



*the gift*

*Let God and the world know you are grateful that the gift has been given.*

*Mary Oliver*

ad  
vent

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2021

guide for  
small groups

**PRESENTED BY**  
the Women's Faith Sharing Group  
of St. Paul the Apostle  
Catholic Community  
Los Angeles  
2021

*We dedicate this labor of love to*

**Elaine Malouf**  
*and*  
**Therese Van Hoof**

*Save a seat for us!*

*Women's Faith Sharing*

read the notice in the church bulletin.

I'd seen it for years.

Sunday after Sunday, I'd pause and consider.

*Too early!*

*Outside my comfort zone!*

I went.

It took three years of considering,

but I went.

The facilitator reminded me of my favorite aunt

and they were having conversations that were

just not taking place in my day-to-day of

kids-family-school-sports.

That was seven years ago and

Tuesdays at 8:00 am have come to be

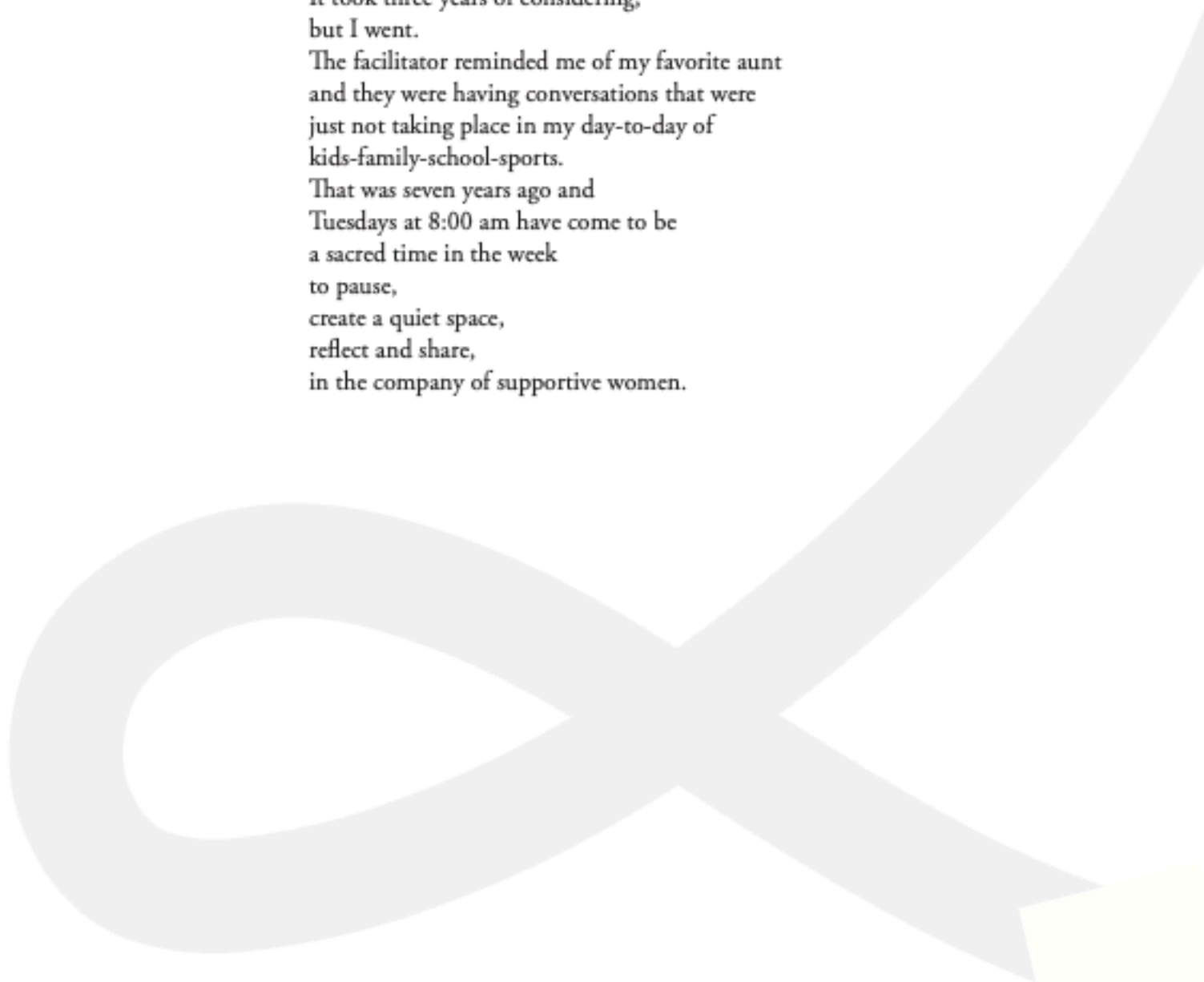
a sacred time in the week

to pause,

create a quiet space,

reflect and share,

in the company of supportive women.





