24

Filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, he said, 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it

has pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' Then turning to his disciples, he spoke to them by themselves, 'Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.'

Instruments of peace

The first reading from the prophet Isaiah states, *"The wolf will live with the lamb, the panther lie down with the kid, calf and lion cub feed together with a little boy to lead them. The cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together...."* Isaiah depicts a vision of peace, where natural enemies coexist harmoniously, such as the wolf and the lamb, and the panther and the kid. This vision invites us to make peace a reality in our personal lives. We can be instruments of peace by performing small acts of kindness and love. While we may not be able to make a significant difference in the world, we can contribute to peace in simple ways within our own environments.

In today's gospel, Jesus gave thanks to those who are humble enough to receive God's presence and His message of love and peace, by placing God at the centre of our lives and being open to learning how to live according to His ways. Today, let us practice humility and do small acts of love that bring about peace.

Reflective question:

How can I make room for Jesus today to let Him use my words and actions to bring peace to others?

Wednesday, 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.

Go and proclaim

Today, we celebrate the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, a Spanish missionary known for his work in India, Malacca, and Japan. Like St. Paul in today's first reading to the Corinthians, St. Francis felt a deep compulsion to preach the gospel. This was not a task he undertook for personal gain; rather, Francis embraced his mission as a responsibility entrusted to him by God. Despite the hardships he faced during his missionary journeys, his clear goal remained: to share the good news and help people encounter Jesus, the source of life and love.

Jesus' words in the gospel resonate with us today: *"Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation."* We are called to proclaim the gospel through our words and actions, living in a way that reflects Christ. This is not merely an option but an essential part of being a Christian. May the life of St. Francis Xavier inspire us to joyfully reach out and bring others to encounter Jesus.

Reflective question:

How can I participate actively in Jesus' mission today?

Thursday, 4th December, St. John Damascene.

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!'

The constant Rock

“Open the gates! Let the upright nation come in, she, the faithful one whose mind is steadfast, who keeps the peace because she trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord is the everlasting Rock...” In the first reading, the words of the prophet Isaiah remain relevant to us today. Amid the instability of our world and the personal struggles we face, the prophet reminds us that God Himself is our firm rock. Peace does not come from control, success, or external security, but from allowing God to be our sure foundation.

In the gospel, Jesus explains that being a true disciple involves more than just saying “*Lord, Lord.*” It is about listening to His word and putting it into action. Such a person is like a wise builder who constructs their life on a solid rock foundation. As we pray, let us reflect and ask ourselves: What is the foundation of my life? Advent invites us to return to Jesus, whose love remains constant. May we open our hearts to Jesus who comes to us, allowing Him to be our peace and solid foundation. Today, let us anchor our choices, desires, and relationships in Him alone.

Reflective question:

Is Christ my sure foundation?

Friday, 5th 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.

The impulse to proclaim

In today's gospel, Jesus healed two blind men, and as a result, they regained their sight. Imagine their immense joy and amazement at the incredible blessing of being able to see! Despite Jesus' command for silence, these two men eagerly went out and shared with everyone that

He had done for them. Their joy and gratitude drove them to share their genuine encounter with Jesus.

In our personal journey of faith, we have experienced moments when Jesus gave us a new vision to see life from a different and broader perspective. This opens our hearts to live with more hope and greater joy. As we celebrate the Advent season, let us not remain silent. Instead, let us eagerly share the extraordinary ways in which God has touched our lives and the lives of those around us. This is a time of joyful anticipation, a moment to reflect on the profound impact of His grace in our daily experiences. Each story we share not only deepens our own faith but also inspires others to recognise the presence of God in their lives.

Reflective question:

Today, who are the people with whom I can share my faith?

Saturday, 6th December, 1st Week of Advent.

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26, Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5-8

Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness. And when he saw the crowds, he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest.' He summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to drive them out and to cure all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness. These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon who is known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who was also his betrayer. These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them as follows: 'Do not make your way to Gentile territory, and do not enter any Samaritan town; go instead to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those suffering from virulent skin-diseases, drive out devils. You received without charge, give without charge.'

