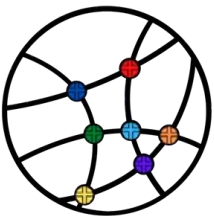


NORTHERN PASTORAL  
NETWORK

TWELVE  
DAYS  
OF  
*Christmas*

SCRIPTURE  
REFLECTION  
& PRAYER



**May this Christmas season be a time of blessing, joy, and peace, as we again celebrate God's gracious and bountiful love in becoming one of us. Jesus became human to show us the way, the way to peace and joy and to our Heavenly Father.**

Christians were originally called 'Followers of the Way' and that is still God's invitation to all of us today.

This year we reflect anew on the meaning of Christmas in response to Pope Francis's invitation for radical renewal in our Church, and in response to a world in economic crisis with growing inequalities, suffering, war, and violence.

Today's 'Followers of the Way' are invited by Pope Francis to participate in the renewal of the Church by walking a synodal path - that is, journeying together in a spirit of communion, respectful listening and prayerful discernment on the life and mission of the church.

In our dioceses and parishes many have already set out on this journey to becoming a synodal Church. They have been involved in dialogue and listening exercises, the outcomes of which are recorded in a national synthesis of reports from these meetings, a synthesis which has been sent to Rome.

Pope Francis' invitation extends to each and every one to make this journey in faith, to move forward with open listening hearts, attentive to companionship and communion, travelling with those who share our lives.

Together, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can prayerfully discern the way forward; what small steps we can take in our families, our parishes, our local and global communities, to play our part in God's plan for renewal in the Church at this time, and transformation in the world. In the midst of an acute economic crisis, growing inequalities and suffering we gaze at the Crib through a somewhat different lens.

In the Gospel we read that on that Holy Night the angel tells the shepherds how to find the God who has come down to earth: "This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger" (Luke 2: v. 12).

The miracle of Christmas is the baby, the Christ Child, lying in the poverty of a manger calling us again to see his image in the poor; calling us, in a time of poverty and suffering, to know the Church's mission and ministry needs the heartbeat of God's merciful love.

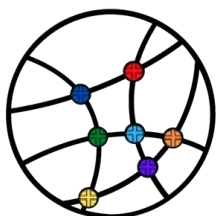
Pope Francis reminds us littleness is the path that God chose to draw near to us, to touch our hearts, to save us and to bring us back to what really matters. (Homily for the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, 2021)

### **God's grandeur appears in littleness**

As we celebrate the wonder of Christmas, we ask our caring God to help us to listen, to the whisper of the hopeless, the plea of the forgotten, the cry of the anguished.

This booklet, produced by the Northern Pastoral Network, provides us with a series of reflections following the feasts of the twelve days of Christmas. You may want to use it in your private prayer or gather your family each day for a short time of prayer and reflection.

We pray this Christmas that, as we rejoice and give thanks with family and friends, each of us will rediscover the meaning of Our Lord's Nativity and the great hope that it proclaims for the world.





DECEMBER 25TH 2022

# *Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*

'FOR UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN, UNTO US A SON IS GIVEN'  
ISAIAH 9:6

## WORD OF GOD

**When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.**

Luke 2: 15-20  
NRSVACE



## REFLECTION

Stable of Bethlehem  
Space of tenderness, home of hospitality;  
To an anxious couple in search of shelter  
To a new-born child fragile and vulnerable  
To poor shepherds on the margins of town  
and society  
To searching Magi, believing in the  
promise of the star.

As we rejoice in God-with-us  
May we become Bethlehem spaces  
Open to receive and embrace  
the fragile, the vulnerable, the displaced;  
in ourselves  
in one another  
in our world.

Christmas  
Stillness of God, whisper of love  
Breath of God, quiet mystery  
Light of God, holy wisdom  
Shadow of God, birth of mercy

May God be with us in tenderness and love  
this Christmas.

## PRAYER

Heavenly Father, as we celebrate  
Christmas this year help us to take time to  
break out of our routine in order to stop  
and listen.

As the shepherds came to the manger to  
adore the Christ child let us come to the  
crib in a spirit of adoration and prayer  
and let us listen to our brothers and  
sisters.

Let us be attentive to their hopes, their  
fears, their dreams for peace on earth and  
among us all.

