



2024 Advent Reflection Series

Advent is a liturgical season the Christian Churches offer us to spiritually prepare for the celebration of Christmas, the reality of Jesus becoming human so that we can become divine. Advent invites us to open our whole selves to welcome Jesus, God-made-flesh, Emmanuel.

December 15 Third Sunday of Advent - Zephaniah 3:14-18; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18

Zephaniah encourages Jerusalem and Israel (and us!) to exult and be glad, truly the theme of this Gaudete “rejoice” Sunday. Advent is a time for joy not only because we anticipate the anniversary of the birth of Jesus, but also because we know Jesus is already in our midst. Our joy does not come from the absence of sadness, pain, or trouble, but from an awareness that no matter what we are going through our Lord is with us at all times.

St. Paul, writing from prison, tells us the same thing: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again, rejoice.” Paul felt the need to bolster the courage of the Philippians, and to bolster our hope and our courage. Paul reminds the Philippians and us that Jesus is the true source of our joy. We are called to share that joy with others by means of kindness, compassion, serenity, prayers and many other good works.

St. Luke focuses on John the Baptist. Some people thought John was actually the Messiah, but John says no, the Messiah was so much greater than he. John encouraged the people to share what they have, not to be thieves or extortioners, to not falsely accuse anyone, etc. We prove our faith in much the same way: through works of charity, honesty and social justice. The last sentence of today’s Gospel is, “Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.” John challenges our superficial attempts at change, demanding that we take a deeper look at ourselves. John calls us to abandon our selfishness and instead be filled with the expectation of Jesus’ coming. May we all spend these last Advent days in a spirit of anticipation, joy, love, and hope.

Sister Linda Fischer ASC

Monday, December 16 - Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a; Matthew 21:23-27

From the book of Numbers, we learn about the prophesies of Balaam. Although he was not a believer himself (not one of God’s people), Balaam spoke the words of God who told him to bless the people of Israel. Balaam then foretold that “A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise from Israel” in a prophesy about the coming birth of Jesus! What a great reminder about the promise of Jesus, as our Lord and Savior, who God sent to offer salvation to all those who believe in Him.

Matthew describes how the religious leaders challenged Jesus to tell them by what authority He was teaching and performing miracles. Jesus wisely deflected the question by asking these leaders who gave John the Baptist the authority to baptize people --- was it from God or from man? When they avoided answering the question by replying that “they didn’t know” where John’s authority came from, Jesus refuses to answer their question. Do we ever question the authority of God, even subconsciously? Do we sometimes think to ourselves, “I’ve got this” and I can handle my problems, instead of turning them over to the Lord? May we always believe in the absolute authority of God and trust in Him in all things!

David Lehman, Director of the Agribusiness Program, Southwest Kansas

Tuesday, December 17 - Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17

I find the Genesis passage more prominent in my life currently as my family has grown as of September with the birth of the next generation, which makes me ever conscious of the importance of lineage and leaving blessings to generations to come. How wonderful that Jacob blesses each one of his sons before he dies with the prophecies to share with each generation. Ultimately, Judah's descendants will include Jesus Christ and the saving of humanity with his birth and life on earth as a human. With the world in its current state, this reading grounded me with peace. It fills my soul with the celebration of the significance of humanity that we have been given from our savior! Enjoy every moment we are given on this earth and celebrate the human spirit!

Deanne Zogleman, Director of the Music Department

Wednesday, December 18 Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-25

A hopeful expectation. That is what I am reminded of when I reflect upon these readings. We are eagerly awaiting and counting the days until Christmas. The hope that Jeremiah spoke of, “the days are coming” when our Lord will come to save us from our sins, is almost here. And Matthew tells us that the day has come. The appointed time when our Lord would appear before his people is here. But that was 2024 years ago. What now? We say with Jeremiah, “the days are coming,” when Christ will come again at the second coming. Let us pray and wait with hopeful expectation.

Caleb Garner, Seminarian

Thursday, December 19 Judges 13:2-7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25

My aunt stitched a sampler for me with something called The Adoption Prayer.

Not flesh of my flesh,
Not bone of my bones,
But still, miraculously, my own.
Never forget for a single minute
You didn’t grow under my heart,
But in it.

I adopted two children as a single parent. Both of my children are grown now, with children of their own. At this time of year, I'm always cognizant of the miracle of adoption that creates not only earthly families, but divine ones. God loves us so much that he opens his heart and allows us to dwell there. I will never get over being amazed by the love of a God who does that! Think about it. God not only gives us life, but God also incorporates us into his own life. We dwell in his heart. That is the incredible gift of Christmas. Let's celebrate it!

Terrie Lewis, SHA 65, '71

Friday, December 20 Isaiah 7:10-14; Luke 1:26-38

Today's annunciation gospel is one of my favorites. I close my eyes and put myself in the scene, watching, as Mary is approached by the angel Gabriel.

"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." I notice Mary's body language. She remains calm but also appears a bit perplexed with such odd words. I see the tiniest look of fear or at the least, confusion, on her face. Gabriel sees it, too, and reassures her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God..." The look on her face says, "He knows my name. He must be a messenger from God, whom I love and serve. I can trust him."

Then he breaks the news to her. "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus...and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever and his Kingdom will have no end." What? The look on Mary's face is total bewilderment. Her expression seems to say, "How is this going to happen? I'm to bear a son and he'll rule over a Kingdom forever? Wait. Really?"

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." Not only that but... "Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age..." Mary tilts her head. Then... her Magnificat. Her fear or anxiety is gone. It's like she figured out a hard math problem she's struggled with or finally mastered a piece of music. She's connected the dots. She understands what the angel has told her, and she totally accepts the reality of what's just happened and the news she's received.

Poof, the angel is gone! I see Mary being totally still and quiet. She ponders what's just happened. She doesn't want to leave the scene, nor do I. May I linger with you, Mary? May we ponder together this incredible news?

Linda and Vince '74 Antonelli

Saturday, December 21 Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Luke 1:39-45

Zephaniah writes, "God will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with his love, God will rejoice over you with singing." These words speak to me deeply, reminding me that God's love is constant. God has always been with me in my toughest moments. I begin to realize how much God had done for me — how God has been my strength and comfort. Reflecting on both passages, I recognize the importance of God's presence, not only in moments of ease, but especially in times of difficulty. God's love and peace are always with us, often in ways we don't expect, but always at the right time. **Daniela Correa, Executive Assistant for Vice President of Advancement, Assistant Director of Hispanic Serving Initiatives**