# the gift

As the Christmas season approaches, our minds turn toward gift-giving. Lists are made, Santa gets consulted, and UPS trucks are suddenly everywhere.

But the word “gift” also has a deeper, spiritual meaning. Besides the gifts that are wrapped and under the tree; a gift is also a talent. We say that someone with a talent for something has a real “gift,” be it for sports, music, business, etc. The Holy Spirit has gifted us with spiritual talents. Each of us has received some sign of the Spirit for some benefit (1 Cor 12:7). Our catechisms, both old and new, summarize these gifts in a list of seven: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.

This Advent comes on the heels of a year of mixed blessings. It has had its cold and bitter moments and more than enough heartaches and headaches. But for all of us, it has also had its joys and its newness, its extraordinary blessings and providence. As Christians, we have been given the tools, the talent, for standing in hope and believing in the promise we are about to celebrate.

May the gift of this little booklet that we have written in love and faith, help you awaken to the wonder of God-with-us.

# maranatha

Lord Jesus, Come

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*the Women's Faith Sharing Group*  
*of St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Community*  
Los Angeles  
2021

## BEFORE EACH MEETING

### Review Guidelines

1. Arrive on time.
2. Honor the confidentiality of the group. Zoom meetings will not be recorded.
3. Everyone's input is valuable. At the same time, no one is required to speak.
4. Wait until everyone has had the opportunity to share before you speak a second time.
5. Be an active listener and resist the urge to give advice.
7. Silence your cell phone and put it away. If you need to make a call or text, please take it outside.

## OPENING PRAYER

For this hour, LORD, let me set aside my cares and concerns, my to-do lists and schedules. Let me listen with an open heart and mind to the readings. Let me hear the insights and stories the other members of my group choose to share. Help me to speak from my heart, as I share my own thoughts and experiences. Thank you for the gift of this quiet space to experience Advent, to ready myself for Christmas. **AMEN**

## AT THE END OF EACH MEETING

Leader: Let us pray to the God who supports and nourishes us along the path of life.

Let us thank God for the signs of care and loving providence that we find so reassuring along the way.

**Response: God of hope, accompany us along the way.**

In the fear and apprehension, in the hesitation and insecurity that we experience as we follow you....

**Response: God of hope, accompany us along the way.**

In the sense of mystery, in the wonder that dawns in us as we seek to follow you...

**Response: God of hope, accompany us along the way.**

In the expectation and pain and restlessness that we experience as we follow you...

**Response: God of hope, accompany us along the way.**

When we grow tired and weary, when the burden makes us falter and want to stop...

**Response: God of hope, accompany us along the way.**

When we grow in insight, as your wisdom prompts us when to let go and when to take up...

**Response: God of hope, accompany us along the way.**

When we glimpse your presence and thrill to the sense of your nearness...

**Response: God of hope, accompany us along the way**

Prayers for Parish Groups, Harrington & Kavanagh

## CONCLUDING PRAYER

Thank you for this hour of sharing, LORD. I know at times I let my mind wander, let the outside world invade the stillness. But I tried, and that effort was itself a gift. Help me to take a little piece of this time of sharing away with me, like a smooth stone in my pocket that I can touch any time to remind myself of the quiet space within me where you can be found. Thank you for the gift of this time where I can experience the seasons of Advent and Christmas more fully. AMEN

We find it more meaningful when faith-sharing takes place the week before the readings are proclaimed at mass, but groups are also welcome to meet the week following.

### *Believe in the Promise*

First Sunday of Advent, November 28  
**Week One Meetings (November 22-27)**

### *Look and See*

Second Sunday of Advent, December 5  
**Week Two Meetings (November 29-December 4)**

### *Embrace the Wonder*

Third Sunday of Advent, December 12  
**Week Three Meetings (December 6 – 11)**

### *Expect New Life*

Fourth Sunday of Advent, December 19  
**Week Four Meetings (December 13-18)**

## ADVENT WEEK ONE

# Believe in the Promise

"The day is coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise"

Jer 33:14

"No one ever became drunk on the word, wine.