Sheep without a shepherd

Today's gospel describes the moment when Jesus looked at the crowds and felt a deep compassion in His heart because they were *"harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd"*. He was moved by their suffering and understood their deep longing for direction, care and guidance. Today, Jesus invites us to reflect on how we can embody this same compassion in our own lives, reaching out to those who feel alone and guiding them towards Him, the Shepherd, who can direct them to live a purposeful and meaningful life.

In the Gospel, Jesus urged His disciples to pray fervently for more labourers to enter the fields of mission work. Today, by virtue of our baptism, we are each called to be His labourers, joining Him in His same mission to spread love and hope. Jesus relies on our willingness to reach out to those closest to us, our family members, colleagues at work, friends, neighbours, and even strangers we meet throughout our day. Each encounter presents a unique opportunity to introduce someone to Christ, and we may be the only ones who can provide them with the light and guidance they seek.

Reflective question:

Am I aware of the mission that Jesus has entrusted to me?

Sunday, 7th December, Second Sunday of Advent.

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

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand'. This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said: A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight. This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather belt 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 fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father", because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the

axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, 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 the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.'

Repent and love

"...And may he who helps us when we refuse to give up, help you all to be tolerant with each other, following the example of Christ Jesus, so that united in mind and voice you may give glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". These words come from St. Paul's second letter to the early Christians in the Roman Church. In this letter, he urged them to practice tolerance by accepting every person, regardless of their background, opinions, personality, or beliefs, because each individual is created in the image and likeness of God. This call to tolerance from St. Paul is still essential for us today in our diverse society. We are also called to practice a Christian tolerance that is rooted in Christ's command to *"Love your neighbour as yourself"* (Mark 12:31). This kind of tolerance is founded on love and is expressed through patience, kindness, and respect, especially towards those who are different from us.

In today's Gospel, St. John the Baptist calls for repentance. This repentance goes beyond simply feeling sorry for our past mistakes; it involves changing our minds, hearts, and priorities. It requires allowing God to remove what is unloving within us, which prevents us from accepting and loving others as we should. As we celebrate the second Sunday of Advent today, let us prepare the way of the Lord by placing Him at the centre of our lives and choosing to love as He loves.

Reflective question:

What steps can I take to live a life of love in this time of Advent?

Monday, 8th December, The 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 favour! 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"

Today, we joyfully commemorate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. In the gospel, we are presented with a pivotal moment when Mary said "Yes" to God's plan for her to be the mother of Jesus. Despite her fear and uncertainty about what her "Yes" would bring, she trusted in God, saying, *"I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have just said be done to me"*. Her response serves as a powerful testament to her unwavering faith in God, revealing the depths of her love for Him.

Like Mary, we are also invited to become vessels of God's love and presence in our world. Today, with trust, we offer this heartfelt prayer to God: *"...let what you have said be done to me,"* affirming our purpose to live wholeheartedly for God and to open ourselves to be used as instruments of His love.

Reflective question:

Where in my own life is the Lord inviting me to say "Yes" and cooperate more fully with His will?

Tuesday, 9th December, St. John Diego Cuauhtlatatzin.

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.'

God, our Shepherd

In today's first reading, the prophet Isaiah proclaims, "Shout without fear, say to the towns of Judah, '*Here is your God.*'...*He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms, holding them against his breast and leading to their rest the mother ewes*". As we prepare ourselves for Christmas, we are reminded by Isaiah that our God, who comes to us, is not an indifferent and intimidating presence. Instead, He is a tender shepherd who cares for His people and carries them close to His heart, offering His comfort and peace.

In the gospel, Jesus highlights the heart of God as the Good Shepherd, whose unconditional love compels Him to actively and tirelessly seek out and embrace each person, no matter how lost or distant they may feel in their journey. His compassion knows no bounds. This reminds us that we are never beyond the reach of the Shepherd's love. Let us draw close to God with trust, not fear. May we also, in this time of Advent, reflect the Shepherd's unconditional love through our words and actions to others.

