

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

Birth of Jesus Christ.

Called to come to Jesus Christ.

Come Emmanuel.

-rvb.

Holy Night

Humble and silent are the skies,

except for the fiery star.

Angels glow with celestial dust,

darting among the wooly creatures.

Stubborn ears and swishing tails

cradle the birth of a child.

Shepherds, with heads bowed,

lean on their staff as they sink to their knees.

Magi are haloed in a whispering light

as the sun dances on their regal robes.

Joseph prayerfully wonders and ponders

the mystery of this miraculous moment.

Give us the heart of a willing and eager virgin Mary

As she receives her first born as a gift from God's hands.

Tender and bleeding flesh is overwhelmed

by the still and holy darkness.

May the Holy Spirit be with us and bless us,

as we labor to give birth to Jesus.

For nothing is impossible with God.

-rvb.

“It is in Jesus that we live, move, and have our being.” -Acts 17:28.

“I know love – I had a dog.” Beth Brown.

And I know love – I have one. ----- Roger J. Vanden Busch

December 21, and the day of my birth; and running out of decades!

The winter solstice is the day with the fewest hours of sunlight throughout the year, making it the shortest day of the year. Thankfully, after we reach the winter solstice, the days begin to grow longer and longer again until we reach the [summer solstice](#)—the first day of summer and the longest day of the year.

Think of it this way: Although the winter solstice means the start of winter, it also means [the return of more sunlight](#). It only gets brighter from here!

Winter Solstice Dates

Year	Winter Solstice (Northern Hemisphere)	Winter Solstice (Southern Hemisphere)
2025	Sunday, December 21, at 10:03 A.M. EST	Friday, June 20

2026	Monday, December 21, at 3:50 P.M. EST	Sunday, June 21
2027	Tuesday, December 21, at 9:42 P.M. EST	Monday, June 21
2028	Thursday, December 21, at 3:19 A.M. EST	Tuesday, June 20

Due to time zone differences, the solstice may technically occur +/- one day in some regions. -Internet.

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Reading 1

[Isaiah 7:10-14](#)

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying:

Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God;

let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky!

But Ahaz answered,

"I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!"

Then Isaiah said:

Listen, O house of David!

Is it not enough for you to weary people,

must you also weary my God?

Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign:

the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,

and shall name him Emmanuel.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.,

The readings today speak of people, events, and moments that are unbelievable. In this reading from Isaiah, the first of three Emmanuel prophecies – chapters 7, 9, and 11, he strives to win the ear and convince the heart of King Ahaz. His message is simple and direct, yet larger than life – trust in Yahweh, not in the neo-Assyrians. Ahaz is stubborn, hard-hearted, and proud. He is unable to fully commit himself to trust in and commit himself to the Lord. Nevertheless, God will give him a sign. A virgin, or more accurately, a young woman will bear a child, Hezekiah, who will be the hope of the dynasty. The prophecy of Emmanuel travels beyond the person of Hezekiah as evidenced by the text of Matthew 1:23 which quotes Isaiah 7:14. Implicit in Isaiah 7:14 is a hidden prophecy of the birth of Christ. This text is also paralleled in Isaiah 9:1-6 and 11:1-9.

This important prophetic chapter deserves more space than we can devote to it in this reflection. Verses 10-16 takes us beyond Ahaz to Christ. It is evident Jesus came as the long-awaited Emmanuel from the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke. However, in its immediate application, the sign is twofold: there is a prediction of the Assyrian desolation and the deliverance of the House of David, for if we are on God's side, he will be with and for his people. In the Old Testament, God

is portrayed as a covenant God. Now, in Christ, he is with us, and by his Spirit, he is within us as the Word made flesh and the Divine Indwelling. Jesus came as God in human guise. As man, Jesus understands our human needs, and as God, he can meet every one of them if we are with Him.

Caryll Houselander captures our spiritual virginity: “We need to be reminded that every second of our survival does really mean that we are new from God’s fingers, so that it requires no more than the miracle which we never notice to restore to us our virgin-heart at any moment we like to choose.”

Responsorial Psalm

[Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6.](#)

R. (7c and 10b) **Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.**

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.

For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.

R. Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?
or who may stand in his holy place?

One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,
who desires not what is vain.

R. Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
a reward from God his savior.

Such is the race that seeks for him,

that seeks the face of the God of Jacob.

R. Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

Reading 2

Romans 1:1-7

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus,
called to be an **apostle and set apart for the gospel of God,**
which he promised previously through his prophets in the holy Scriptures,
the gospel about his Son, **descended from David according to the flesh,**
but established as Son of God in power
according to the Spirit of holiness
through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.
Through him we have received the **grace of apostleship,**
to bring about the **obedience of faith,**
for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles,
among whom are you also, **who are called to belong to Jesus Christ;**
to all the beloved of God in Rome, called to be holy.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In this reading from Romans, it is one of Paul's more challenging and theologically developed epistles. The opening salutation is different from those of the other letters of Paul. This community church was not of his founding and had not been visited by him. Thus, Paul introduces himself as an emissary appointed to proclaim the good news of what God has done for humankind. Thus, a full explanation of what this means is unfolded in the subsequent 8 chapters. He illustrates three theological issues: 1. The

content of the Gospel is Jesus Christ; 2. The vocation of Jesus is unique and novel; and 3. The Gospel, now made known in Jesus, has taken on a universal scope of “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” for those who have ears to hear, hearts to believe, and souls to expand within us the Word made flesh.

Anthony de Mello shares a story which expresses Paul’s theological reflection. A disciple asked the master, “Is there anything I can do make myself enlightened?” The master answered, “As little as you can do to make the sun rise in the morning.” To which the disciple replied, “Then of what use are the spiritual exercises you prescribe?” The master said, “To make sure you are not asleep when the sun begins to rise!”

Alleluia

[Matthew 1:23](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

[Matthew 1:18-24](#)

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.
When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph,
but before they lived together,
she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.

Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man,
yet unwilling to expose her to shame,
decided to divorce her quietly.
Such was his intention when, behold,
the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,
"Joseph, son of David,
do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.
For it is through the Holy Spirit
that this child has been conceived in her.
She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins."
All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:
***Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,
which means "God is with us."***
When Joseph awoke,
he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him
and took his wife into his home.

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

In the Gospel of Matthew, the familiar quote from Isaiah, the first
reading for today, is used:

***Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,
which means "God is with us."***

Spiritual virginity is a time of waiting, expectation, openness to the
possibility of the moment of grace indwelling within our souls. Such was
the disposition of Joseph as the angel says to him, "Joseph, son of David,

have no fear about taking Mary as your wife.” Joseph and Mary hear God’s word and respond in an unconditional fashion. Spiritual virginity is about obedience to the Word of God made flesh. It is a time of waiting and expectation, yet a time that almost has come.

The scholarly theologian, Paul Tillich wrote – “Although waiting is not having, it is also having. The fact that we wait for something shows that in some way we already possess it. Waiting anticipates that which is not yet real. If we wait in hope and patience, the power of that for which we wait is already effective within us. He who waits in an ultimate sense is near to that for which he waits. He who waits in absolute seriousness is already grasped by that for which he waits. He who waits with patience has already received the power of that for which he waits.”

As we wait let us be “Present” to the “Presence” of the Lord as we are caught up in the whirlwind of giving and receiving “Presents.”

1. We want you home with family alive – do not drink and drive.
2. Become involved with discretion – lest you fall into a depression.
3. Remember the spirit of the season as you are so inclined - do not forget the message and the reason.
4. When you are frantically running about – do not forget to take time out.
5. Drink in moderation – avoid intoxication.

6. When buying something with plastic – remember money is not elastic.
 7. There is a tendency to overeat and indulge – what remains is only the bulge.
 8. Giving gifts can be lots of fun – wouldn't it be nice if we each only received one.
 9. Avoid excessive decorating, entertaining, and wrapping – rather it is a time for frequent napping.
 10. Remember those near and far away on this day – dwelling positively on those loved ones who have passed away.
 11. 'Tis the season to be jolly – do not forget to decorate your heart with healthy holly.
 12. The traditions are rich, meaningful, and dear – make sure you embrace this season with good cheer.
 13. This is the season to worry and fret – spend some time with your pet.
 14. Jesus came to try on our skin – it was nothing but a win. -rvb.
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Final prayer: God, your son, Jesus, is born of a virgin called Mary. She and Joseph listen to your Word and respond unconditionally. As we wait in anticipation and expectation, may your Spirit guide us in our spiritual virginity and be obedient to your Word made flesh. Amen.