



Winter's Wisdom
Advent 2021

“O Come, Emmanuel”

Advent is filled with singing, “O Come, Emmanuel.” Emmanuel is already here! It is not God who is coming to us. The anticipation and hope we experience in this season is God’s longing within us for our awakening and to the Mystery, Emmanuel, in whom we live, move, and have our being. The babe in the manger of Christmas is no ordinary baby. This baby is the new revelation of humanity. This baby makes known the next evolution of the meaning of humanity. We are participants in Infinite, Inclusive Love who fills the whole cosmos, and Infinite Love, whom we call God, also participates in us. All creation is the body of God! And God’s body is also our body!

Do we hear the cry of God in the burning, choking, flooding, starving of Earth and her people? God dwells in the flesh of all that is laboring for us to claim our identity as participants with God in the flourishing of creation! There is no time to waste. Advent is wake up time. Advent is action time!

Pope Francis hears the cry and recognizes the urgency. He summons all people of faith to the personal and communal spiritual transformation necessary to awaken the precious gift entrusted to humanity. We are created to be participants with God in healing and transforming creation. We have seven years to stop climate change and preserve the biodiversity of the planet for the future. The simplicity of our lifestyle, our ecological economy, education, spirituality, and community involvement will reveal our awakening. The future implores us, “Wake up.”

Hearing the cries of God, reflect on the readings of Advent. Beg for inspiration. Respond whole-heartedly. Pray that we, who are summoned and gifted for this moment, awaken to our summoning. Then Advent will be the “beginning of the end of all that is not Christ (Love incarnate) in us and in our world.” (Merton)

*Pat Bergen, CSJ
Westchester, IL*

NOVEMBER 28
1st SUNDAY of ADVENT

SCRIPTURE

Jer 33: 14-16
Ps 25: 4-5, 8-9, 10, 14
1 Thess 3:12-4:2
Lk 21: 25-28, 34-36

REFLECTION

Strengthen your hearts to be blameless in holiness.
1 Thess 3:13

Ah, Advent! That marvelous moment in the liturgical year when we are reminded of the source of our hope. The three readings for the 1st Sunday of Advent provide options to focus my journey through these four weeks. Jerimiah says that a tiny shoot is the promise that will restore the Davidic kingdom. Might I allow that shoot of justice to grow in me? Luke uses apocalyptic language to highlight with spectacular signs that “the Son of Man is coming...*with power and glory...because our redemption is at hand.*” What does redemption mean to me? Between these two readings Paul, in the earliest of his letters, encourages the Thessalonians to conduct themselves in a way that pleases God. *Strengthen your heart, love one another.* The *call to holiness* is a constant in these readings. For Paul the call is about unity, building up the community amid a society that has different values. Advent calls me to that kind of holiness.

PRAYER

Loving God, this time of anticipation is a time for rejoicing. You come to rule our lives with peace. May we be faithful in building up communion among all your people and caring for all your creation. Make us wise, make us holy, make us one.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Be at the service of someone in need today.

Marianne Race, CSJ
Brookfield, IL

MONDAY - NOVEMBER 29

SCRIPTURE

Is.2: 1-5

Ps. 122: 1-9

Mt 8: 5-11

REFLECTION

*“For the peace of Jerusalem pray...May peace be within your walls...
May peace be yours.”*

Is. 2: 3-4

Recent space exploration has gifted the world with astonishing images of Earth as seen from space. The amazing pictures have expanded our understanding of and appreciation for the wonders and beauty of the universe.

This vastly expanded view of Earth can remind us of the “holy mountain” Isaiah describes where with awe and wonder God will “instruct us in His ways.” There we will be invited to “beat our swords into plowshares and our spheres into pruning hooks...One nation shall not raise the sword against another nor shall they train for war again.”

The vision of the world in Old Testament times is vastly different from our expanded understanding of the universe so beautifully imaged in the pictures from space. But the call to be peacemakers remains the same. That mountain, just a speck in the great and grand universe, summons us to preserve and respect all God’s creation and build a world where all can flourish and live in peace.

PRAYER

God of creation, you call me to be a peacemaker in both the small occurrences of daily living and in the broader challenges of addressing systems and situations that cause disharmony in our world. Make me attentive to the cries of the poor and alienated and help me respond with compassion and care.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will try to be more aware of the power of a kind word to replace an impatient or sarcastic one.

*Jean McGrath, CSJ
Chicago, IL*

TUESDAY – NOVEMBER 30

SCRIPTURES

Rom 10: 9-18

Ps 19: 8-11

Mt 4: 18-22

REFLECTION

(They) will not ask for...help unless they believe in him, and they will not believe in him unless they have heard of him, and they will not hear of him unless they get a preacher, and they will never have a preacher unless one is sent...is it possible that they did not hear? Indeed they did...their voice has gone out through all the earth, and their message to the ends of the world. Romans 10: 9-18

*Jesus said, "Come follow me and I will send you out to fish for people."
Mt. 4:19*

I remember going fishing with my grandparents when I was young. I was often bored, because it meant a lot of sitting and waiting. However, I think Jesus was casting his bait for me and I got hooked. I gave my life to him. I wonder who or what his "fish" would be today? I studied Laudato Si. My eyes were opened to the suffering in our world and how our earth is crying out because of the harm we have inflicted upon her. Integral Ecology gives us a glimpse of how we are all connected. We are one. Does not our charism as a member of the CSJ community call us to this? Jesus' prayer is in our hearts and if we believe, we must take the bait. Following Jesus enables us to see all of Creation as he sees it: sacred. We are one part of this universe and what we do to one, we do to ourselves and to the whole.

PRAYER

Loving God, we know that you are present in the whole universe. Help us to understand that we are part of the whole, so that we will protect all life and work for a better future for your Kingdom of justice, peace, love, and beauty. Praise be to you! Amen

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Am I willing to do what I can to protect God's beautiful creation, even to changing my lifestyle and living sustainably for all?

*Mary Ellen Loch, CSJ
Wichita, KS*

WEDNESDAY - DECEMBER 1

SCRIPTURE

Is. 25: 6-10;
Ps. 23: 1-6;
Mt. 15: 29-37

REFLECTION

*Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, so that he might save us.
This is the Lord for whom we have waited. Isaiah 25: 9*

For what are you waiting? Today's readings identify various experiences that reflect the hungers the whole community shares. Each one talks about what *salvation* looks like in real life. Each reading names a human need that God understands, responds to, and wants to transform. For those who hunger and thirst, God promises feasts of rich food and wine. For those who weep, he will wipe away tears. For those in need of renewal, God leads us from dark valleys to green pastures and still waters, places of peace. If you are lame or blind or maimed, Jesus offers God's saving touch and caring presence.