Reflective question:

How can I allow myself to be sought and found by God, allowing Him to bring me to a deeper experience of His love?

Wednesday, 10th December, Our Lady of Loreto.

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.'

Come to me

Are we feeling worn out because we are juggling many demands from work and family? Or perhaps we are simply too reliant on our own strength, leading to fatigue? Do our efforts sometimes feel pointless? Let us take a moment to listen to Jesus' gentle invitation: *"Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest."* Let these words settle in our hearts and bring us comfort.

Jesus does not promise us an escape from the demands of work; instead, He assures us that we will find strength and purpose in our labour because He will share the yoke with us. But what does this mean? A yoke is a farming tool that connects two animals, allowing them to share the workload and work more effectively together. This serves as a beautiful reminder that Jesus desires to be our partner in the midst of our daily struggles. We are not alone as we face life's challenges. With Jesus by our side, our burdens become lighter. Today, we are called to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus and let Him give us the rest we need.

Reflective question:

How can I learn to experience the rest that Jesus desires for me?

Thursday, 11th December, St. Damasus.

Isaiah 41:13-20, Matthew 11:11-15

Jesus spoke to the crowds: '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. Since John the Baptist came, up to this present time, the kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm. Because it was towards John that all the prophecies of the prophets and of the Law were leading; and he, if you will believe me, is the Elijah who was to return. Anyone who has ears should listen!'

True humility

In today's gospel, Jesus referred to John the Baptist with the following words: *"Among those born of women, no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist."* However, Jesus goes on to say that *"the least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he."* John's greatness does not lie in his achievements, public influence, or austere lifestyle; rather, it is rooted

in his profound humility—his willingness to decrease so that Christ may increase.

John knew that his role was to prepare others, not to be the main focus. His humility is not self-negation but clarity of identity: he knows who he is, and who he is not. He is “*the friend of the Bridegroom*,” the voice that awakens hearts, the finger pointing towards the Lamb of God. During Advent, we are called to have this same humility, recognising that our true mission is not to draw attention to ourselves but to help others encounter Christ. Today, let us walk the path of humble love, which is not about seeking attention, but about being faithful; not about striving for importance, but about making space for the presence of God.

Reflective question:

How can I live today in such a way that Christ may be seen more clearly through my words and actions?

Friday, 12th December, Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Isaiah 48:17–19, Matthew 11:16–19

Jesus spoke to the crowds: ‘What description can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to each other as they sit in the marketplace: “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 has been proved right by her actions.’

A receptive heart

In today's gospel, Jesus likens the people to children in a marketplace. They played wedding music, but no one danced, and when they sang funeral songs, no one cried. This illustrates their resistance to God's invitations—John the Baptist came with sternness and was deemed possessed, while Jesus, who showed mercy and companionship, was labelled a glutton and friend of the sinners. The problem lies not in the message but in their unresponsive hearts.

God approaches us in different ways—sometimes through challenge and repentance, as with John, and sometimes through tenderness and

joy, as with Jesus—but a stubborn heart finds excuses to reject both. A hard heart often shows itself quietly through defensiveness, cynicism, or a refusal to be vulnerable. It is the inner posture that says: *“I want God, I want to follow Him, but on my own terms.”* Today, Jesus reminds us that *“Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.”* When we finally open our hearts, we discover that God’s ways, though different from our expectations, always lead to life.

Reflective question:

How can I cultivate a more childlike openness, with less control and more trust in my relationship with God?

Saturday, 13th December, St. Lucy.

Ecclesiasticus 48:1-4, 9-11, Matthew 17:10-13

As they came down from the mountain, the disciples put this question to Jesus, ‘Why do the scribes say then that Elijah has to come first?’ ‘True,’ he replied, ‘Elijah is to come to see that everything is once more as it should be; 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.’ The disciples understood then that he had been speaking of John the Baptist.