**Amen**

## CHRISTMAS BLESSING

May each person who comes into your life  
be greeted as another Christ.  
May the honour given the Babe of  
Bethlehem be that which you extend to  
every guest who enters your presence.

May the hope of this sacred season settle  
in your soul. May it be for you a foundation  
of courage when times of distress occupy  
your inner land.

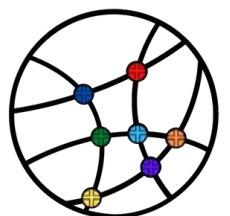
May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes  
of children be awakened within you. May it  
lead you to renewed awareness and  
appreciation of whatever you too easily  
take for granted.

May the bonds of love for one another be  
strengthened as you gather with your  
family and friends around the table of  
festivity and nourishment.

May you keep your eye on the Star within  
you and trust this Luminescent Presence to  
guide and direct you each day.

May you go often to the Bethlehem of your  
heart and visit the One who offers you  
peace. May you bring this peace into our  
world.

(Adapted from Joyce Rupp's Out of the Ordinary)





DECEMBER 26TH 2022

## *Feast of St Stephen*

### WORD OF GOD

**But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 'Look,' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he died.**

Acts 7: 55–60  
NRSVACE



### REFLECTION



The transition from the joy of Christmas to the cruelty of martyrdom seems too abrupt and it is a vivid reminder that Jesus came on earth to die.

The Greek word from which we derive the English word 'martyr' literally means witness. In celebrating the feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr, on this day, we are reminded that Jesus calls his followers to be witnesses; not all called to shed their blood. In contrast to the violence of the Roman Empire into which Jesus was born, we are called to be witnesses to a different kingdom, God's Kingdom, where values of compassion, justice, mercy and kindness reign.

Love, including love of enemies, is at the heart of God's kingdom. As Stephen faced death, imitating Jesus, he prayed for his enemies.

Stephen was a much loved and respected deacon in the early Church and it was his task to organise meals to feed the poor. In remembrance of Stephen's work, people used to collect money for the poor in small clay boxes during the year. On St. Stephen's Day, 'Boxing Day', the boxes were broken and the money distributed to the poor.

### PRAYER



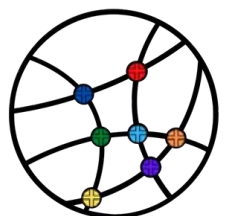
Lord God, we give you thanks for the example of Stephen who looked up to Heaven and prayed for his persecutors. We remember Christians who are persecuted throughout the world today, and all those afflicted because of their faithful witness.

We face many dangers at the present time and we ask you to bless us with the gifts of courage and calmness which Stephen showed in the face of danger. Help us find the generosity of heart to pray for our enemies as Stephen did.

Watch over those in our world who are poor, so that, guided by your Word, they may never lose sight of the path of love which passes through the hearts of our brothers and sisters affected by need and suffering.

May your Spirit give strength, courage, and tenacity to those who dedicate themselves to help those in need.

**Amen**





DECEMBER 27TH 2022

## Feast of St John

APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST

### WORD OF GOD

**On the first day of the week Mary of Magdala came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb' she said 'and we don't know where they have put him.' So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed.'**

John 20:2-8  
NJB



### REFLECTION



Saint John, who was able to outrun Peter on their way to the empty tomb, is called, "the beloved disciple" in the Gospel. He was a Galilean, son of Zebedee and brother to Saint James the Greater, both of whom were fishermen. They were called by Jesus to be disciples as they were mending their nets by the Sea of Galilee. Fast forward and we see he was the only one of the apostles who did not forsake Jesus in the final hours of his Passion, and it was to him Jesus entrusted the care of his Holy Mother as He hung dying on the Cross.

John was a believer, an apostle, and an Evangelist, the writer of the fourth Gospel, three Epistles and the Book of Revelation. He wrote down his experience, what he had heard and what he had seen as he followed Jesus. He wanted to share his Joy in knowing Jesus and enable other people to experience that Joy.

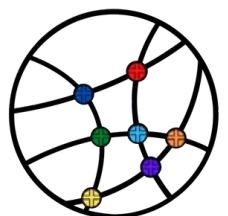
St. Jerome relates that when St John, as a result of age and weakness, was no longer able to preach to the people, he would be carried to the assembly of the faithful by his disciples, with great difficulty; and every time said to his flock only these words: "My dear children, love one another."