But our God is not a magician who comes simply to amaze. The gospel story of the feeding of the multitude offers a sense of how God's presence continues to save, to feed and heal and house and renew as we yearn for salvation today. Listen to the news, dare to look at global or family pain and suffering. Notice neighbors. Then choose: how am I called to continue Jesus' saving mission, touch human hearts, care for the community that still awaits salvation?

PRAYER

God here among us, you invite us to follow you and
so bear your saving Presence today. Open our eyes and ears,
touch our hearts, and lead us on.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Read or watch the news today *and* today's gospel.
How do they connect? And how do they call you?

*Joy Milos, CSJ
Spokane, WA*

THURSDAY - DECEMBER 2

SCRIPTURE

Is 26:1-6

Ps 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27

Mt 7:21, 24-27

REFLECTION

Anyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on a rock. When the rainy season set in, the torrents came and the winds blew and buffeted his house; it did not collapse; it had been solidly set on a rock. Mt 7:24-25

We can remember so many horrific scenes of this past year; the floods in the South and East, the fires out West, the pandemic that has touched this country and the world, the 20-year war in Afghanistan ending with trials and difficulties. This year has not been without fears, crises, worries, losses. Many of the memories still remain and haunt us. Yet if we can recall messages from special news reporters, there are so many stories of survival, faith, and hope in the future because of prayer, belief in God, and of neighbor helping neighbor. Was the foundation of the life of a person, a family, a country built on sand or rock? Research has shown that religion, faith, and support of others can be the rock that shows us important ways to cope and survive such trauma, distress, and loss. It is not just words, but actions that give others the hope to continue on when “starting over” is necessary.

PRAYER

God, our Creator and Rock, in times of distress and loss, be with us and protect us.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

May we be more conscious of the needs of our neighbor when a crisis happens.

*Lenora Benda, CSJ
St. Clair Shores, MI*

FRIDAY - DECEMBER 3

SCRIPTURE

Is 29: 17-24

Ps 27: 1, 4, 13-14

Mt. 9: 9: 27-31

REFLECTION

*“Out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see
...and the poor rejoice in the Holy One.” Is. 29:18 -19*

Hope characterizes the first week of Advent and today’s readings, filled with Divine Promise, urge us toward relentless hope. An unflinching hope which springs from a deep, hidden place within and is of God. Hope dwells in darkness. For hope is not hope if it is seen. Yet hope is the steadfast assurance that the darkness will not overcome the Light - ever. Charles Peguy, the French poet, writes that hope is the most forgotten and neglected of the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Yet, is it not hope’s persistent force we most need today? In the face of the crushing suffering we hear and see daily we can feel powerless and think our efforts meager, even useless. Hope not only urges us to trudge on, but puts a spring in our step and joy in our hearts. Hope enthusiastically answers “Yes!” to Christ’s question in the gospel, “Do you believe I can do this?” “Do you believe I can do this through you?”

PRAYER

“Wait for the Lord with courage. Be stouthearted
and wait for the Lord.” Ps 27:14

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

In moments of discouragement, frustration, sadness, or feeling overwhelmed, I will hope in the Lord.

*Marcella Clancy, CSJ
Detroit, MI*

SATURDAY – DECEMBER 4

SCRIPTURE

Is 30: 19-21, 23, 26

Ps 147: 13-14

Mt 9:35-10: 1, 5-8

REFLECTION

When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke.” Mt 9: 35-36

My heart breaks, too, as I look around me. I see a planet in crisis—natural disasters more extreme and frequent than ever before; polar ice melting and raising the sea level, threatening coastal towns and cities; plants and animals going extinct; political chaos lacking integrity and morality; institutions crumbling; millions suffering and dying in the wake of the pandemic. All these are accompanied by racism, poverty, and the social ills that always plague us.

What can I do? If Jesus were on Earth today, he would weep, but he would also speak out and act for peace, justice, and the healing of our planet and he would do it with compassion. As his follower, I must do the same. Practicing compassion will bring peace and joy to my heart even in the midst of adversity. That energy will join the energetics of the planet...the higher frequencies at which Earth is now vibrating...and bring healing to us all.

PRAYER

*"Spirit of Love, come give us the mind of Jesus.
Teach us the wisdom of God."

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

At the end of the day, I will ask myself how I showed compassion, how I spoke out or acted to bring peace, justice, and healing to our planet.

**"Eye Has Not Seen" by Marty Haugen*

*Linda Fox – CSJ Associate
Indian Head Park, IL*

DECEMBER 5
2nd SUNDAY of ADVENT

Bar. 5:1-9

Ps. 126: 1-2, 2-3, 45, 6

Phil. 1: 4-6, 8-11

Luke 3: 1-6

REFLECTION

God will guide Israel with joy, mercy and justice/and all humankind will see the salvation of God.

Bar. 5:9/Lk.3:6

In this day and age people don't like to be told where to go. Independence is valued and "doing it my way" is more than a song. Yet our cars, watches, verbal direction apps, and oh, so much more do just that, constantly tell us where to go and how to get there. Enter our first reading. Baruch's proclamation of God's "bringing Israel" reminds us that joy, mercy, and justice are our guides... the kind that we need to practice more than proclaim. And where does all this guidance get us? Luke has no doubt: "all humankind – indeed all creation – will see the salvation of God." Here's the catch: if all humankind - all creation - will see that salvation, where do we look? We look at our lives and how we go about living, with whom we partner, how we forgive, heal, and risk righting wrongs that separate us. OK, so that seems impossible, yet... a one-day-at-a-time attitude says that we can make a gospel difference. Dare we? Dare I? Isn't all life worth our being and acting with Gospel energy and Old Testament hope! All it takes is one step at a time.

PRAYER

Holy God of all creation, no exception, guide and strengthen me to live with contagious joy, mercy, and justice!

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will choose at least one way of practicing more than preaching joy, mercy, and justice during this Advent, Christmas season and upcoming 2022 New Year.