God’s ways

In today’s gospel, the disciples ask Jesus about Elijah’s return—an expectation deeply rooted in Jewish tradition. Jesus reveals that Elijah has already come in the person of John the Baptist, yet the world did not recognise him. Instead of receiving him as God’s messenger, they rejected and mistreated him. What God sent in quiet humility, the world looked for in glory and power. What God offered as a sign of His presence, the world dismissed as insignificant.

This moment reveals a profound truth: God’s ways often arrive hidden and unassuming, while the world seeks what is impressive, loud, and strong. Like the people of John’s time, we too can fail to recognise God’s presence because we are looking in the wrong places. We expect God to act according to our assumptions, through dramatic interventions, immediate solutions, or outwardly impressive signs. Yet God continues to come in hidden ways: in silence, in smallness, in daily faithfulness, in the unnoticed good we do for others.

Reflective question:

Do I miss His presence in ordinary people or simple events because they do not fit the world's standards of greatness?

Sunday, 14th December, Third Sunday of Advent.

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

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.' As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, 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 the scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

Patient

As we light the third candle in the Advent wreath, we remember that Advent is a time for joy. Our joy comes not from fixing all our problems or easing our pain, but from knowing that Jesus is near. In the second reading from the letter of St. James, we are reminded to be patient, enduring suffering with hope and trusting in God's promises and that He is working for our good, even when we do not see immediate results. This can be hard for us today because we often want quick solutions to our problems. Like a farmer waits for his crops to grow, we can trust that good things will come in time.

In today's gospel, John the Baptist, who was in prison, wanted to know if Jesus was the awaited Messiah. Jesus replied by pointing to His works: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the sick are healed, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life. The signs that indicate God was truly

present in Jesus also encourage us today to recognise God's presence in the goodness we see and experience around us. We can find evidence of this presence in the smile of a stranger, through acts of kindness, and in words of encouragement. These moments remind us that God is truly with us.

Reflective question:

In what ways do I struggle with patience in my life?

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

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?' 'And I' replied Jesus, 'will ask you a question, only one; if you tell me the answer to it, I will then tell you my authority for acting like this. John's baptism: where did it come from: heaven or man?' And they argued it out this way among themselves, 'If we say from heaven, he will retort, "Then why did you refuse to believe him?"; but if we say from man, 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, 'Nor will I tell you my authority for acting like this.'

Authority to love

In the gospel, the chief priests and the elders of the people were troubled by Jesus' actions. They observed him healing the sick, dining with sinners, and befriending outcasts. With self-righteous pride, they questioned His authority. Everything Jesus did and said came from the authority of love, which had its source in God. Motivated by love, he was free from the opinions of the chief priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees. He fearlessly went about doing good and showing love, regardless of the challenges he faced.

In our own lives, we want to love more and do good. Yet, we often hesitate due to the judgment of others. Questions like, "*What will this person think if I offer them peace?*" or "*What will my friends say when they see me being kind to someone they dislike?*" can hold us back. These fears may cause us to procrastinate in doing good, and at times, we may choose not to act at all. May the gentle, loving voice of Jesus

quiet all the critics' voices around us. Today, Jesus invites us to embrace his authority to love.

Reflective question:

How can I allow Jesus to guide me in putting love into action today?

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

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.'

Actions speak louder than words

In today's gospel, Jesus tells a parable about a father who instructs his two sons to go and work in the vineyard. The first son tells him that he will go, but ultimately does not. The other says, "no" to working in the vineyard, but ends up working there all day. Jesus then asks, "*Which of the two did the father's will?*" The answer is obviously the second son. Through this parable, Jesus is making a point to the religious leaders and to us today that actions speak louder than words and good intentions. Sometimes a verbal "yes" can turn into an empty promise, resulting in a "no" in practice.

Today presents a new opportunity for us to commit ourselves to God's call to work in His vineyard, in His mission field. By placing our lives at the loving service of others, we can truly make a difference in their lives. Let our "yes" be more than just words; may it inspire us to take meaningful actions that reflect our faithful commitment to God and our love for others.

