

Advent
REFLECTION

TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY-FOUR




IMMACULATA
UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the Old Testament, we learn of the great drama of humanity and the history of people who were called by God but continually wrestled with Him, waiting upon Him to save them. A people whom God promised would become a great nation... A people whose hearts longed for more, knowing the hunger of great famine... A people whose hearts had been broken as they were forced into slavery... A people whose hearts yearned for a home, yet wandered for years... A people whose hearts had been torn apart by injustice, division, violence, war, and eventually exile from their land... A people whose hearts grew impatient as they waited for a Messiah to come and save them... Does any of this sound familiar? So much of their story is not unlike the story of humanity today. Our hearts are filled with a longing, brokenness, impatience, and yearning for acceptance, torn apart by such darkness that seems to surround us each day. Yet we continue to wait and to hope.

Let us return to the story of the Israelites. In the Advent liturgies, we hear Isaiah's prophecy of a Messiah bringing justice and peace to the nations. The Israelites were so busy waiting for a mighty and powerful king to strike down their enemies that they never even considered that the Messiah would come as an infant king through the "yes" of a poor, humble teenage girl, our Blessed Mother, for whom our great university is named. Mary's trust and obedience in saying yes to God not only enabled Christ to take on our human flesh and enter our world but also enabled Jesus to take on a human heart. God loves us so much that He was willing to experience the sufferings of the human heart, just as the Israelites did over two thousand years ago, and we continue to today!

In Pope Francis' most recent encyclical, *On the Human and Divine Love of Jesus Christ*, he describes Jesus' great love for us by saying, "His open heart has gone before us and waits for us, unconditionally, asking only to offer us his love and friendship." This also calls to mind one of the greatest and most well-known quotes of our spiritual hero, St. Alphonsus Liguori, "The paradise of God is the human heart." Jesus chose to take on a human heart and suffer for us so that we might learn how to open our hearts to His Heart, creating space where He may dwell within us.

As we wait in joyful expectation for the coming of the Lord during this Advent Season,

I invite you to reflect upon two questions:

How might we open our hearts to the Lord to accept His friendship and be filled with His love, joy, hope, and peace?

How can we, like our Blessed Mother, in trust and obedience, humbly accept our mission to bring Christ to each person we encounter, allowing Him to take on our human hearts so that He may dwell within us, lead us, and guide us to love one another as He loves us?

May the peace of Christ's love fill your hearts this Advent Season!

SISTER. CHRISTINA MARIE ROBERTS, IHM
DIRECTOR OF CAMPUS MINISTRY



DECEMBER 1, 2024
FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT
LUKE 21: 25-28, 34-36

In the Gospel, Jesus shares with his disciples that when the day has come that the Son of Man comes to redeem them, He will make his presence known. He says, “There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and nations will be in dismay, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and waves.” While this sounds intimidating, one cannot help but wonder, “How cool is that?” Jesus tells the disciples that the Son of Man will come “in a cloud with power and great glory” and tells them not to be afraid.

This reading, in particular, has always fascinated me. At least for me growing up, hearing “the Son of Man will come,” and all the extraordinary events that will take place when this happens frightened me. I always feared not being “ready enough” for God. Since being at Immaculata, I have learned a relationship with God is a choice. He will always love us, but each day, we must love Him in return and do His will intentionally. We must seek Him to learn more about Him and His immeasurable love for us. I find immense comfort in the concluding remarks of this Gospel, which says, “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” because I know God does not want to punish us. He does not want us to suffer; He wants us to be in heaven with him in a place where there is no pain and suffering.

To reach heaven, we must choose Him every day. The phenomenal events Jesus tells the disciples about before the Son of Man arrives are interesting and spine-chilling, but they are not meant to scare us. He wants us to choose Him every day, even when life gets hard, because when we do, the day He comes will be magnificent, as God intended.

KYLEIGH BRUNOTTE
CLASS OF 2024
COMMUNICATION

DECEMBER 2, 2024
MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
MATTHEW 8: 5-11

“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word,
and my soul shall be healed.”