Barbara Dreher, CSJ
St. Louis, MO

MONDAY - DECEMBER 6

SCRIPTURE

Is 35: 1-10

Ps 85: 9-14

Lk 5: 17-26

REFLECTION

*Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.*

Is 35:5

When I was seven years old, I awakened one night in pitch darkness and dead silence. For some reason, I immediately thought I had gone blind and deaf. Instead of leaping out of bed to turn on the light, my eyes strained against the darkness, trying to detect something, *anything*, that could assure me that my eyes and ears were still working. It was the reflection of the headlights and the sound of a passing car that finally quieted my racing heart. I could see! I could hear!

As I have grown older, I have learned that there are many ways that these infirmities show up in my life. As grateful as I am for the gift of physical vision and hearing, I have learned that an even greater gift is spiritual insight: the capacity to understand those things which we can only see and hear with our hearts, and which hold even greater value because they are the sources of meaning, purpose, and direction in our lives. Being spiritually deaf and blind prevents me from seeing not only what is sacred and beautiful, but what is ugly, unjust, and disunifying.

PRAYER

Jesus, I acknowledge my heart is blind and deaf without your healing and direction. Open me to your love!

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Today I will look for the face and voice of God in every person I meet, without distinction.

*Judith Minear, CSJ
Cleveland, OH*

TUESDAY - DECEMBER 7

SCRIPTURE

Is 40: 1-11

Ps 96: 1-3, 10-13

Mt 18: 12-14

REFLECTION

*Comfort my people . . . their guilt is expiated . . . Is 40 :1-2
It is not the will of your heavenly Father that one of these
little ones be lost. Mt 18: 12-14*

Today we are invited to listen to God's own desires, divine longings. The readings also give us a God's-eye-view of our communities.

We have been accustomed to interpret the reading from Isaiah as depicting God relenting and even repenting from punishing people who have strayed. But the picture of God we get from Jesus – who had a better handle on God than any of the others in Scripture – is very different.

Jesus paints God as one who will go to outrageous lengths to include even the most lost and rebellious within the fold of a loving community. It's not that the one is loved more than the ninety-nine, but that the ninety-nine, every last one of them, are incomplete without the one. The Good Shepherd knows that. Going after the one teaches ninety-nine that they are one and cannot be whole if they forget that truth. Including the one in the community heals them all.

PRAYER

Shepherding God, draw us together as only you can.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

What do I need to do in these days to restore a lost relationship and, therefore, heal my community?

*Mary McGlone, CSJ
St. Louis, MO*

WEDNESDAY - DECEMBER 8

SCRIPTURE

Gn 3: 9-15, 20

Ps 98: 1-4

Eph 1: 3-6, 11-12

Lk 1: 26-38

REFLECTION

“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 holy...”

And Mary said, Yes, I see it all now: I’m the Holy One’s handmaid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say.

Luke 1: 35 & 38

I have to confess that the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary has never been one that I felt drawn to. It’s not a quarrel with Mary being born without sin, but rather that it seems to diminish the sacredness of human intimacy and the miracle of birth. So, as I was reflecting on this gospel, I found myself wondering about how it’s been interpreted over the centuries, and how we might read it with new eyes in 2021.

What if we read it with the eyes of the new cosmology, and deep faith in our God of extravagant love and compassion? With a heart that truly knows that the Holy Spirit has come upon every one of us, and that we are all overshadowed by the power of the “Most High?” What if, in response to that knowing, you, me, all of us responded wholeheartedly with Mary’s words—*I’m ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say*—to whatever our lives bring us today by way of an opportunity to be God’s love and compassion present wherever we are? What an amazing *fiat* I/we could give. What a difference I/we would make in our world.

PRAYER

Source of Being, grant me the grace and courage to live my own fiat to you, in whatever circumstances I find myself in this day.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will try to see each person I meet today as an expression and reflection of your love and compassion.

*Christine Parks, CSJ
Kalamazoo, MI*

THURSDAY - DECEMBER 9

SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 41: 13-20

Ps 145: 1, 9-13

Mt 11: 11-15

REFLECTION

*For I am the Lord, your God; it is I who say to you,
"Fear not, I will help you."
Isaiah 41:13*

She was practicing sand volleyball outside with her college team when it happened. The coach warned the girls not to veer off the path as they left the area because herbicides had been freshly applied. Bridget was shocked that they were all put at risk with these carcinogenic materials so close to them. And she worried about the health risk to the groundskeepers who had to apply them. In that moment Bridget had a vision, attacked the problem at her university and Herbicide-Free Campus was born, where no herbicides with glyphosate would be used at her university, and since then, a growing number of universities around the country. Might Bridget have felt some fear tackling this as a student, not as more powerful faculty or staff or administration? Of course. But Bridget shares our CSJ vision that ALL IS ONE and she had the courage, drive, and leadership to be God's instrument in protecting God's people and creation itself.

PRAYER

God With Us, may we rely on Your help if fear blocks our way to serving You in some small or bold way.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

To remember that God is more invested in 'integral ecology' than I am, and to count on that support.

*Mary Jo Hazard - CSJ Associate
Naperville, IL*

FRIDAY - DECEMBER 10

SCRIPTURE

Is. 48: 17-19

Ps. 1: 1-2, 3, 4, and 6

Mt. 11:16-19

REFLECTION

Those who follow you, Lord, will have the light of life.

John 8:12

The Christmas tree lights have come out of storage and are put on the tree. The candles to light the darkened windows are found and put into place. We are anxious to bring light to the long cold hours of dark. Christmas calls us out of darkness to bring the light of hope to the world around us – here and now. Here, in Advent, it can feel like the dark is overwhelming. What can we do? How do we bring light to so much darkness? Isaiah counsels that the Lord will lead us on the way we should go. The psalm calls us to follow the Lord. Jesus brought light to the darkened edges of society – to the poor and outcast, to the sick and lonely. We have this Advent time to pray and contemplate: what is our light? How do we bring this light to shine in this world?

PRAYER

Let your light shine in my heart, Lord, and help me find the way to bring that light to those around me each day.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Each day I will spend time in thoughtful action to bring light to a dark area in the lives of those with whom I live.