Emotional realization is what makes a difference in spiritual transformation."

Anthony De Mello

The readings we have for this first Sunday of Advent are full of both promise and warning. In the first reading, Jeremiah assures the Israelites that the days are coming when God's promise of security and justice will be revealed. Jeremiah prophesied during the Babylonian siege, when all seemed lost. We have experienced our own sieges of late and like the Israelites we may have a hard time believing God's promise is ever going to come to pass.

But Paul's letter to the Thessalonians encourages us to strengthen our hearts and conduct ourselves in ways that keep us close to God. Luke's Gospel confirms that, yes, there are going to be crazy times, but it is our job to be vigilant and not to lose faith in the promise.

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*Earlier this year we lost a long-time member of our women's faith sharing community. For years, Therese shared her faith story with us on Tuesday mornings as we pondered the scriptures for the upcoming Sunday. Spending that much time in spiritual conversation together, you come to know a person's soul. During the setbacks that we have all recently experienced, Therese remained a seeker - always trying to better understand God, through prayer groups, podcasts and conversations. She was vigilant, and through her vigilance, to paraphrase St Paul this week, she increased and abounded in love - and in the end - isn't that what the promise is all about?*

*Therese's terminal cancer appeared just as the pandemic began to sweep through all of our lives. During it all, she never stopped believing in the promise. Her pastor knew her well, and at her funeral liturgy said something about her that those who attended will never forget. When Therese walked into mass and sat down, he said, "Eucharist had already begun in her." She wasn't merely sitting there, waiting for mass to happen to her, or for her. Jesus, the Christ, was already alive and living in her.*

*That is what these readings are calling all of us to. Not to be bystanders, immobilized by the siege, standing by drowsily as we dream of a far distant promise, but active participants in the fulfillment of that promise.*





### Reading I, Jer 33:14-16

The days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land. In those days Judah shall be safe and Jerusalem shall dwell secure; this is what they shall call her: "The LORD our justice."

### Responsorial Psalm, Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14

**R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.**

Your ways, O LORD, make known to me; teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior, and for you I wait all the day.

**R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.**

Good and upright is the LORD; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, and teaches the humble his way.

**R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.**

All the paths of the LORD are kindness and constancy toward those who keep his covenant and his decrees. The friendship of the LORD is with those who fear him, and his covenant, for their instruction.

**R. To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.**

### Reading II, 1 Thes 3:12-4:2

Brothers and sisters: May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, just as we have for you, so as to strengthen your hearts, to be blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. Amen. Finally, brothers and sisters, we earnestly ask and exhort you in the Lord Jesus that, as you received from us how you should conduct yourselves to please God and as you are conducting yourselves, you do so even more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus.

there will be signs  
in the sun, moon  
and stars



## Alleluia

**Ps 85:8**

**R.** Alleluia, alleluia.

Show us, Lord, your love; and grant us your salvation.

**R.** Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel, Lk 21:25-28, 34-36

Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on earth nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand. "Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man."

### REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1. This week's readings are full of both promise and warning. Why do you think the church chose them for the first Sunday of Advent?
2. Luke's Gospel has a phrase that can remind us of the pandemic. "For the day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth." Luke then tells us to be "vigilant at all times." How has your spirituality been affected by the pandemic?
3. Are there ways you have become drowsy or complacent?
4. In the second reading, Paul talks about strengthening our hearts. What does that mean to you?
5. What do you hope to get out of Advent this year?



## ADVENT WEEK TWO

# Look and See

“Look to the east and see your children gathered  
from the east and west at the word of the Holy One”

Bar 5:5

“The real spiritual journey is work. You can make a naïve assertion  
that you trust in Jesus, but until it is tested a good, oh, 200 times,  
I doubt very much that it’s true.”

Fr. Richard Rohr

On this second Sunday of Advent, the readings convey both a sense of joy and a sense of urgency. In the first reading, Baruch urges us to stand upon the heights, where we can look and see people gathering from east and west to rejoice in the Lord. When we are too close to things, too bound up in our own concerns, we lose perspective. Standing upon the heights makes us look at the world in a new way.

