

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Keeper of Promises

Father,
you keep your promises
to Sarah, to Hannah,
to Elizabeth, to Mary,
to your people Israel.
You have promised to heal the world

and to fill it with your love
like water fills the sea.
Help us to wait in hope.
Give us food for the journey
that our eyes might see your salvation.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, December 19, 2021 Blessed Are You Who Believed



Today's readings: Micah 5:1–4a; Psalm 80:2–3, 15–16, 18–19; Hebrews 10:5–10; Luke 1:39–45. In the season of Advent, we look to those who watched and waited for Jesus when he first came into the world. The people of Israel, who first heard the words of the prophets, were waiting. The prophets spoke God's Word to them and gave them hope. They described the one who would come and the kingdom he would bring. Micah says his greatness extends to the ends of the earth.

Mary waited for the messiah throughout her early life. But she waited for Jesus in a way unique to her. When she was invited to be part of this completely new thing God was doing, she said yes with her whole heart. And then she set out.

Elizabeth's words to Mary communicate something important. "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." Mary is blessed because she knew that God was a keeper of promises. As we wait in hope, we can meditate on this truth. Take some time to think about what we hope for. We often worry about the conditions of the world. The weight of its brokenness can be hard to bear. But God keeps promises. In the words of the prophets and in the life of Jesus, a new possibility is revealed. Take some time today to meditate on the possibility of a world filled with God's love, governed by justice and peace to the ends of the earth.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 20

Nothing Impossible

“Nothing will be impossible for God.” It is easy to be discouraged when confronting a struggle. People have cried out to God throughout salvation history, longing to heal the brokenness in their lives and in the world. God’s solution came in a way beyond their comprehension: God coming to experience human life and thereby redeem it. Consider illustrating this Gospel passage or copying the Scripture. While you are reflecting, meditate on these words: “Nothing will be impossible for God.” What are the seeming impossibilities in your life? Where might God provide solutions beyond your imagination? *Today’s readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; Psalm 24:1–2, 3–4ab, 5–6; Luke 1:26–38.*

Tuesday, December 21

The Visitation

Imagine yourself alongside the newly pregnant Mary as she goes “in haste” across eighty miles of rough terrain, seeking out someone also experiencing a miraculous pregnancy. What did she see, hear, and think about as she was walking? We know that John the Baptist leapt for joy within his mother at the sound of Mary’s voice. What do you think Elizabeth felt when John leapt for joy? *Today’s readings: Song of Songs 2:8–14 or Zephaniah 3:14–18a; Psalm 33:2–3, 11–12, 20–21; Luke 1:39–45.*

Wednesday, December 22

He Has Lifted Up the Lowly

Mary proclaims the Magnificat, her song of praise to God, in Luke 1:46–56. Copy the Scripture. Which words particularly speak to you? While reading the Scriptures, we see how God has acted in history. This can help us to see what God is doing today. How do you see God acting as Mary proclaims? *Today’s readings: 1 Samuel 1:24–28; 1 Samuel 2:1, 4–8; Luke 1:46–56.*

Thursday, December 23

Great Mercy

In today’s Gospel, the birth of John is described as “the Lord had shown his great mercy toward” Elizabeth. When have you experienced God’s mercy? God kept the promise to Elizabeth, and in doing so, kept the promise of the prophets of old, that one would come who would prepare the way of the Lord. *Today’s readings: Malachi 3:1–4, 23–24; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 8–9, 10, 14; Luke 1:57–66.*

Friday, December 24

Nativity Scene

Laying out a Nativity can be a contemplative experience. If you have already set up a Nativity, spend some time sitting before it in silent prayer. What do you notice? Did you know that St. Francis of Assisi put together the first Nativity? Nativities have helped Christians to pray about the incarnation for hundreds of years. *Today’s readings: Morning: 2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27, 29; Luke 1:67–79.*

Saturday, December 25

Joy to the World!

Today we celebrate the incarnation, God becoming human that we might share in God’s divine life. We might wonder why God would choose to become something so vulnerable as a new baby. Why would God want to enter into the human condition, with all its limitations? Why would God enter into a world with sadness and suffering, and death? He came to open the way to a new possibility: a kingdom marked by justice, peace, and life. God’s love is more than anything we can imagine, and God’s will is for us to live in that love. *Today’s readings: Night: Isaiah 9:1–6; Psalm 96:1–2, 2–3, 11–12, 13; Titus 2:11–14; Luke 2:1–14; Dawn: Isaiah 62:11–12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11–12; Titus 3:4–7; Luke 2:15–20; Day: Isaiah 52:7–10; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27, 29; Hebrews 1:1–6; John 1:1–18 or 1:1–5, 9–14.*