*Sue Martin – CSJ Associate
Westchester, IL*

SATURDAY - DECEMBER 11

SCRIPTURE

Sir. 48; 1-4, 9-11

Ps. 80; 2-3, 15-16, 18-19

Mt. 17; 9, 10-13

REFLECTION

*Turn again, Lord of hosts. Look down from heaven and see.
Attend to this vine, the shoot your right hand has planted.*

Ps. 80: 15-16

I reflect on this psalm and realize how many times I have seen “myself as the vine” and my plea was for the Lord of Hosts to see and attend to “my needs, my hopes, my concerns.” Now... in this time of our earth crisis... somehow, I feel a shift of concern... to the growing suffering of our planet earth. In these days of the growing devastation across this earth caused by both natural disasters as well as human neglect and destruction, we’ve reached a point of no return. We... I need to be accountable for how I have been and continue to be responsible for what is happening to our common home. If I truly believe in our interconnectedness with all things... how can I not show more concern for the simple things that value and preserve the life of our common home. Yes... even those simple things like... my use of water, plastic, use of electrical appliances, turning off the lights, TV, waste disposal etc. can make a difference. Am I willing to set my mind and heart to make that difference happen?

PRAYER

Loving God, Help me to see... to love... to protect and attend to this earth which you have given us.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will try at least once each day, to look out the window at the trees, the grass and flowers, the sky above, and ask myself... What have I done or not done today... to try to preserve the gift of this precious planet earth?

*Ann Terese Reznicek, CSJ
La Grange Park, IL*

DECEMBER 12
3rd SUNDAY of ADVENT

SCRIPTURE

ZEPH 3: 14-18

IS 12: 2-6

PHIL 4:4-7

LK 3:10-18

REFLECTION

*Rejoice in our God always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Is. 5
Let your gentleness be evident to all. Phil 4:4-5*

Today is the 3rd Sunday of Advent, but it also is the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1531, outside of Mexico City on a hill at Tepeyac dedicated to the goddess, Tonantzin, Juan Diego, a poor, uneducated, indigenous peasant became an ambassador to bring a message to the Bishop of Mexico. A young lady appeared to him and sent Juan Diego a sign to ask the bishop to build a church at the spot on Tepeyac. To the Mexican people, Our Lady speaks of restoration of justice and is the visible love of God and God's action on behalf of those who are poor. La Morenita (the little brown one) as she is lovingly called, is the expression of the love of God and tells us of God's unconditional love and never-failing presence.

Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, says, "Her presence and consoling words served to promote the human dignity of defeated people at the time of conquest and have continued ever since..." and "...the figure of La Virgin in their communities is a symbol of divine love, and people's devotion as a mediated encounter with divine compassion."

Theologian Jeannette Rodriguez tells us, "Our Lady of Guadalupe continues to stand for justice, solidarity with the oppressed, belonging, unconditional love" and "manifests the presence of God."

God is here. Our Lady of Guadalupe is one more way that we know of this loving Presence.

PRAYER

O Compassionate God, you tell us in many ways of your love and care for all people, Help us, too, to be a sign of your love for all people and all creation.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will see the image of God in all I meet today.

*Joellen Sbrissa, CSJ
La Grange Park, IL*

MONDAY - DECEMBER 13

SCRIPTURE

Num. 24; 2-7; 15-17

Ps. 25: 4-9

Mt. 21:23-27

REFLECTION

Make known to me your ways, Lord; teach me your paths.

Ps 25:4

Getting from one place to another is so easy these days. Gone are those paper maps and those complicated trip tics. Just program your GPS and let the soothing voice of Siri or some other gentle voice take you where you want to go step by step, turn by turn, lane by lane. Yet even with the GPS there are decisions to make. Do you want the fastest route? Avoid tolls? Go the easiest way? Would that it was that simple when discerning where God is leading!

To be guided by our loving God we have to be humble, open and docile. We need to surrender our will and rely on the fidelity of our Creator. Is there anyone who has been as faithful throughout the ages?

The Psalmist waits for God all the day long. During this Advent season may we put aside our plans and dreams and wait for the soothing voice of the Spirit to take us to realms we could never have imagined.

PRAYER

Guide me, gracious God, to places I'd rather not go, situations outside my comfort zone, to share your lifegiving waters with those who thirst. Show me the way.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will intentionally put aside what I am doing to listen carefully for a few minutes to the still small voice steering me to places where God bids me come.

*Doreen Glynn, CSJ
Latham, NY*

TUESDAY - DECEMBER 14

SCRIPTURE

Jer 33: 14-16

Zeph 3: 1-2, 9-13

Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-19, 23

Mt 21: 28-32

REFLECTION

The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Ps 34: 18

It is difficult to not be broken hearted as we enter this season of Advent. Our spirit has been challenged, and perhaps crushed, by the events and loss we've seen around us for the past year. Too many of us have experienced the loss of a loved one or have been separated from family and friends. Too often, it seems that conflict and fear are the primary emotions in everyday life. Soon we will welcome the Christ Light into the world again and we will be reminded of his promise to tend to his flock and lift our spirits. In the parable of the Two Sons today, Jesus challenges us to follow him – in deeds, not just words. This season, in this unprecedented time, we have the opportunity to join Jesus, to shine a light and be a light for all of those with whom we come in contact. Living out our Mission of Unity with the Dear Neighbor has never been more important.

PRAYER

Loving God, open my heart and my senses to the needs of all whom I meet each day.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

When have I been Christ for someone else today? What am I doing to tend to the spirit of those who are troubled and disheartened?

*Bill Stauffer – CSJ Associate
Palos Heights, IL*

WEDNESDAY - DECEMBER 15

SCRIPTURE

Is 45:6-8, 18, 21-25

Ps 85:9-14

Lk 7:18-23

REFLECTION

...God formed the earth and made it...a place to be lived in.

Is 45:18

The earth given to us is the first revelation of God, the first scripture. Everything on earth reveals something of who God is. Jesus often used creatures of the earth to teach lessons about God's love and care for us. Earth is also given to us to be lived in, providing for our needs and requiring us to care for her that she can continue to provide for future generations. Advent is a good time for us to look at how well we are living sustainably and to notice what more Creator God is inviting us to change in order to do our part as caretakers and co-creators of Mother Earth. As we prepare to celebrate the coming of God as human in Jesus and look forward to His second coming, what kind of earth will there be to receive Him? How are we called to live in it and to participate in making ourselves and our earth ready this year?