Baruch also reminds us that God has commanded every lofty mountain to be made low, every depth to be filled. His words echo those of Isaiah, which Luke’s gospel quotes in telling us about John the Baptist. It’s John’s job to prepare the way of the Lord. It’s our job, too, especially during this season of Advent. Just as we take the time to choose gifts and plan Christmas dinner, we need to take the time to think about God’s place in our lives and hearts. As Paul writes in the second reading, our love for one another should increase “in knowledge and every kind of perception.”

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*Our faith-sharing group, like so many groups and families, has been meeting on Zoom since the pandemic struck. Instead of gathering in a room, lighting a candle, and praying the scriptures together, we’ve been clicking a link. In September, we finally had an opportunity to hold a “hybrid” meeting, half on Zoom and half in person, outdoors. It was such a joy to see each other face-to-face, to hear voices unfiltered, to share a cup of coffee.*

*But we didn’t do a very good job of listening to the other half of the group. People online tried to get our attention, but we didn’t hear them. Only near the end of the meeting did we remember to ask them to share their insights. We had lost our perspective, lost sight of how others were experiencing our get-together.*

*That’s the challenge of standing upon the heights. We can glory in God’s splendor, as long as we don’t lose sight of our brothers and sisters, whether far away or close at hand.*

### REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1. Is there an aspect of your own life that could benefit from taking the long view?

2. Do you believe that God is working in/through you? If yes, how have you experienced it? If no, why do you think that is so?

### Reading I, Bar 5:1-9

Jerusalem, take off your robe of mourning and misery; put on the splendor of glory from God forever: wrapped in the cloak of justice from God, bear on your head the mitre that displays the glory of the eternal name. For God will show all the earth your splendor: you will be named by God forever the peace of justice, the glory of God's worship. Up, Jerusalem! stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children gathered from the east and the west at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God. Led away on foot by their enemies they left you: but God will bring them back to you borne aloft in glory as on royal thrones. For God has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low, and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground, that Israel may advance secure in the glory of God. The forests and every fragrant kind of tree have overshadowed Israel at God's command; for God is leading Israel in joy by the light of his glory, with his mercy and justice for company.

Responsorial Psalm, Ps 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6.

**R. The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are filled with joy.**

When the LORD brought back the captives of Zion,  
we were like men dreaming. Then our mouth was filled  
with laughter, and our tongue with rejoicing.

**R. The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are filled with joy.**

Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has  
done great things for them." The LORD has done great  
things for us; we are glad indeed.

**R. The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are filled with joy.**

Restore our fortunes, O LORD, like the torrents in the  
southern desert. Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.

**R. The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are filled with joy.**

Although they go forth weeping, carrying the seed to be  
sown, they shall come back rejoicing, carrying their sheaves.

**R. The Lord has done great things for us;  
we are filled with joy.**

### Reading II, Phil 1:4-6, 8-11

Brothers and sisters: I pray always with joy in my every  
prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for  
the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident  
of this, that the one who began a good work in you will  
continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. God  
is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection  
of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may  
increase ever more and more in knowledge and every  
kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that  
you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,  
filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through  
Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

### *Alleluia*

Lk 3:4, 6

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:  
all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel, Lk 3:1-6

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar,  
when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod  
was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch  
of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias  
was tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of  
Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John  
the son of Zechariah in the desert. John went through-  
out the whole region of the Jordan, proclaiming a  
baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is  
written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah:  
A voice of one crying out in the desert: "Prepare the  
way of the Lord, make straight his paths. Every valley  
shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made  
low. The winding roads shall be made straight, and the  
rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the  
salvation of God."

3. In what ways do you  
feel bound up in your  
own concerns?

4. Give an example of a time that  
you overlooked someone. What  
could you have done differently?

5. How spiritually prepared do you  
feel for Christmas? What would  
make Christmas most meaningful  
for you this year?

## ADVENT WEEK THREE

# *Embrace the Wonder*

"Be glad and exult with all your heart"

Zep 3:14

with me before me behind me in me beneath me above  
me on my right on my left when I lie down when I sit  
down when I arise in the heart of every person who  
thinks of me in the mouth of everyone who speaks of  
me in every eye that sees me in every ear that hears me

St. Patrick's Breastplate

On Gaudete Sunday, the church invites us to exult in joyous wonder – to anticipate the joy of the coming of Christ. We hear proclaimed, "The Lord God is in your midst," and "The Lord is near." The scriptures remind us that we are to "get ready."