Familiar words, yes? Of course! We recite them at Mass before receiving Holy
Communion. They express a beautiful, pious thought but so much more!

The familiar Gospel paraphrase comes from a compelling story of faith centered
around a Roman centurion! Who would expect this official with governing power
over the Jews to appeal publicly to Jesus with such urgency and confidence? Aside
from his faith witness, the centurion acts as a responsible leader in his compassion for
his paralyzed, suffering servant. Jesus responds immediately: “I will come and cure
him.” At the centurion’s declaration that he is not worthy to have Jesus enter his
house, Jesus is amazed at the man’s faith! The Lord makes it clear to all present that
people “from the east and the west,” like the centurion, will be seated at the banquet
of heaven!

What a rich Gospel reading for the First Week of Advent! Not only does the
centurion's faith remind us to nurture the gift of our faith, but his oft-quoted words
can inspire us to use mantras and short, repeated phrases to carry our prayer through
these days of Advent. Examples could be: “Say the word, Lord; I will be healed.” or
“Lord, increase my faith.”

Each time you repeat the mantra, Jesus listens intently, understands your heart's
longings, speaks to you, supports you, and strengthens you.

He walks with you always, especially during this blessed season of Advent!

Lord, this Advent, this week, this day, increase my faith!

SISTER. KATHLEEN C. DOUTT, IHM
PROFESSOR EMERITA
MUSIC DEPARTMENT

DECEMBER 3, 2024
MEMORIAL OF SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER, PRIEST
LUKE 10: 21-24

As we celebrate the Feast of St. Francis Xavier, the Patron of Missions and a member of the Society of Jesus, it is good to reflect on his missionary journeys and view them as a reminder to examine our responsibilities as Christians. We are obligated to proclaim the message of God's truth, the Gospel of salvation, to everyone we encounter. This is true particularly at Christmas when so many come home to Mother Church briefly for the joyful season – we are offered the opportunity to evangelize joyfully by example with our very presence at Mass.

In proclaiming the Gospel, we should remember that our Church is joyful. St Francis Xavier, like Jesus, was full of joy because of the Holy Spirit working in his life, and it gave St. Francis even more joy to be spreading the Good News to others so they might share that joy as well.

In this Advent season of prayerfully preparing for the joyful events of Christmas, St. Francis Xavier reminds us to recommit ourselves, be filled with love for the Lord, and be beacons of His light, love, and truth.

JANET SPAULDING
ACADEMIC ADVISOR
CENTER FOR UNDERGRADUATE ADVISING

DECEMBER 4, 2024
WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
MATTHEW 15: 29-37

Jesus's heart was "moved with pity" for them—the lame, the blind, those longing to hear his voice—the crowds that stayed to listen to him for three days (Matthew 15:32). What a great reminder that Jesus looks upon us with love. He responds to our human needs for love and healing because he walked among us and shared our human nature. He anticipates the crowds' needs, yet he waits for the crowds to come to him to share his healing grace. Jesus invites us to share in his banquet and to experience his healing love, but we must first open the doors of our hearts to come to him and receive him.

Jesus performs multiple miracles in this gospel account. First, Jesus responds to the needs of those who come to him for physical healing—and He delivers the cures for which they long. These miracles are a great sign and witness of God's love for us. He responds to our prayerful persistence and desire to be with him. While our prayers are not always answered in the ways we would like or understand, each prayer is an opportunity to grow closer to God, open our hearts to him, and invite him to work miracles in our hearts.

The second miraculous occasion in this gospel arises when Jesus multiplies the loaves and the fish. It is a beautiful story of God's providence. With just seven loaves of bread and a few fish, Jesus blessed, broke, and gave enough food to satisfy crowds of over four thousand people and still have seven baskets left over. Jesus's love and mercy are abundant, and His desire to fill the deepest hunger in our souls is so evident. He comes to us every time His Body and Blood is offered on the altar at Mass, and His presence is abundant. Jesus invites us to receive his very self in the Eucharist, and everyone is welcome to the table. The Eucharist is the meal that keeps on giving. Jesus's love for us will never run out, and there is more than enough to supply all of the needs of His creation.