### PRAYER



God our Father,  
Moved by Jesus' example,  
We want to enter fully into the fabric of  
society,  
Sharing the lives of all,  
Listening to their concerns,  
Helping them materially and spiritually in  
their needs,  
Rejoicing with those who rejoice,  
Weeping with those who weep;  
Arm in arm with others,  
We are committed to building a new world.  
We do this as a result of a personal  
decision  
Which brings us joy and gives meaning to  
our lives.

**Amen**





DECEMBER 28TH 2022

## *Feast of the Holy Innocents*

### WORD OF GOD

**Now after the wise men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'**

**When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.**

Matthew 2:13-16  
NRVSACE



### REFLECTION

The Feast of the Holy Innocents is celebrated soon after Christmas Day. The holy Innocents are innocent victims of King Herod's lust for power, cruelty, and desire to kill the Child Jesus. They are innocent victims of the cruelty of the same Roman Empire which nailed Jesus to a Cross. We think about the children today who are innocent victims including children whose families are forced live in poverty or forced to flee their homes.

As people of Faith we are carriers of Hope and Joy. We believe the promise of 'Emmanuel' God- with -us, in sorrows and in celebrations. The infant Jesus, born on that Holy Night when the Heavenly Choir of angels sang, is the Light of the world and conquers its darkness and sorrow.

We find well-springs of Hope among all those who live lives of unselfishness, generosity, kindness and compassion in their families and communities. They are God's Kingdom builders. Today we have an opportunity to thank God for his extravagant love, the reason for our Hope. It is also a time to ask God to help us work to create the kind of world he intended, a compassionate, just, merciful and non-violent world

Today is a special day for children when parents have an opportunity to explain that the Holy Innocents are the patrons of small children; they help them to please the Infant Jesus by obeying their parents, loving their playmates, sharing their toys etc.

### PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, on this Feast of The Holy Innocents, we remember You embraced and placed Your hands upon the little children who came to You, and said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"

Look now with fatherly eyes on the innocence of children and their parents' devotion. Bless them this day. (parents may sign the forehead of each child with the sign of the cross.)

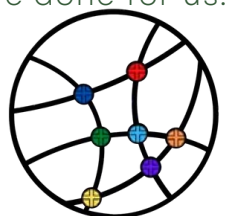
In Your grace and goodness let them grow in faith, longing for You, loving You, fearing You, keeping Your commandments.

We ask you to help all of us make your Kingdom come in this world and make our homes, parishes and communities places of compassion and kindness, where there are no more innocent victims.

We thank you God this day for your extravagant love. In taking on our flesh you know from the inside, our joys and our sorrows.

In this Christmas season help us to praise and glorify you for all you have done for us.

**Amen**





DECEMBER 29TH 2022

## *Fifth Day of Christmas*

### WORD OF GOD

**When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:**

Matthew 2:13-16  
NRVSACE



**'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace,  
just as you promised;  
because my eyes have seen the salvation  
which you have prepared for all the nations to see,  
a light to enlighten the pagans  
and the glory of your people Israel.'**

**As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'**

### REFLECTION

This was a moment of joy for Mary and Joseph presenting their first born Son to God. It was a moment of joy for the elderly Simeon who had been waiting his lifetime for this encounter. Simeon's words to Mary however introduce a different cadence: the joy of salvation is intermingled with suffering for Jesus, for Mary, and for Christian disciples.

Today we draw consolation from the example of Mary and Jesus. Their lives show us that the joy of salvation comes through embracing and transcending suffering.

Speaking about the encounter in the Temple Pope Francis has said "the eyes of Simeon saw salvation because they were expecting it. They were eyes that were waiting, full of hope". He encouraged his listeners to ask God for 'a new way of looking, that knows how to see grace, how to look for one's neighbour, how to hope'. "Then", Pope Francis added, "our eyes too will see salvation".