But like the crowds in Luke's gospel, we may be asking ourselves, what should we do to prepare? What about the sorrows and losses of the past year? What about the bereavement and hurt we feel? What about the gaps in all of our own lives that make it hard for us to find the Lord God in our midst?

Perhaps we begin by simply rejoicing in the beauty of the new day's morning sunrise. We can stop, breathe in, and acknowledge when moments of joy arise in our hearts. We might even schedule a time each day to reflect on the coming of Christ into our world. In late evening, we can pause for a look at the night sky. These small touch points can remind us that no matter the difficulties we might be facing, the Lord is near.

One of the women we dedicated this booklet to was Elaine. Despite her considerable health struggles, every Sunday was Gaudete Sunday for Elaine. She always stopped us if we began to pass over reading the "Alleluia," before the Gospel. Now that she is no longer with us, her spirit rings out in the Alleluia we faithfully read each week.

As we experience God's nearness, our songs of sadness remain with us, but they are sung with faith and hope. We will continue to mourn those who have left us during this unprecedented time. We will take comfort in our reflections on the richness of lives well spent. We will lift up in love all the young people who had embraced a future that will forever go unfulfilled. We will find ourselves in solidarity with the living - in the daily lives of our seniors, our immigrants, our sick, our poor.

This week, as we come closer to the day we celebrate the arrival of Jesus Christ among us on earth, we pause to observe the good that surrounds us. We refresh our faith and renew our intentions to experience the hope that this season invites us to. Christ is speaking to us and through us, addressing the suffering around us, as well as our impatience with our busy lives, and so much more. May the glow of the season resound in our actions. May it lift us and encourage us to praise the wonder of God's love.

GAUDETE = JOY



### Reading I, Zep 3:14-18a

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has removed the judgment against you; he has turned away your enemies; the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst, you have no further misfortune to fear: On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior; he will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, he will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals.

### Responsorial Psalm, Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6.

**R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.**

God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unafraid. My strength and my courage is the LORD, and he has been my savior. With joy you will draw water at the fountain of salvation.

**R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.**

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name; among the nations make known his deeds, proclaim how exalted is his name.

**R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.**

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement; let this be known throughout all the earth. Shout with exultation, O city of Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel!

**R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.**

### Reading II, Phil 4:4-7

Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall

say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

### *Alleluia* Is 61:1

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

### Gospel, Lk 3:10-18

The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him, "Teacher, what should we do?" He answered them, "Stop collecting more than what is prescribed." Soldiers also asked him, "And what is it that we should do?" He told them, "Do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, and be satisfied with your wages." Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

## REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1. Do you see a difference between joy and happiness?
2. How is it possible to experience Advent joy alongside feelings of sadness, anxiety, or loss?
3. Paul's letter to the Philippians tells us to "have no anxiety at all." Do you find that possible in your own life?
4. The refrain that runs through the Gospel is "what then should we do?" John the Baptist's answers echo what we will soon hear from Jesus – support justice and mercy on behalf of the poor and marginalized. Why do you think this message is part of Gaudete Sunday?
5. Are your outward Christmas preparations helping or impeding your inner preparations?

## ADVENT WEEK FOUR

# *Expect New Life*

"Blessed is the fruit of your womb"

Lk 1:42

Live like Jesus lived and the world will listen.

Mahatma Gandhi

Have you ever considered how all new life starts out so very small? Be it human life or the varieties of other animal or plant life, the activation of the most mysterious, miraculous event we ever participate in, happens in its own time, outside of our control, in quiet, microscopic darkness. Yes, we plant seeds and breed animals and plan pregnancies, but once we do, we still have to sit and wait in expectation.

In this Sunday's first reading, the Prophet Micah goes out of his way to mention how the area of Bethlehem-Ephrathah is too small to even be considered a clan of the Jewish people, yet he predicts that the one who is to rule Israel will spring from this insignificant group of kinfolk. In Luke's gospel passage, the ageing Elizabeth recounts that as she greeted Mary, Elizabeth experienced movement (perhaps for the first time?) from the new life in her womb.

A lesson we might learn this week is to expect new life. Expect it to come from unusual places, and unusual people. Another lesson is to be on the lookout for new life, because it seems to come in its own good time.

At the end of our Women's Faith Sharing gatherings, we often pray for the women that will join us in the future. We have no idea who they are or when they will come, but we expect them. We expect that a curiosity to engage more deeply with scripture will lead them to us.