MELANIE DUDLEY NORRIS
CLASS OF 2014
HISTORY

DECEMBER 5, 2024
THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
MATTHEW 7: 21, 24-27

Words speak louder than actions. This statement is heard throughout a myriad of aspects of life. How we act and treat others speaks volumes and, most of the time, has more impact and meaning than our words alone. Moreover, words are spoken into existence, but the words we speak hold no ground or meaning unless they are followed up and emphasized by our actions. This principle holds true for our faith life and our relationship with God.

In this chapter of Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus states, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” These words alone further emphasize that God asks us to be his followers through our words and actions. The words, “I am Catholic, and I believe in God,” flow so quickly, but have we stopped to reflect upon how we have shown our faith in God through our actions? Throughout Advent, we must examine our relationship with God and which actions we can take to improve our relationship with Him.

In the second half of the gospel reading, it is mentioned that those who follow the word of God and act on those words will have a house built on firm rock, while those who listen but do not act will be a fool who builds an unsteady house on sand. During this time of Advent, it is important to self-reflect on our relationship with God and how our actions speak to the strength of our relationship. Furthermore, we should strive to have a relationship with God that can weather all of the tribulations life has to offer.

KATHRYN DEHAVEN
CLASS OF 2025
NURSING

DECEMBER 6, 2024
FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT
MATTHEW 9: 27-31

In an age rampant with scams, schemes, cons, and deepfakes, it's easy to grow distrustful and even cynical. Savvy individuals realize that "All that glitters is not gold" and that if something looks "too good to be true," it probably is. They investigate before investing and consult reliable sources before "swallowing information hook, line, and sinker." The two blind men in today's scripture passage feel no need to investigate, not because they are gullible or naïve, but because they possess the gift of night vision.

"As Jesus passed by, the two blind men followed him, crying out, 'Son of David, have pity on us!'" Although physically blind, the two are not "in the dark" about Jesus' identity. By addressing him as "Son of David," they profess that Jesus is the promised Messiah and then ask for his "pity," a word closely aligned with "mercy." When Jesus asks if they believe, they respond without hesitation, "Yes, Lord." Jesus responds by touching their eyes and declaring, "May it follow according to your faith." Despite their physical blindness, they see with eyes of faith, and it is their faith in the power and mercy of God that heals them. Faith enables them to see in the dark.

Darkness of one form or another is inevitable on life's journey. Most of us do not suffer the darkness of physical blindness; however, we all encounter situations that darken our spirits and trouble our hearts. Suffering, loneliness, the loss of those we love, doubt, depression, a sense of meaninglessness – the list is endless, and at times, we lose our bearings. At such times, we need night vision to ground us as we navigate the terrors of our personal nights. We need the kind of faith that enables blind men to believe that Jesus loves them enough to heal them. Like them, we must seek Him out, ask confidently for what we want, and persevere courageously "until day dawns and the morning star rises in your [our] hearts" (2 Pet. 1:19).

SISTER. BARBARA COOK, IHM
WRITING CENTER SPECIALIST
WRITING CENTER

DECEMBER 7, 2024
MEMORIAL OF SAINT AMBROSE
BISHOP AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH
MATTHEW 9: 35- 10: 1, 5A, 6-8

This Gospel message reminds us that we are called to listen, learn, and trust. Sometimes, we might feel we are following the Word wisely and honestly; other times, we may find resonating with it challenging. The Blessed Mother may have experienced periods of challenge and confusion while waiting for God's plan to unfold. However, her generous spirit and righteous faith-filled actions brought her close to the Father in times of challenge.