Reflective question:

Do I aspire to live in accordance with God's purpose for my life?

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

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

A genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, Tamar being their mother, Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon was the father of Boaz, Rahab being his mother, Boaz was the father of Obed, Ruth being his mother, Obed was the father of Jesse; and Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Azariah, Azariah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah; and Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers. Then the deportation to Babylon took place. After the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob; and Jacob was the father of 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.

The active presence of God

In today's gospel, we encounter the genealogy of Jesus, a rich tapestry of names and stories that not only connects us to His family but also invites us to reflect deeply on its significance for our lives today. The genealogy serves as a powerful reminder that God is deeply involved in human history. It reveals a journey filled with people and their diverse experiences—stories marked by mistake and repentance, triumphs and

setbacks, fears and joys. Despite the imperfections of these individuals, God's presence stays strong. They played a vital role in the unfolding of His story, reflecting God's ability to work through imperfect people to fulfil His plan.

As we face our own challenges and struggles, it is essential to recognise that God is always at work in our lives. He can straighten the crooked paths in our lives and heal our brokenness, guiding us toward healing and renewal. As the Christmas season approaches, let this time be an opportunity to deepen our trust in God, not only in our own lives but also in the lives of those around us.

Reflective question:

Do I trust that God is at work in my life, patiently crafting a beautiful narrative from my struggles, and making crooked lines straight?

Thursday, 18th December, 3rd Week of Advent.

Jeremiah 23:5-8, 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 a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when 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 the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son. And they will call him Emmanuel, 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-is-with-us

As we pray with today's gospel, let us allow these words to sink deeply in our hearts, "*Emmanuel... God-is-with-us*". This is the joy of this season as we celebrate that God is never far away from any of us. He is present in every success and failure, in every hurt and fear, in every anger and joy. He is the God of our story. He is God who is with us here,

now and forever. This assurance fills us with hope and gratitude, reminding us that we are never alone.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, let us take a moment to reflect on the significance of this season. Let us open our hearts to welcome Jesus in both our joys and sorrows, knowing that He never fails to love us. Each day, we strive to share His presence of love with those around us.

Reflective question:

In this time of prayer, am I truly present for God, who is always present for me?

Friday, 19th December, 3rd 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 worthy in the sight of God, and scrupulously observed all the commandments and observances of the Lord. But they were childless: Elizabeth was barren, and they were both getting on in years. Now it was the turn of Zechariah's section to serve, and he was exercising his priestly office before God when it fell to him by lot, as the ritual custom was, to enter the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense there. And at the hour of incense the whole congregation was 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, your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son and you must 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 sons of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah, he will go before him to turn the hearts of fathers towards their children and the disobedient back to the wisdom that the virtuous have, preparing for the Lord a people fit for him. Zechariah said to the angel, 'How can I be sure of 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. Listen! Since you have not believed 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 received 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. Sometime later his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept to herself. 'The Lord has done this for me' she said 'now that it has pleased him to take away the humiliation I suffered among men.'

Faith, not doubt

Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God's sight. They were devoted individuals who loved God with all their heart, mind, and strength. However, when Zechariah encountered the angel in the Temple, he was afraid and doubted God's message. He allowed the physical limitations he and his wife faced to hinder his faith in God's promise.

Often, we can diligently observe rituals and commandments while living a good Christian life. Yet, we may struggle internally with fears and doubts because our hearts are not fully open to God and His ways. We might find ourselves asking, *"How can I be sure of this? How can I be certain about the future? How can I know this is the right path for me?"* Instead of allowing these uncertainties to overwhelm us, why not turn to God in prayer and be honest about our fears and doubts? He desires to lead us to deeper faith and greater trust, and He longs for us to have peace in our hearts. Today, we hold onto the words from Psalm 56:3, *"Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You."*

Reflective question:

Do my fears and doubts hold me back from deepening my faith in God and His Word?

Saturday, 20th December, 3rd Week of Advent.