### PRAYER

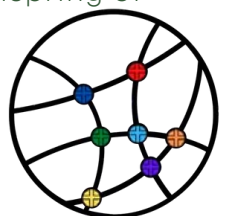
With Mary we advance confidently towards the fulfilment of God's promise and to her we pray:

Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who, moved by the Holy Spirit, welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith: as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One, help us to say our own "yes" to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

Virgin of listening and contemplation, Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast, pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are, that she may never be closed in on herself or lose her passion for establishing God's kingdom.

Mother of the living Gospel, wellspring of happiness for God's little ones, pray for us. Amen. Alleluia!

(Prayer at the conclusion of  
Evangelli Gaudium. Abridged)





DECEMBER 30TH 2022

## *Feast of the Holy Family*

### WORD OF GOD

**There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.**

Luke 2:36-40  
NRVSACE



**When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.**

### REFLECTION

Anna was a prophetess who remained at the temple day and night, worshipping, fasting and praying. Most people would have disregarded Anna as an elderly woman who didn't have much to offer the world because she was a bit religious, always in church praying.

It may be that for some of us that our gift to the Church and to the community is to be in the background praying. Our Churches, communities, and the world need to be held in prayer as we try to navigate the crises of today, including the economic and climate crises.

Anna was in the right place at the right time when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the Temple. Inspired by the Holy spirit her wisdom enabled her to recognise this tiny baby was the Saviour of the world. Her spirituality spilled into thanksgiving to God and those prophetic words she spoke to Mary and Joseph.

### PRAYER

Anna, the prophetess, was filled with the spirit of wisdom and hope by the Holy Spirit. We now pray to the Holy Spirit to come to our 21st century troubled world.

Come, Holy Spirit,  
Come, Spirit of God,  
Come with your peace, your power,  
your light.

Come with forgiveness, courage and hope.  
Come now to our suffering world, where war, conflict and environmental disasters threaten everywhere with silent death, but most cruelly among your poorest children.

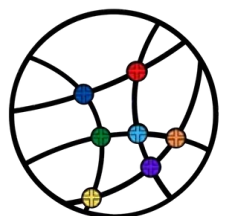
Comforter, we call you, Counsellor,  
Consoler, Advocate and Paraclete.  
Come to the hearts and minds of all who seek to walk with those who suffer.

With your gift, the community of believers who came to be called Church, was born.

Strengthen us to be working signs for all humanity to be one, a community of mutual care.

**Amen.**

(Leo J. O'Sullivan S.J. Adapted)





DECEMBER 31ST 2022

# Feast of Pope St Sylvester

NEW YEAR'S EVE

## WORD OF GOD

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

**He was in the beginning with God.**

**All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.**

**What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.**

**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**

John 1:1-5  
NRVSACE



## REFLECTION

As we bid farewell to 2022 there is much comfort in the words of today's Scripture which reassure us that Jesus is 'a light that darkness could not overpower'.

In this year our world has experienced more of the darkness of violence and war. In Rome at the closing ceremony of the Oct. "Cry for Peace" conference, Pope Francis said: "The plea for peace cannot be suppressed: it rises from the hearts of mothers; it is deeply etched on the faces of refugees, displaced families, the wounded and the dying, and this silent plea rises up to heaven. It has no magic formulas for ending conflict, but it does have the sacred right to implore peace in the name of all those who suffer, and it deserves to be heard." "Let us never grow resigned to war," he concluded. "Let us cultivate seeds of reconciliation."

2022 has witnessed a growing economic crisis and disastrous climate events with floods fires and droughts.

Just as during the pandemic we have also witnessed charity and heroism flourishing in the midst of these crises. Courageous and dedicated people continue to risk their lives to save others under threat from bombs, forest fires, and floods. Ordinary people open their homes and lives to those fleeing war. Generous people offer clothing, food, care and companionship to the victims of disasters. At home many charities have sprung up to help those worst hit by the economic crisis. In his homily on World Day of the Poor Pope Francis said: "Do not listen to 'prophets of doom' but instead 'light candles of hope..... A disciple of the Lord should not yield to resignation or give in to discouragement, even in the most difficult situations, for our God is the God of resurrection and hope, who always raises up.'" For this reason, he said, "Christians in the face of trials ask: What is the Lord saying to us? And when evil events occur that give rise to poverty and suffering, the Christian asks: 'What good can I concretely do?' Do not run away, ask yourself the question: 'What is the Lord saying to me and what good can I do?'"