Like Mary, St. Ambrose was generous in spirit and deed. He served the poor and vigorously defended the Word of God. Both St. Ambrose and St. Matthew remind us of God's healing actions. Their lives remind us to prepare our hearts for the arrival of the Christ child.

We are called to be all in no matter where we are in our faith journey. We may sometimes feel lost in the church, but the season of Advent offers us an opportunity to find a rebirth in the faith and to behold the significance of the Christ-child coming into the world for the salvation of all. The first step to rejoin the flock may be the most challenging, but God's grace and love will illuminate the way back home.

There's a quote from a TV show that encapsulates the feelings of being found and seen in the Church: "If you think God's plan is supposed to feel like something specific and you haven't felt it, and you wonder if everyone is all in on some big secret that you aren't in on, let me tell you – you're in on it." You are not left out of the secret – you're in on it. And your return to Christ will help you understand the joys of His plan in time. So, stay vigilant, remain watchful, and trust that the birth of Jesus will help you gain everything you yearn for in the arms of Christ.

MARY KATE SHIELDS
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT LIFE
STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

DECEMBER 8, 2024
SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
LUKE 3: 1-6

In St. Luke's Gospel, John the Baptist arrives at a particular time in the history of the world. John the Baptist had a specific mission at a time for the Jews when it seemed like all was lost, and the Romans had a firm grip on the people of Israel. In this barren, hopeless world, he became the "voice crying out in the desert." His goal, as many of us have heard since our youth, was to prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths, and smooth overall pathways so that when Jesus Christ entered the scene, the world was ready to listen to Him. Due to this great saint's mission, the Apostles and others who handed on Jesus's teachings to the rest of us were ready to listen to what the Lord had to say.

Advent provides us with a beautiful time to begin anew and prepare for the way of the Lord in our own lives. Like John the Baptist, we were all born at a particular time to proclaim the good news of the Lord. Our country and world are more divided than ever before, and, like the Jews of Jesus's time, all hope seems lost. For our family, friends, and all those whom we interact with, we have this incredible opportunity now to prepare the way of the Lord and lower the hills so that hope can return to the world and our communities can be prepared and ready to listen to what Jesus tells us throughout the Christmas season and beyond.

Will you take the opportunity this Sunday and throughout the remainder of the Advent Season to heed the call, prepare the Lord's way, and make his paths straight in your life?

Lord, give us the strength to prepare the way for you so that all might be ready and willing to hear your Good News.

PAUL MCANDREW
CLASS OF 2010
SECONDARY EDUCATION

DECEMBER 9, 2024
SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
LUKE 1: 26-38



Today, we honor the Virgin Mary as the most beloved and venerable of all the saints! The Church celebrates Mary as the sinless, immaculate one today. Over 300 years ago a papal proclamation made this feast a solemn one, a holy day of obligation! Nine months from now, we will celebrate Mary's birthday on September 8.

Yes, today we celebrate the fact that Mary was conceived without original sin, making her a fitting mother for Jesus, the Son of God, and the Son of Mary! Mary was conceived as the sinless one because Jesus, taking on our human nature, always remains the sinless one in His divine nature.

Mary soon became a young woman. We hear that she is “full of grace” in today’s gospel of Luke, as the Annunciation story is proclaimed. Because Mary was preserved from original sin at her conception, it follows that she would agree to the startling announcement posed to her by the angel Gabriel. The Holy Spirit comes, thus, as the Annunciation takes place on March 25, so Jesus’ birth is celebrated on December 25!

In today’s gospel, Mary challenges us to embrace God's will. May we trust that God has a plan for each of us. May we, like Mary, say yes— “Be it done unto me according to your word.”

SISTER. ANTOINE THERESE LAWLOR, IHM, D.MIN
VICE PRESIDENT
MISSION AND MINISTRY

“Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; The rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley.” The symbolic image painted in this prophecy speaks of the roughness of our world today. Politicians and celebrities are drunk with power. The poor and vulnerable are cast aside and ignored. Mothers and their children are put in danger by abortion. We are no strangers to the rugged landscape of our time, but these words from the prophet Isaiah should comfort us in times of such division and turmoil.