PRAYER

Creator God, help me during this Advent season to live more in harmony and balance with our dear Mother Earth, to care for her as she cares for me and all of us, and as she reveals who You are in so many wonderfully varied ways.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will notice all the ways that I am invited to change in order to better live in harmony with creation and I will give thanks each time I make a sustainable choice.

*Liz Kerwin, CSJ
Paul, MN*

THURSDAY - DECEMBER 16

SCRIPTURE

Is. 54 1-10

Ps. 30 4-6, 11-12

Lk. 7 24-30

REFLECTION

*My love for you will never leave you. Is.30:10
I am going to send a messenger before you. S/he will prepare the way
before you. Lk. 7 :27*

The readings today invite us to embrace the labor and joy of giving birth to ourselves, to others, and to creation. Listening to the call to love as God loves is an ever-deepening Advent journey into the depths of both sadness and joy. Courage and wisdom are needed on this journey to open our hearts to the people and experiences that present themselves as our midwives. Midwives are God's human face as we seek to make our world a more safe, peaceful, and joy-filled place. Midwives companion us to receive and respond to the pains and promises of our individual and collective experiences of the pandemic, racial injustice, and the impact of climate change. Midwives empower us to be a healing and unifying presence in our cities, neighborhoods, and families often touched by violence, divisions, and unrest. Midwives support our efforts to trust that God's love lives forever, love will transform relationships, healing will happen, and hope will be reborn within us and across our world if we are messengers who say yes to birthing God's way.

PRAYER

God of love, open my heart to the chosen and unexpected midwives in my life story. Expand my capacity to trust painful moments knowing that healing happens. Lead me always to extend my hands and heart to others, receiving the invitation to become a midwife of your abiding love.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Take time to name the person(s) or experiences that have helped you to give birth to God's healing love for our world. Awaken to the possibility of becoming a midwife, helping to unwrap the gift of God's healing love in another.

*Linda Bronersky, CSJ Associate
Bollingbrook, IL*

FRIDAY - DECEMBER 17

SCRIPTURE

GN 49: 2, 8-10

Ps 72: 1-4, 7-8, 17

MT 1: 1-17

REFLECTION

*Come, Wisdom of our God Most High, O holy Word of God, Come.
- O Antiphon for December 17*

Today begins the O antiphons, and as church we pray that the WISDOM of God come be with and in us!

In the readings Genesis speaks of Jacob calling his offspring to “Assemble and listen;” Matthew names, for prosperity’s recollection, Jesus’ lineage (with its often hard to pronounce names) and the psalm prays “Justice shall flourish in its time and fullness of peace forever.”

This Word of God comes to us today and recalls for us how God’s wisdom has been among us. Daily, we are called to “assemble and listen” and remember the ever-present faithfulness of God who, through the ages, is here through thick and thin, sinfulness and glory. We are called to participate in bringing and being justice and peace in our world.

Wisdom lives in us – we only need to pay attention and allow God to come! God chooses to flourish in us as the love, compassion, and wholeness/holiness for which we pray as Advent unfolds.

PRAYER

Come, Wisdom of our God Most High, O holy Word of God.
Come guide creation with power and love as you call us to walk in
the path of your Son.
Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Listen deeply to wisdom both outside and inside yourself this day.

*Christine Partisano, CSJ
Latham, New York*

SATURDAY - DECEMBER 18

SCRIPTURE

Jer. 23: 5-8

Ps 72: 1-2, 12-13,18-19

Mt.1 :18-25

REFLECTION

May all the earth be filled with the Lord's glory.

Ps 72: 19b

Up in the community room one summer, a potted corn plant occupied an obscure corner, deliberately left by its owner who had moved out. By early fall, the six- foot corn plant began to tip and wither despite regular care. Soon, it collapsed on the floor. My temptation was to throw it out, pot and all. But I remembered the fig tree in Scripture and my grandfather-farmer, and I couldn't do it. I cut off the useless, brown corn stalk and left the potted roots in place. Just before Christmas, I happened to stop at the plant only to see that.... Yes! A new green shoot had begun to make its way up from a homely stump. Once more, the earth revealed the Scripture to us! God's glory writ large in new life emerging from the apparently lifeless.

One week from today the stump of Jesse, with its new shoot, will blossom, and all creation shall see Him: Jesus, Son of Mary, Son of God, son of David. We have waited and we can't wait much longer. That's how eager we are. So, look around your everyday world and see new green emerging from whatever stump nurtures it. See all around you the promise which will be fulfilled on Christmas.

PRAYER

God of the earth, through its fragile beginnings and its later bounty, the apparently lifeless reveals life, if we but notice.

As winter distracts us, help us to tend to new growth.

May the coming of Emmanuel raise up in us hope for the earth.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Brother and Lord,
who blossoms in our world. Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

To be alert to the coming of Christ in the dormant,
apparently lifeless earth.

*Joan Sobala, SSJ
Rochester, NY*

DECEMBER 19
4th SUNDAY of ADVENT

SCRIPTURE

Micah 5: 1-4

Ps 80: 2-3, 15-16, 18-19

Heb 10: 5-10

Lk 1: 39-45

REFLECTION

“Alice laughed. There’s no use trying,” she said: “One can’t believe impossible things.” “I daresay you haven’t much practice,” said the Queen. “When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.” (Lewis Carroll)

I love today’s Gospel cameo of two pregnant women blessed by a God who has done the impossible. A young girl, impossibly pregnant “through the power of the Holy Spirit,” hastens to visit her ancient cousin who is now in her sixth month. Mary needs support from someone who, like her, has experienced the impossible. And she is not disappointed. The same Holy Spirit who quieted her initial fear speaks once more, this time through Elizabeth: “Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

PRAYER

Dear Holy Spirit, show us where our belief in the God of the impossible must grow. Teach us how to believe in seemingly impossible things such as your longed-for reign of justice, peace, and the healing of creation. Open our lips to proclaim our blessing of belief to those who hunger for it. Open our hearts to receive the blessing given to us through those who love you.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Today, I open my inner self to hear God’s word.
Today, I rest in faith that God’s word in me will be fulfilled.

Christine Schenk, CSJ
Cleveland, OH

MONDAY - DECEMBER 20

SCRIPTURE

Is 7: 10-14

Ps 24: 1-6

Lk 1: 26-38

REFLECTION

Nothing will be impossible for God

Lk 1:37

It is easy to sometimes feel like there are problems that are impossible to solve. We are in one of those times. We face catastrophic climate change and all the destruction that comes with it; COVID-19, which continues to spread as of this writing; racial injustice, which never goes away but sometimes gets lost among the other crises; and what seems to be a hopeless divide based on our politics. The list could go on.