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

In the sixth month, 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, so highly favoured! 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. Listen! You are to conceive 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 am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you', the angel answered, '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. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary, 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

The heart of Advent: God is near

In today's gospel, we hear the Angel Gabriel's greeting, "*Rejoice, O favoured one! The Lord is with you,*" which reveals the heart of Advent: God draws near. Before Mary is asked to do anything, she is first told who she is in God's eyes: loved, chosen, and accompanied. Advent invites us to let these same words echo in our hearts: You are seen. You are chosen. The Lord is with you.

Mary's response to God's plan is not blind certainty. She asks a sincere question: "*How can this be?*" She brings her confusion, her humanity, her limitations. It is comforting to know that faith doesn't mean having no questions. Rather, it means bringing our questions into God's presence. Advent is a season where we invite God into our uncertainties and hear His message: "*Nothing is impossible for God.*" Today, let us prepare our hearts not only for the historical birth of Christ but also to make space for Him in the present moment.

Reflective question:

What is God asking of me today?

Sunday, 21st December, Fourth 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 a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when 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 the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son. And they will call him Emmanuel, 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.

Joseph and Mary: People of courage

The gospel today speaks of two people who loved God with their heart, mind and strength: Mary and Joseph. Their love for Him led them to say 'Yes' to cooperating with His plan. They did not set conditions, calculate risks, or complain; they simply loved and did His will. Their love gave them the courage to trustingly tread unknown paths and walk on unfamiliar ground. Courage is not the absence of fear; rather, it is the choice to act and move into the unknown despite that fear. The courage of these two individuals made Christmas possible.

We may sometimes lack the courage that Mary and Joseph had by setting conditions, calculating potential outcomes, complaining, and hesitating to completely let go so that God can take control. As Christmas approaches, let us courageously say "Yes" to God by bringing His presence to others through our acts of kindness and goodness. In doing so, we allow Him to use us as instruments to bring meaning to Christmas for many people today.

Reflective question:

What situations in my life currently require me to have courage?

Monday, 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 forever.' Mary stayed with her for some three months and then went home.

Magnificat

In today's gospel, we hear Mary's Magnificat, a song of praise that shares a strong message about what God's coming truly means. Mary shows us that God's arrival is not just gentle or sentimental. It is transformative, disruptive, and revolutionary. God notices the lowly. God lifts up the forgotten. God reaches out to those on the margins first. This is the important "reversal" at the heart of the Gospel: while people honour power, God honours humility; while society celebrates the successful, God celebrates the small, the broken, and the overlooked.

Today, we are invited to recognise God's ongoing work in our lives and in our world. Even now, God continues to turn things upside down, revealing injustice, challenging pride, supporting those who suffer in silence, and bringing hope to those who feel overwhelmed by life. This Advent, may Mary's song become ours: a song of hope, courage, and a song that helps us welcome the God who turns the world—and our own lives—upside down.

Reflective question:

How can I allow Christ to reorder my priorities, relationships and attitudes?

Tuesday, 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.

Rejoice and gratitude

In today's gospel, Elizabeth gave birth to a son. She, who had been barren for many years, rejoiced over her child. Her neighbours and relatives came to hear the good news and shared in her joy, fully aware of the pain she had endured without a child. This passage serves as a powerful reminder for us to celebrate the achievements of others, encouraging us to share in their joys and triumphs instead of giving in to feelings of envy. It highlights the power of community and the importance of supporting one another through the ups and downs of life.

When the child was to be circumcised on the eighth day, everyone expected that he would be named "John". However, his mother firmly insisted, "*No, he is to be called John,*" highlighting her conviction and the importance of this name. Zechariah, the child's father, who had been unable to speak since the announcement of the child's birth, confirmed this choice by writing it down when asked for the name. In that moment, he regained his ability to speak and immediately began praising God. This joyful moment reminds us to express gratitude for the blessings we receive and the moments that transform our lives.

Reflective question:

Do I celebrate God's blessings and acts of mercy in the lives of others around me, or do I focus more on my own situations?

Wednesday, 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.'