We remember another Pope today as this is the feast of St. Sylvester. He was a fourth century Pope whose devout faith so moved his contemporaries, that they publicly honoured him as "confessor" one who, though not suffering martyrdom, lived a life completely given to Christ.

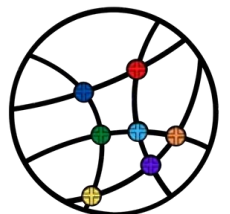
## PRAYER



God of the approaching New Year, we are walking into mystery. Fill us with hope and an abiding trust that dwells in us amid all our joys and sorrows. God of new beginnings and wonderful surprises, thank you for this gift of a new year. May it be a time of grace, a time to grow in faith and love, a time to renew commitments to following Your Son, Jesus. May it be a year of blessing, a time to cherish family and friends, a time to embrace faith more fully, a time to work for peace and justice. Walk with us, please, in every day and every hour of this new year, that the light of Christ might shine through us, in spite of our weaknesses and failings.

Above all, may we remember this year that we are pilgrims journeying together on the sacred path to You.

**Amen.**





JANUARY 1ST 2023

# Solemnity of Mary Mother of God

## WORD OF GOD

**The shepherds hurried away to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child, they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.**

Luke 2:16-18  
NJB



## REFLECTION

Today is more than a celebration of a new calendar year. Today we celebrate the Feast of Mary Mother of God. It's an opportunity to honour Mary, the Mother of God, and our mother too, who said "yes" in the name of all of us. Her "yes" enabled God to take flesh in the Person of Jesus, who came as a humble baby who would grow and walk in our midst, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God.

With grace and courageous faith, Mary cooperated fully with what God asked of her; not just at the Annunciation, but each and every day of her life as she lived out God's plan for her. Difficult though it can be sometimes to believe or accept, God does have a plan for each us. Can we follow the example of Mary? Can we put our faith, hope and trust in God? Can we ponder and treasure in our hearts all that happens to us?

Mary is often given the title 'Queen of Peace' and today is also World Day of Peace. We know that sadly there are wars, threats of wars and many people and countries suffering because of violence and random acts of terrorism. Some of these acts of violence take place in our own communities and in our own streets. Today we pray to Mary, Mother of God, and Queen of Peace, to help us play our part in breaking down barriers of hate and fear and bring whispers of hope.

## PRAYER

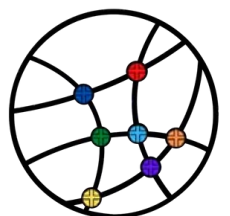
We pray that in the year ahead we, like Mary, will cooperate with God in the ongoing mission of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Father of Jesus, You who sent your angels to herald your Son's coming with cries of peace.

Hear our cry now  
That your peace may touch all corners of our world.  
You whose Son called all peacemakers blessed,  
Help us forge peace in your name.  
Peace among nations.  
Peace among neighbours.  
Peace among families.  
When we look back on this time  
May we recall it as the time we all heard the angels' cry  
And worked together to reveal that peace to all.  
A peace worthy of God, born into the world.

**Amen**

(CRS adapted)





JANUARY 2ND 2023

## St Basil and St Gregory

### WORD OF GOD

**All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.  
Sing a new song to the Lord  
for he has worked wonders.  
His right hand and his holy arm  
have brought salvation.**

**All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.  
The Lord has made known his salvation;  
has shown his justice to the nations.  
He has remembered his truth and love  
for the house of Israel.**

**All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.  
All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.  
Shout to the Lord, all the earth,  
ring out your joy.**

**All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.**

Psalm 97(98):1-4



### REFLECTION

On January 2, the Church honours Saints Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, two friends who were pillars of orthodoxy during a period of chaos and confusion, in the early Church. This was in the fourth century the time in which the Church faced the far-reaching heresy of Arianism, which denied the divinity of Christ. In 'The Song of the Seed', Macrina Wiederkehr OSB, sees divinity reflected in creation and encourages us to be disciples, like Saints Basil and Gregory who follow Jesus closely, patiently and faithfully.