Today we are reminded that no matter how daunting our problems seem that nothing is impossible for God. We are also reminded that God relied upon Mary's response, "Let it be done to me according to your will." We each have a mission to fulfill. That mission may call for great sacrifice from us as Mary's did, and like Mary we may have no understanding of what is going to be asked of us. With Mary "we ponder all these things in our heart."

PRAYER

Good and Gracious God, remind us that all things
are possible with you.

We seek your guidance in responding to the needs of the world.
Help us to know what is ours to do.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Pay attention to the nudges from God inviting us to find our part
in God's plan.

*Pat Murray, CSJ
Charleston, WV*

TUESDAY - DECEMBER 21

SCRIPTURE

Song of Songs 2:8-14
Ps. 33: 2-3, 11-12. 20-21
Lk 1: 39-45

REFLECTION

Get up my dear one and beautiful friend – come to me.

Song of Songs 2:10

Mary was filled with the Holy Spirit and sang out exuberantly. Lk 1:40

Christmas is coming in just four days! Good chance that your house is decorated, presents wrapped, meals planned, lights shining both inside and outside of your home. Christmas is a time of great beauty: beauty in our surroundings and beauty in our homes. The Scriptures for this day, seem to me, to be all about beauty, too – the beauty that stirs our heart, our spirit; not the Christmas decoration kind of beauty but the beauty of relationship, the beauty of God with us, Emmanuel. In the Song of Songs we hear, “Get up my dear one and beautiful friend – come to me.” 2:10 Elizabeth, totally engaged with her cousin Mary, “was filled with the Holy Spirit and sang out exuberantly.” Luke 1: 40. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” so the sage says. We are invited on this day to seek the beauty that fires up our heart.

PRAYER

“Create your own new song to God; give God a trumpet blast.”

Psalm 33:3

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Tonight, reflect on a beautiful relationship in your life as you sit surrounded with the darkness and with one candle lit. Relive this relationship as you anticipate Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.

*Carol Crepeau, CSJ
Burr Ridge, IL*

WEDNESDAY - DECEMBER 22

SCRIPTURE

1 Sam 1: 24-28

1 Sam 2: 1, 4-8

Lk 1:46-56

REFLECTION

Then Hannah prayed: "My heart delights in Yahweh."

1 Sam 2: 3

Mary said: "My soul proclaims your greatness, O God. And my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior."

Lk 1: 46-47

Being present to a sunset, watching as the colors of pinks and oranges of the sky fade to purples, then indigo, of the night sky can invite us to be filled with gratitude and awe at the beauty of the experience. These moments and others like it have inspired poets and artists to express their creativity.

Mary's and Hannah's prayers of waiting, tending, listening, and surrendering to the unknown mystery of God's presence allowed them to be open to the movement of God in their lives. How deeply must the feelings of awe and gratitude have filled their hearts, realizing that the months of joyful anticipation were ended. Their prayers and dreams have been fulfilled; a poetic voice sang words of praise.

PRAYER

God of my longings, desires, and dreams help me to become attentive to their invitations in my life's journey. May I learn to trust the guidance they offer me to open my heart toward a deeper intimacy and presence with you.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

The days of Advent will soon end. Take some time to reflect on these past days, to remember the moments of awe, gratitude, and God's guiding presence. Allow these moments to return.

You may wish to create some art expression or write a song of praise for the many blessings with which you have been blessed.

*Evie Sommers, CSJ
Elmwood Park, IL*

THURSDAY - DECEMBER 23

SCRIPTURE

Mal 3: 1-4, 23-24
Ps 25: 4-5, 8-10, 14
Lk 1: 57-66

REFLECTION

*Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me
Mal 3: 1*

References abound in Hebrew Scripture to angels, messengers from God, heavenly beings who help the faithful to discern and follow the paths of the Lord. As we transition to Christian Scripture, we are introduced to the concept of a very human messenger from God, John the Baptist, whose task is to prepare God's people for the coming of the Lord. Where are those messengers today? We are surrounded by them! All around us are angels, people who lead us to God through their presence in our lives. They are those who inspire and challenge us by their care and compassion towards all of God's Creation. They are those who help us to act with justice, to love tenderly, to serve one another, and to walk humbly with God. They carry on the awesome work of the angels of the Old Testament and of the one called to prepare the way of the Lord.

PRAYER

Good and gracious God, help me to recognize the angels in my life and allow me to act as an angel for others.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will take time each day to recognize those whose lives are reflections of God's love, and I will identify ways that I can reflect God's love through love of all creation.

*Tess Bezouska - CSJ Associate
La Grange, IL*

FRIDAY - DECEMBER 24

SCRIPTURE

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

Psalms 89:2-5, 27, 29

Luke 1:67-79

REFLECTION

I have made a covenant with my chosen one.

Psalms 89:4

The covenant between God and David stood firm, even when David broke the promise of mutual love. God forgave him and kept the promise to be with David wherever he went, to protect him and his progeny forever. And David praised God in prayerful song, “The promises of the Lord I will sing forever . . . for you said, ‘My love is established forever.’”

We believe that God loves each of us in the same way that he loved David, and the ultimate proof of that love is that God became one of us in the Incarnation, and in his living among us. Love begets love and a commitment to mutual love is a covenant—a promise reciprocated—not out of duty but out of love. Two people make a commitment to love each other in sickness and in health. The promise is born of love which summons a love response and in that exchange the covenant is strengthened.

Tomorrow we celebrate love incarnate—Jesus, Son of Mary and Joseph and of God, human and divine, born in poverty, to show us the way to live and to love in unexpected and incomprehensible ways. God keeps the promise to be with us always and forever.

PRAYER

God of love, thank you for your forever love and for Jesus,
who shows us how to love.

May I find the humility and the courage to walk in God’s ways.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will find a way to love at least one person today and thus re-ignite the covenant I made through the faith of my parents in Baptism, and renewed in my profession of religious vows.