God's faithfulness

In today's gospel, after months of being unable to speak, Zechariah's first words are not complaints, explanations, or fears, but a blessing: *"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel."* As we approach Christmas, we find ourselves alongside Zechariah, reflecting on God's faithfulness throughout our lives. We can recognise moments of quiet mercy, gentle guidance, and growth. Like Zechariah, we also look forward to a dawn that is already beginning to break.

Zechariah proclaims that God is sending One who will *"shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death"*. On Christmas night, this promise will take flesh. Jesus, the Light of the world, will come, not with noise or power, but in the vulnerability of a child. He becomes Emmanuel: God with us, God beside us, God in the hidden and humble places. Today, may we quiet our hearts so that when Jesus comes, we can truly welcome Him with joy and renewed hope.

Reflective question:

Where have I seen God's faithfulness manifest in my own life?

Thursday, 25th November, The 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 became flesh

The Gospel for this Christmas day states, “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.*” God does not come as an idea, an abstract force, or a passing visitor. He comes to dwell and to make His home with us. Despite our chaotic lives full of mistakes and weaknesses, He enters our world. Nothing human is beneath Him. Nothing in our lives is too small, too broken, or too hidden for Him to enter. As we celebrate Christmas today, let us rejoice that God draws close, not because we have been good enough, but because His love cannot stay far away.

John tells us that the world did not recognise Him, and many did not receive Him. Yet to those who open their hearts, even a little, He gives the power to become children of God. This is the real gift of Christmas: not simply a child in a manger, but our identity as sons and daughters of God. Let us welcome Jesus into our hearts today and share His loving presence with others.

Reflective question:

How can I receive Jesus more fully, not just on Christmas Day, but also in my daily life?

Friday, 26th December, St. Stephen, the First Martyr.

Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59, Matthew 10:17-22

Jesus said to his apostles: ‘Beware of men: they will hand you over to the Sanhedrin and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the pagans. But when they hand you over, do not worry about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will be given to you when the time comes, because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of

your Father will be speaking in you. Brother will betray brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all men on account of my name; but the man who stands firm to the end will be saved.'

Committed to follow Jesus to the end

We celebrate the Feast of St. Stephen the First Martyr, who remained faithful to Jesus even in the face of death. This feast serves as a reminder that Christmas is not just about celebrating the birth of Jesus; it is also a call to commit ourselves to following Jesus faithfully. This commitment may require us to set aside our self-centred pride, laziness, addictions, jealousy, and other behaviours that draw us away from God and hinder our ability to love and serve others.

In today's gospel, Jesus speaks of the challenges that arise when we choose to follow Him. We may encounter opposition, even from family members and friends. Despite these difficulties, there is a profound sense of comfort. Jesus assures us by saying, *"Do not worry... the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you, will be acting through you, will be loving with you."* God will guide our words and actions, empowering us to face the complexities of our relationships. Even when we face misunderstanding or criticism, we can depend on the Spirit to fill us with love and wisdom, helping us to remain steadfast in our journey of following Jesus.

Reflective question:

What place does Jesus occupy in my life?

Saturday, 27th December, 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.

The beloved disciple

Today we celebrate the Feast of St. John the Evangelist. In the gospel, John rushed to the tomb after hearing of Jesus' resurrection, demonstrating not only his quickness but also his deep faith. He believed wholeheartedly in Jesus' resurrection, grounded in his profound experience of being loved by Christ. Known as the "Beloved Disciple," John's identity was shaped by this unconditional love, inspiring him to reflect that love in his own life.

Today, as we experience the transformative love of Christ, we are called to share that love with others. Each of us must actively seek and create opportunities to communicate the message of Jesus wherever we find ourselves, at home, at work, in our communities, and beyond. Our acts of kindness, words of encouragement, and expressions of love can serve as powerful instruments through which Christ's love flows into the world. Let us embrace this calling with open hearts, eager to share the treasure that we have received.

Reflective question:

How can I communicate Jesus to those around me today?

