



DECEMBER 24, 2023

EXPLORE THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16

Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Rom 16:25-27

The Announcement of the Birth of Jesus

Lk 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God
to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,
to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph,
of the house of David,
and the virgin's name was Mary.
And coming to her, he said,
"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."
But she was greatly troubled at what was said
and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
Then the angel said to her,
"Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.

"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his kingdom there will be no end."
But Mary said to the angel,
"How can this be,
since I have no relations with a man?"
And the angel said to her in reply,
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

Therefore the child to be born
will be called holy, the Son of God.
And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,
has also conceived a son in her old age,
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;
for nothing will be impossible for God.”
Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.
May it be done to me according to your word.”
Then the angel departed from her.

MEET OUR EXTENDED FAMILY

St. Stephen (Feast Day December 26)

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Stephen is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as being one of the first deacons of the Catholic Church (See Acts 6-8). He was ordained to assist the apostles in their work of preaching, administration, and works of mercy. He boldly proclaimed the name of Jesus Christ and used his rhetorical gifts to preach the truth of the Gospel. His bold preaching brought him many enemies, and he was stoned to death in the streets of Jerusalem. He is called the “proto-martyr” because this is the first account in Scripture of a believer in Christ being killed for professing that Jesus is the Messiah. We celebrate his feast day immediately after Christmas (December 26) as a reminder that in the midst of the joy of Christmas, Jesus calls us to follow him completely, knowing that it could even cost us our lives.

TAKE TIME TO CHAT

- Why does the angel say “Do not be afraid” to Mary? Do you think she was scared?
- What would it be like to meet an angel?
- The angel tells Mary, “Nothing is impossible for God.” Have you seen or heard of God doing something that seemed impossible?
- St. Stephen boldly proclaimed Jesus and the truth of the Gospel. Do you have the courage to proclaim Jesus to others? Why or why not?

FAMILY FUN

Christmas Lights Road Trip

After dinner, drive around town or your neighborhood to see the Christmas lights. See how many homes have something from our Catholic faith in their display (Nativity scene, statue of Mary, etc.). Play Christmas music while you drive and find the house with your favorite display. Challenge: Go to their door and tell them they won “Best Display in the Neighborhood” by the Christmas Display Committee of your family.

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Homemade Hot Sauce

Feeling the chill of winter coming on? Why not warm up with some homemade hot sauce? This hot sauce has the perfect amount of heat, and it's easy to make. It also makes a great gift!

1-pound mixed medium to hot fresh red chilies like fresno, holland or cayenne

3 Tbsp kosher salt

2 cups distilled white vinegar

Rinse the chilies in a colander and pat dry. Transfer chilies to the bowl of a food processor; add salt.

Transfer the chilies mixture to a glass jar. Cover and allow to sit for 2 to 3 days so it can ripen. Do not stir.

Uncover and stir in the vinegar. Cover again and allow to sit in a cool place for 5 days. Strain mixture through a mesh strainer and press with a spoon. Discard the solids. Pour mixture in a bottle with a tight- fitting lid. You can refrigerate this for up to 6 months.

FAMILY PRAYER

*Pray this traditional litany together this evening. It is a great reminder of the richness of our Catholic tradition and how God uses Mary in so many ways to be close to us. For this prayer, dad (or mom) leads and everyone else says the responses, which are **in bold**.*

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

Christ have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

Lord have mercy. **Lord have mercy.**

Christ hear us. **Christ graciously hear us.**

God, the Father of heaven, **have mercy on us.**

God the Son, Redeemer of the world, **have mercy on us.**

God the Holy Spirit, **have mercy on us.**

Holy Trinity, one God, **have mercy on us.**

Holy Mary, **pray for us.**

Holy Mother of God, **pray for us.**

Holy Virgin of virgins, **pray for us.**

Mother of Christ, **pray for us.**

Mother of the Church, **pray for us.**

Mother of divine grace, **pray for us.**

Mother most pure, **pray for us.**

Mother most chaste, **pray for us.**

Mother inviolate, **pray for us.**

Mother undefiled, **pray for us.**

Mother most amiable, **pray for us.**

Mother admirable, **pray for us.**

Mother of good counsel, **pray for us.**

Mother of our Creator, **pray for us.**

Mother of our Savior, **pray for us.**

Mother of mercy, **pray for us.**
Virgin most prudent, **pray for us.**
Virgin most venerable, **pray for us.**
Virgin most renowned, **pray for us.**
Virgin most powerful, **pray for us.**
Virgin most merciful, **pray for us.**
Virgin most faithful, **pray for us.**
Mirror of justice, **pray for us.**
Seat of wisdom, **pray for us.**
Cause of our joy, **pray for us.**
Spiritual vessel, **pray for us.**
Vessel of honor, **pray for us.**
Singular vessel of devotion, **pray for us.**
Mystical rose, **pray for us.**
Tower of David, **pray for us.**
Tower of ivory, **pray for us.**
House of gold, **pray for us.**
Ark of the covenant, **pray for us.**
Gate of heaven, **pray for us.**
Morning star, **pray for us.**
Health of the sick, **pray for us.**
Refuge of sinners, **pray for us.**
Comfort of the afflicted, **pray for us.**
Help of Christians, **pray for us.**
Queen of Angels, **pray for us.**
Queen of Patriarchs, **pray for us.**
Queen of Prophets, **pray for us.**
Queen of Apostles, **pray for us.**
Queen of Martyrs, **pray for us.**
Queen of Confessors, **pray for us.**
Queen of Virgins, **pray for us.**
Queen of all Saints, **pray for us.**
Queen conceived without original sin, **pray for us.**
Queen assumed into heaven, **pray for us.**
Queen of the most holy Rosary, **pray for us.**
Queen of families, **pray for us.**
Queen of peace. **pray for us.**

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, **spare us, O Lord.**

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, **graciously hear us, O Lord.**

Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, **have mercy on us.**

Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. **That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.**

Let us pray.

Grant, we beseech thee, O Lord God, that we, your servants,
may enjoy perpetual health of mind and body;
and by the intercession of the Blessed Mary, ever Virgin,
may be delivered from present sorrow, and obtain eternal joy.
Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

LITURGY LINK

Listen closely to the words of the angel Gabriel in today's Gospel. The words he uses to greet Mary are the beginning of a common prayer we pray. Which one is it?

FAMILY CHALLENGE

Spend 5 minutes in silence reflecting on today's Gospel passage.

FUN FACTS

Although stores and radio stations begin blasting Christmas songs long before Thanksgiving, you won't hear any Christmas carols in church until Christmas Eve, which is the official beginning of the liturgical season of Christmas.

<https://www.52sundays.com/sundays/december-24-2023>