*Maria Hill, CSJ
Brookfield, IL*

Saturday - December 25
Christmas Mass at Dawn

SCRIPTURE

Is 62: 11-12

Ps 97: 1, 6, 11-12

Titus 3: 4-7

Lk 2:15-20

REFLECTION

Light dawns for the just Ps 97:11

*Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place,
Which the Lord has made known to us. Lk 2:15b*

Seeing the light of dawn and sunrise. Seeing a newborn baby in smitten parents' embrace. These experiences are among the most evocative of wonder and grace in our lives, and today's Christmas scriptures use both to herald good news for the poor. A dazzling new day of hope has shattered the darkness of fear and suffering; God's generous loving kindness is reborn for us.

The inbreaking of *God-with-us* quickens our loving whenever we accept the Graceful invitation to go and *see*. It's the shepherds who call us to go with them to Bethlehem: the *marginalized* summon us to the place of the *least* (Micah 5:2), at once the *house of bread*, where we, like Jesus, are nourished for the journey of care. Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ writes this about the meaning of Incarnation: "As the embodiment of Sophia...Jesus the Christ's redeeming care intends the flourishing of all creatures and the whole earth itself, so that the power of Christ's Spirit is seen whenever human beings share in this love for the earth." (*She Who Is*, 166) So let's have ourselves a "go and see," and let our hearts be light.

PRAYER

Let me see You more clearly, love You more dearly,
follow You more nearly, day by day.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Gift yourself and others with loving kindness,
with special care for the weak.

Mary Jo Curtsinger, CSJ
Chicago, IL

SUNDAY - DECEMBER 26
Feast of the Holy Family

SCRIPTURE

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

Psalm 128: 1-5

Colossians 3:12-21

Luke 2:41-52

REFLECTION

*Blest are those who love you, happy those who follow you,
blest are those who seek you, O God.*

(song setting of Psalm 128 by Marty Haugen)

The Feast of the Holy Family, on this day after Christmas, draws our attention to the model of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. But in our lives and world, we really must broaden the lens beyond the traditional family to the many families that exist and thrive way beyond the traditional.

In Mt 12: 46-50 Jesus himself poses the question: “Who are my mother? Who are my brothers and sisters?” And he points to the community of those who do the will of God.

On this Sunday, then, let us consider the families/communities to which we belong, especially communities of faith, where hearts are joined in God. As in the Psalm refrain, these families/ communities are drawn together and deeply bonded in loving, following, and seeking God.

Those of us who belong to such families/communities are indeed blest.

PRAYER

We pray, oh God, for our families of origin and families we enjoy. May your grace gift us with peace. And we pray, too, for families torn apart by struggle and differences. May they be reconciled.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I will be conscious and mindful of family/community bonds today, and reach out to someone from whom I have been separated by time or distance.

Sallie Latkovich, CSJ
Chicago, IL

MONDAY - DECEMBER 27

SCRIPTURE

1 Jn 1: 1-4

Ps 97: 1-2, 5-6, 11-12

Jn 20: 1a and 2-8

REFLECTION

*What was from the beginning, what we have heard,
what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon
and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life.*

1 Jn 1:1

How many times do we want to wish away that which is in front of us – mounting obligations, family strife, work tensions, environmental abuse, and more? It is sometimes hard to recognize how God is present in these situations through the grace of Christ. We all want Christmas, the Holy Child in the manger, surrounded by joy and hope. But John's words in both 1 John and the Gospel of John tell us that Jesus IS there – we have heard, seen, and felt him even when we did not recognize him, even when the tomb seemed empty. We have been given the Word of life. And when we do recognize Christ's presence in this ever-expanding Body, we are called to give witness to our faith and to act with God's justice with the same loving care, solidarity, and welcome to the most vulnerable among us, human or not, just as Jesus did.

PRAYER

Gracious God, give me your Spirit that I may accept into my heart what is empty, missing, and broken in our world and all its peoples, and respond with love as you did.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

When I review my day in prayer I will reflect on how Christ was present in the moments that troubled me the most.

*Celeste A. Cotter, CSJ
Westchester, IL*

TUESDAY - DECEMBER 28

SCRIPTURE

1 Jn 1:5-2, 2

Ps. 124:2-5, 7-8

Matt. 2:13-18

REFLECTION

A sound was heard in Ramah, weeping and much Lament

Matt. 2:18

Such a violent story given for us to reflect on just three days after the joy of Christmas! A Savior is born, we sing hymns of praise and gratitude at the stable. And now we are invited to reflect on the murder of innocent children – babies and toddlers just starting their life journeys. Oh, the grief of their parents!

We could ponder the injustice, violence, hatred, and jealousy around this event, but as we all know there is no easy answer – just the hard question of why? Today, we still have no answers as to “why bad things happen to good people.” But we do believe that a loving God is right there alongside us in our pain. There are many causes of senseless suffering today – innocent children being detained at our borders; our total disrespect for our common home, the innocent earth, that causes many people to be displaced or plunged into ever deepening poverty; innocent refugees from so many countries devastated by climate change and war.

Yes, there is the sound of weeping and lament in today’s world as in Ramah. How many innocent lives are taken every day in this country and around the world through war, gun violence, racism, climate change, hatred of anyone or anything that is different from us, the global COVID pandemic (even when there are ways to curtail it)?

Watch the news, read social media, listen to TV or radio and we have to admit that we are making a mess of things. Where is God in this mess that we have created? My hope and belief are that somehow God will show us how to grow as human beings into more compassion, more love, more honesty, more gratitude for all God gives us each day. God works in strange ways and always leaves us free to do what’s right and good or wrong and bad. It is up to each of us to search our hearts to see if we are contributing to a better world or are continuing to hurt the innocents in our lives.

PRAYER

Creating God, keep us close to you, show us the path we must follow to share your love with earth and all living creatures within it.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Take a few moments today to see what you can do in your corner of the world to make it safer and healthier for the innocents among us and our common home.

*Mary Ann Wyllie, CSJ
St. Clair Shores, MI*

WEDNESDAY - DECEMBER 29

SCRIPTURE

1 Jn 2: 3-11

Ps 96: 1-3, 5, 6

Lk 2: 22-35

REFLECTION

“for my eyes have seen your salvation... a light for revelation to the Gentiles”

Lk 2: 30-31

When Simeon met Jesus at his Presentation in the Temple, what salvation, what revelation did he see? Might he have seen us, these thousands of years later, living as Jesus might in a time of planet-wide peril? Did he see us living so completely in Jesus that the cry of the Earth and the cries of all who are suffering rang throughout our souls? Sometimes our imaginations fail us and we lose sight of how salvation might look in a time of crises – it looks like people doing what they never thought they could. Participants in the Youth4Climate Summit reminded us that in order to slow the effects of climate change and protect vulnerable people, animals, plants, water, air we need to change in ways the world has never seen. Did Simeon see this, our changing so as to realize that all of creation is our very Self and worth any sacrifice to save?