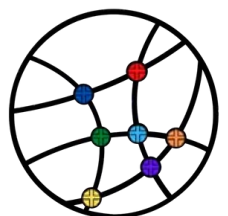
### PRAYER

Christ Be With Me (Prayer of Saint Patrick)  
Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me and before me.  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore.  
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in hearts of all who know me.  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger,  
Christ in quiet and in roar.  
Love, blessed Trinity of three,  
Bound in unity  
Who guides my journey.  
I will arise with strength of heaven  
Trusting in Your light  
To guide my journey  
Shine before me  
Lead me home.  
Power to guide me, might to hold me,  
Wisdom teach me, watching o'er me.  
Ear to hear me, hand to guard me,  
Love to conquer every fear.

### SONG OF THE SEED

Macrina Wiederkehr

Life unfolds  
a petal at a time  
slowly.  
The beauty of the process is crippled  
when I try to hurry growth.  
Life has its inner rhythm  
which must be respected.  
It cannot be rushed or hurried.  
Like daylight stepping out of darkness,  
like morning creeping out of night,  
life unfolds slowly a petal at a time  
like a flower opening to the sun,  
slowly.  
God's call unfolds  
a Word at a time  
slowly.  
A disciple is not made in a hurry.  
Slowly I become like the One  
to whom I am listening.  
Life unfolds  
a petal at a time  
like you and I  
becoming followers of Jesus,  
disciplined into a new way of living  
deeply and slowly.  
Be patient with life's unfolding petals.  
If you hurry the bud it withers.  
If you hurry life it limps.  
Each unfolding is a teaching  
a movement of grace filled with  
silent pauses  
breathtaking beauty  
tears and heartaches.  
Life unfolds  
a petal at a time  
deeply and slowly.





JANUARY 3RD 2023

# *The Most Holy Name of Jesus*

## WORD OF GOD

**The Archangel Gabriel announced to Mary, “And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus” (Lk 1:31). And Joseph had a dream in which the angel told him, “She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” (Mt 1:21). The Gospel of Luke tells us that “After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb” (Lk 2:21).**

**The New Testament is filled with incidents where the name of Jesus is invoked to drive out devils, cure illnesses, and perform miracles. St. Paul tells us: “so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth...” (Philippians 2:10).**

**Jesus reinforces the power of His own name in St. John’s Gospel: “Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you” (Jn 16:23).**

NRSVCE



## REFLECTION



On this feast the Church invites us to prayerfully, and respectfully, reflect on the Holy Name. The name of Jesus reminds the hearer of who Jesus is and what He has done for us - Jesus means "God saves" or "God is salvation." The Holy Name of Jesus, reverently spoken, or prayed, is a source of peace, protection and blessing for ourselves and our families.

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux promoted devotion to the holy name of Jesus. He wrote: “The Name of Jesus is Light, and Food, and Medicine. It is Light, when it is preached to us; it is Food, when we think upon it; it is the Medicine that soothes our pains when we invoke it.”

Pronouncing the Holy Name of Jesus with love and trust is the shortest of prayers. When we find ourselves in difficult situations invoking the Name of Jesus is a source of comfort and support. We can practise praying continually the Jesus Prayer, that beautiful prayer of the heart: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

This Christmas season we ask Jesus, father of the poor, our Way and our Life, to inspire all of us to follow his example; to pour out our lives in the service of others.

## PRAYER



JESUS

Glorious name, gracious name,

Name of love and of power!

Through you sins are forgiven,

Through you enemies are vanquished,

Through you the sick are freed from their illness,

Through you those suffering in trials

Are made strong and cheerful.

You bring honour to those who believe,

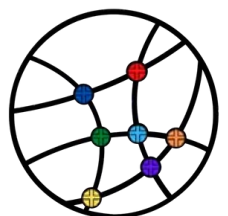
You teach those who preach,

You give strength to the worker,

You sustain the weary.

**Amen**

(St Bernardine of Siena, Apostle of the Holy Name)





JANUARY 4TH 2023

## Tenth Day of Christmas

### WORD OF GOD

**The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (This is the same as Peter and means "a rock.")**

John 1:35-42  
NRSVACE



### REFLECTION



Today's reading is taken from the later verses of the first chapter of St. John's Gospel. These verses cover the early days of the ministry of Jesus. We have a last glimpse of John the Baptist, who heralds Jesus for a second time as 'the Lamb of God'. Jesus is the one who is to lay down his life like an innocent lamb 'for the sins of the world'. This is the purpose of his coming into the world, the purpose of the Son of God 'becoming flesh' and 'living among us'.