Christmas is coming soon, with all the expectations that it always brings. It's a time when we remember and celebrate the quiet, small moment when our new life in Christ had its beginnings. Jesus' life and ministry taught us a way to grasp who God is. The ever-greater God is also the ever-closer God. Within us, around us, empowering not only us, but the whole natural world, the cosmos. Our God is continually creating new life around us and through us.

Expect it.

# maranatha

### Reading I, Mi 5:1-4a

Thus says the LORD: You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth has borne, and the rest of his kindred shall return to the children of Israel. He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD, his God; and they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he shall be peace.

### Responsorial Psalm, Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19.

**R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

O shepherd of Israel, hearken, from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth. Rouse your power, and come to save us.

**R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

**R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

May your help be with the man of your right hand, with the son of man whom you yourself made strong. Then we will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

**R. Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.**

### Reading II, Heb 10:5-10

Brothers and sisters: When Christ came into the world, he said: "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; in holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight. Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, behold, I come to do your will, O God.'" First he says, "Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in." These are offered according to the law. Then he says, "Behold, I come to do your will." He takes away the first to establish the second. By this "will," we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

## Alleluia

Lk 1:38

R. Alleluia, alleluia. Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.  
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

### Gospel, Lk 1:39-45

Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, cried out in a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled."

## REFLECTION/DISCUSSION

1. You've heard the saying, "good things come in small packages." When has something small and seemingly insignificant proved to be very important to you?
2. God is continually creating new life around us and through us. What ways has God used you to create life, love, or peace?
3. The second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews says "behold, I come to do your will." What do you believe God's will is for you at this time in your life?
4. What are your spiritual expectations for Christmas Day and the season that follows?
5. What will you take away from this Advent faith sharing experience?



*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.*



May you have a blessed & joyful

*Christmas*

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH AT ST PAUL'S ~ 2022

### **BIBLE STUDY**

Contact: David Brady,  
dhbrady47@gmail.com

Recent Bible study programs have focused on Angels, Panorama of the Old Testament, and Acts of the Apostles. Cost is typically around \$30 for books and materials. Monday evenings, 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Multipurpose Room.

### **FOOD PANTRY**

Contact: Parish Office,  
parishoffice@sp-apostle.org

Donations of rice, beans, vegetable oil, cereals and soups are always needed. Bring donations to the foyer of the Parish Office, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday - Saturday.

### **LITURGICAL MINISTERS**

Contact: Lisa Wellik,  
lwellik@ca.rr.com

Eucharistic Ministers, Lectors and Ushers are needed for Sunday and weekday liturgies. Training is provided.

### **FEEDING THE HOMELESS**

Contact: Claire Gerard,  
cgerard110@aol.com

Parishioners partner with other parishes to prepare and distribute meals in Venice. Commitment is roughly every five weeks.

### **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY**

Contact: Frank Connolly,  
Frank@iconfox.tv

Humanity of Greater Los Angeles (Habitat LA) Catholic Coalition is looking for volunteers for current and future builds. Habitat's skilled on-site construction team provides all tools, safety equipment, instruction and preparation for the site.

### **MEDITATION GROUP**

Contact: Chuck McCreary,  
cnmccreary@gmail.com

This prayerful meditation group meets Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. via Zoom. No need for previous meditation experience.

### **MEN'S FAITH SHARING**

Contact: Chuck McCreary,  
cnmccreary@gmail.com

An on-going prayer group designed for men. The group meets at 8 a.m. Wednesdays via Zoom.

### **MUSIC MINISTRY**

Contact: Jeffrey Parola, Director of Music Ministry,  
jparola@sp-apostle.org

Music is a powerful tool for renewal and conversion. Choirs, cantors, and instrumentalists can contribute.

### **RCIA (RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS)**

Contact: Father Gerard (Jerry) Tully,  
gtully@sp-apostle.org

Inquiring into the Catholic faith? Wherever you are on your faith journey, you are welcome here.

### **VIA (YOUNG ADULTS)**

Contact: Father Gil Martinez, C.S.P.,  
via@sp-apostle.org

Young adults from college and beyond are encouraged to connect with their faith through fellowship and reflection with our small groups.

### **WOMEN'S FAITH SHARING**

Contact: Claire Henning,  
claire@catholic-conversations.com

An on-going prayer group designed for women. The group meets at 8 a.m. on Tuesday mornings via Zoom.

notes



