

“He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

—John 1.10-13

**The Third Sunday in Advent
December 12, 2021**

The theme for this week in Advent is purpose: Jesus came into the world to make the Father known and to bring us back to God through his sinless life, his substitutionary death, and his victorious resurrection. Therefore, as Isaiah said,

“Give thanks to the LORD,
call upon his name,
make known his deeds among the peoples,
proclaim that his name is exalted.

**Sing praises to the LORD, for he has done gloriously;
Let this be made known in all the earth.
Shout, and sing for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 12.4-6).**

Let us pray.

Father, you are the restorer of all things. May we who belong to you, be filled with gratitude and joyful anticipation at the coming of your Son. Remove all that hinders our joy and, like creation that longs for its redemption, may we joyfully anticipate your coming now and at the end of the age; for we ask it in the name of that Babe born so long ago, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. ...For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known” (Jn 1.14, 17-18).

A Reading the Prophet Zephaniah:

Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion;
shout, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!
The LORD has taken away the judgment against you;
he has cleared away your enemies.
The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;
you shall never again fear evil.
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:
“Fear not, O Zion;
let not your hands grow weak.
The LORD your God is in your midst,
a mighty one who will save;
he will rejoice over you with gladness;
he will quiet you by his love;
he will exult over you with loud singing” (Zeph 3.14-17).

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

A Reading from the Gospel of Luke:

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, O favored one, the Lord is with you!” But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called Holy—the Son of God” (Lk 1.26-35).

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn No. 211

GOD REST YOU MERRY, GENTLEMEN

Hymn No. 201

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

The Gospel of Matthew on the Incarnation:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:

"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"

(which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took his wife, but knew her not until she had given birth to a son. And he called his name Jesus (Mt 1.18-25).

Reflection on the Incarnation

"The Extraordinary Beginning of Jesus' Life"

Hymn No. 210

SILENT NIGHT! HOLY NIGHT!

Hymn No. 224

GO, TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN

Receive the Lord's Blessing:

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope" (Rom 15.13).

Thanks be to God.