Attention quickly moves away from John the Baptist to the conversation between Jesus and the two disciples. They follow Jesus, but he challenges them with the question 'what are you looking for?' They counter this question with another, 'where do you live Rabbi?' Jesus invites them: 'Come and see!'

The time they spend with Jesus makes a deep impression on them. Andrew cannot contain his enthusiasm. He is convinced that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah. He calls his brother Simon Peter. When Jesus meets Simon Peter, he does not hesitate to enlist him among the disciples and immediately gives him the new name, Cephas, which means Rock. These verses are marked by the enthusiastic response of the first disciples to Jesus and their eagerness to spread the news about him. When the good news of salvation comes, when we encounter the word of God we cannot be contained or suppressed. It is imperative to let others know!

'What are you looking for?' What would be your response to Jesus' question? How often do you invite others to 'come and see' something of your life of faith? We pray that, as another year begins, we may meet Jesus with new enthusiasm. Let us have the courage to make Jesus known to others, as the first disciples did.



SCAN ME

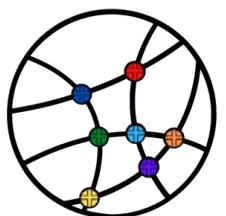


### PRAYER



Today I say yes to you, God.  
I say yes to your love for me.  
May I receive your love.  
May I rest in your love.  
I say yes as well to your plans for me.  
I say yes to all you would  
teach me and change in me.  
I say yes to you, my Love, my Life.

**Amen**





JANUARY 5TH 2023

## Eleventh Day of Christmas

### WORD OF GOD

**The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'**

John 1: 43-51  
NRSVACE



### REFLECTION



How do I know that God knows me?  
I know myself to be known by God

- in the beauty, power and diversity of creation and nature;
- in the joys and frustrations of daily work;
- in the joys and sorrows of my life;
- in the gifts of God seen in the lives of people who believe in Him and those who don't;
- in music and the arts;
- in small acts of kindness in daily life.

I know myself to be known by God most of all, in the many people I have known who have loved me.

### PRAYER



Father, we thank you for your love.

Thank you for caring for us in our daily lives.

Thank you for guiding us in our decisions, thank you for giving us wisdom when we stumble, and thank you for leading us to support one another.

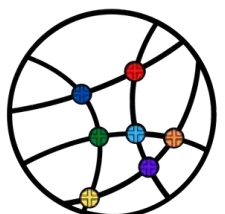
Oh Lord, the love and care you show us blesses our daily lives,

and we are better for it.

**Amen**



SCAN ME





JANUARY 6TH 2023

## *Feast of the Epiphany*

### WORD OF GOD

**In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:**

Matthew 2:1-12  
NRSVACE



**"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel."**

**Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road**

Lord Jesus  
may your light shine our way,  
as once it guided the steps of the magi:  
that we too may be led into your presence  
and worship you,  
the Child of Mary,  
the Word of the Father,  
the King of nations,  
the Saviour of mankind;  
to whom be glory for ever.

### PRAYER

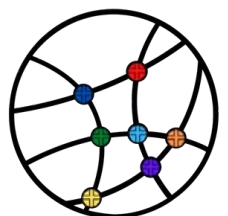


**Amen**  
Frank Colquhoun

We conclude with the words of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein), that great Carmelite mystic and lover of the cross, who wrote so beautifully about the Christmas mysteries:

"Those kneeling around the crib are figures of light: the tender innocent children, the trustful shepherds, the humble kings, Stephen, the enthusiastic disciple, and John the apostle of love, all those who have followed the call of the Lord. They are opposed by the night of incomprehensible obstinacy and blindness: the scribes, who know indeed when and where the Saviour of the world is to be born, but who will not draw the conclusion: "Let us go to Bethlehem." King Herod, who would kill the Lord of Life. Ways part before the Child in the manger ... "

Today as we move away from the manger of our new-born King and Lord, let us recommit ourselves to the cause of life that is the Heart and the Joy of Christmas.



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