PRAYER

Jesus, you are alive in every small particle of creation.
Guide me to live in and care for every being as you do.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

In my morning prayer, I will commit myself to make one change in my lifestyle that I never thought I could.

*Toni Nash, CSJLA
Sausalito, CA*

THURSDAY - DECEMBER 30

SCRIPTURE

1 Jn 2:12-17

Ps. 96: 7-10

Lk 2:36-41

REFLECTION

*The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;
and the favor of God was upon him.*

Lk 2: 40

With great tenderness, love, and guidance this child, Jesus, accepted the loving and kind advice of his Mom and Dad, Mary and Joseph, who guided Him as He grew and developed into a child and then a man. He lived and loved knowing that the favor of God was upon, within, and around him. His smile, contagious laughter, and hard work ethic were a mirror of Joseph, who shared his love, his job, his values, and his spirituality with his Son. He accepted the warmth, tenderness, and gentleness of the Holy Spirit from his Mom, Mary. Mary taught him to accept and love those around Him, judging no one and accepting all. She opened Him to be filled with grace and wisdom. Together his Mom and Dad laid the foundation for His spirituality, kindness, and unconditional love. He became the first to serve the Dear Neighbor. He reached out to all Jews, Gentiles, all races, colors, creeds. He grew and became strong and was filled with Wisdom.

PRAYER

Dear Joseph and Mary, guide us as you guided your Son. Challenge us as we seek new ways to serve the Dear Neighbor in our lives.

Lord Jesus, share your grace and wisdom.

Help us to be strong and experience the favor of The Creator throughout our Common Home.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

How have I served the Dear Neighbor today? How have I served the poor today? What have I done to heal our Common Home?

*Robert Labadie Funaro
Grand Rapids, MI*

FRIDAY - DECEMBER 31

SCRIPTURE

1 Jn 2: 18-21

Ps 96: 1-2, 11-13

Jn 1: 1-18

REFLECTION

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice!

Psalm 96:11a

On this day, many of us take time to reflect on the gifts of the past year and focus our intentions for the year to come. Our psalm invites us to join with the heavens and earth to rejoice and praise God's name. Living in Michigan, I get the benefit of enjoying four seasons. The winter snow and frost can glimmer with Earth's beauty and also encourage us to slow down our lives a bit. The vibrancy of spring with new buds on trees, the blossoming of flowers, and the song of birds remind us of how life can be renewed. Summer calls us outdoors to enjoy the beauty of lakes and hills and walks in the woods. Our gardens produce an abundance of vegetables and flowers. The majestic reds, oranges and yellows of autumn leaves speak of God's glory. The cooling of nights calls earth into another transition and reminds us, too, of all the transitions of life. As we enter into this New Year, let us be aware of the beauty and gifts of Earth and join in rejoicing.

PRAYER

Loving God, as I prepare for the New Year, I ask you to touch my heart so I am aware of the gifts of Earth, praise these gifts and do all I can to protect and care for Earth. Amen.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Begin each day focusing on one thing you can do for Earth.
End each day thanking God for one gift Earth provided that day.

*Marie Hogan, CSJ
Warren, MI*

SATURDAY - JANUARY 1

SCRIPTURE

Nm 6: 22-27

Ps 67: 2-3, 5-6, 8

Gal 4: 4-7

Lk 2: 16-21

REFLECTION

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;
The Lord make his face to shine upon you
And be gracious to you; The Lord lift his countenance upon you
and give you peace.”
Nm 6: 22-27*

What better blessing can we ask as we begin the New Year 2022? In the Old Testament we read today of a blessing God gives his people: “The Lord bless you and keep you; The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; The Lord lift his countenance upon you and give you peace”. This reminds us that God’s presence and blessings will be and are with us, for we, too, are God’s people. Even more than that, his face will shine upon us and give us peace. Many in our world are suffering and in great despair. There is a great need for God’s blessings and presence. We know of refugee camps in many parts of the world, of victims of natural disasters, of asylum seekers living in less than humane circumstances. Let’s support wholeheartedly all the efforts around the world to alleviate some of the pain and suffering of the body of Christ, so that everyone can praise God for his abundant blessings. There is no time to waste. Our time is NOW!

PRAYER

Loving God help me this New Year, to return in love and service the blessings I have received from you.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Each evening before going to bed I will take a few minutes to give thanks for the blessings I have received and ask God to bless those in greatest need of God’s gifts.

*Ily Fernandez, CSJ
Wheeling, WV*

SUNDAY - JANUARY 2

EPIPHANY

SCRIPTURE

Is 60: 1-6

Ps 72: 1-2, 7-8, 10-13

Eph 3: 2-3, 5-6

Mt 2: 1-12

REFLECTION

God's secret plan was revealed to me. . . in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are now co-heirs with the Jews, members of the same body and sharers of the promise through the preaching of the gospel.

Ephesians 3: 3, 6

Every nation on earth will adore you.

Psalms 72: 11

According to the dictionary included with the New American Bible, the Israelites distinguished themselves from all foreign peoples, describing foreigners with the Hebrew word “goiim.” This word, which has a nuance of scorn, is often translated today as “nations” or “Gentiles.” As God’s chosen people, the Israelites considered themselves somewhat superior to other nations (because of being “chosen”), so for the first Jews who followed Jesus, it would have come as a great surprise that the “goiim” were “co-heirs...and sharers of the promise.” It was *good news* for all the peoples of the world, but perhaps not so much for the Jews.

OUR God...OUR Savior...OUR promise – that was a lot to share with “every nation on earth.” Surely the Jews struggled with God’s all-inclusive love, even as we do today. As we celebrate the Epiphany, let us pray that we – and our Church – will make room for ALL people at our Table.

PRAYER

In Christ Jesus, we are all co-heirs of the promise.

Such gift! Such mystery!

Help us to believe the promise.

Help us to live the promise.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Who is not welcome at my table?

*Jeanne Cmolik, CSJ
Cleveland, OH*



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