Sunday, 28th December, The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. 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 left for 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

The Feast of the Holy Family reveals that God entered the world not through power, but through a simple family: Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. They show that holiness resides in everyday acts of love and faithfulness. In today's gospel, Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus are not shown in a peaceful home. Instead, they face a crisis: they flee danger and live as migrants in a foreign land. Their holiness does not come from avoiding problems but from how they respond. They trust in God, protect one another, and remain faithful during uncertain times. This reminds us that families become holy not because they are perfect, but because they support one another through life's challenges.

In the second reading, St. Paul's words offer a beautiful portrait of what a holy family looks like from the inside: *"Put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience... Bear with one another... Forgive one another... And over all these, put on love."* These virtues are not abstract ideals; they are the daily garments of family life. May this feast strengthen us to *"put on love"* in our homes, to trust God in difficulties, and to allow Christ to be the centre who unites, heals, and renews us.

Reflective question:

How can I practice virtues like compassion, kindness, and humility in my daily routine and transform ordinary tasks into acts of love?

Monday, 29th December, Fifth Day within the 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.'

The Holy Spirit guides

"Prompted by the Spirit, Simeon 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..." This passage, taken from today's gospel, highlights how Simeon responded to the gentle prompting of the Holy Spirit, which guided him to encounter Jesus. His strong trust in the Spirit's guidance shows a readiness that we can all aim for. Just as the Holy Spirit led Simeon to recognise God in the humble form of a baby, He continues to illuminate our paths today. We are invited to remain open to the gentle nudges of the Spirit, encouraging us to seek and recognise opportunities for encountering Jesus in our daily lives. By attuning ourselves to Him, we too can experience transformative moments that deepen our relationship with Jesus.

As Simeon held the baby Jesus in his arms, Simeon said, *"Now, Master, you are letting your servant go in peace as you promised; for my eyes have seen the salvation..."* Like Simeon, we too, with eyes of faith, have seen Jesus. We recognise Him in the breaking of the bread in the Eucharist, we hear Him speaking to us when we pray with the Scripture, and we experience His loving presence in the friendships we share with others. We look forward to the day when we will see Him face-to-face.

Reflective question:

How can I remain open to guidance from the Holy Spirit?

**Tuesday, 30th December, Sixth Day within the Octave of Christmas.
1 John 2:12-17, Luke 2:36-40**

There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem. When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

Anna, the faithful prophetess

In today's gospel, we see Anna, a faithful servant of God, who patiently awaited the arrival of the promised Messiah. Living in the temple, Anna dedicated her life to prayer, allowing her to remain attuned to God's presence around her. Her deep connection to God enabled her to recognise the signs of His coming and to listen attentively as He revealed Himself through various events and people. When she encountered baby Jesus, she instantly recognised Him as the long-awaited Messiah, fulfilling her hopes she had clung to for so long. Anna's story reminds us of the importance of faith, patience and discernment as we seek to understand and celebrate God's unfolding plan in our lives.

As we pray with the gospel passage, we are also invited to slow down and make a conscious effort to see God in the faces of people we encounter and in the everyday situations we find ourselves in. Each of these moments is an opportunity to be with God.

Reflective question:

What is Jesus' invitation for me in this time of prayer?

Wednesday, 31st December, Seventh Day within the 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.

Eternity steps into time

Today's gospel states, *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."* As we look back on the events of this year, we can recall moments when darkness seemed overwhelming, marked by uncertainty, loss, worry, loneliness, and tiredness. And yet, somehow, the Light kept shining. We may not always have seen it clearly, but it guided us step by step, sometimes only enough for that very day. The Light of Christ has carried us to this moment.

And now, as we prepare to step into a new year, the gospel speaks of a new beginning: *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."* Jesus does not remain distant from us; He enters our time, our humanity, and our stories. He walks with us into the unknown. On this New Year's Eve, let us entrust the old year to Him and welcome the new year with Him.

Reflective questions:

What does God want me to let go of from the past year? What does He want me to carry forward with courage and hope?



Artist Leigh Bradford