Amid all the fighting and injustices in our nation, we find refuge in the Word of the Lord that he will “cast down the mighty from their thrones and lift up the lowly,” “fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty” (Luke 1:52-53). This means that despite imbalances in material and spiritual goods, all will be set right through Jesus Christ. Let us not only put all our hope in these promises but become living embodiments of them, helping to bring them to fruition in a world so desperately awaiting them. Above all, we ask the Lord for the privilege of crowning Him as our true leader above all human beings, for “He shall rule the world with justice and the peoples with his constancy.” (Psalm 96:13).

LUKE MISCKY
CLASS OF 2025
COMMUNICATION

DECEMBER 11, 2024
WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT
MATTHEW 11: 28-30

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” The beginning of the Advent season is filled with joyful anticipation and hope as we prepare for the coming of the Christ Child. We started this season of waiting with a renewed sense of peace and joy. As we find ourselves almost halfway through the Advent season, we are likely beginning to feel some of the burdens associated with Christmas time. Those burdens present themselves in various ways. Finding the time and resources to shop, bake, and attend holiday gatherings may be difficult for some. The loss of a loved one may be burdensome, while some find themselves struggling with illness, addiction, or loneliness.

In today’s gospel reading, Jesus says, “Come to me.” He invites us to come, no matter the burden, without hesitation or fear. This does not mean that the burdens we carry will disappear. It is a reminder that Jesus walks alongside us and invites us to learn from His meek and humble heart. In doing this, we will find rest in Him. There is no more attractive invitation we will receive this Christmas season.

KELLY PHILBIN, PH.D.
CLASS OF 1991
ENGLISH
CLASS OF 2007 (MA)
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

DECEMBER 12, 2024
FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
REVELATION 11: 19A; 12:1-6A, 10B

“And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, and on her head was a crown of twelve stars.” Perhaps one of the most significant “signs” for the people of the Americas was the appearance of a “woman” who appeared to St. Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill near Mexico City on December 9, 1531. Her appearance resembled that of the indigenous people of Mexico, the Aztecs. Although conquered and colonized by the Spanish, the numerous missionaries who accompanied the expedition planted the seeds of the gospel that bore abundant fruit in the Americas.

The appearance of this “Lady,” clothed in garments recognizable as linked to the indigenous people of Mexico and richly symbolic of the Blessed Virgin Mary, implanted in the hearts of future generations with the cherished belief that Mary is their mother. Juan Diego’s tilma (cape) bore the imprint of this beautiful Lady who promised to be with the people. She is, indeed, the Christ-bearer to all peoples of the American continent, North and South.

So, during this Advent season, may we examine our lives: Are we, too, “Christ-bearers” to family and friends? Is our Christmas preparation more about giving the present (a gift) and the presence of Christ Jesus to others by our attentiveness to all members of the human family, particularly those whose lives and livelihoods have been conquered by war, violence, famine, and disease?

SISTER. ANNETTE PELLETIER, IHM, PH.D.
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

DECEMBER 13, 2024
MEMORIAL OF SAINT LUCY, VIRGIN, AND MARTYR
MATTHEW 11: 16-19

At first glance, one might find this passage from the Gospel today a bit odd. First, Jesus compares the generation of those alive to children playing games in the marketplace. The children, he says, do not dance when prompted by the flute, nor do they mourn when prompted by a song of lament. Jesus uses this imagery as an analogy for the people who disregard John the Baptist's message. John sings a dirge of repentance and turning back to God, which is not always comfortable and often painful. They write him off as 'possessed' because of his ascetic lifestyle, unwilling to believe his message comes from God. Yet, the people also reject Jesus' message, saying he is a glutton and drunkard because he broke societal expectations by keeping company with tax collectors and sinners.

The children in his example and the people Jesus speaks about fail to respond to the invitation. The message, however, is for that generation and our very own generation- for you and me. How often do we fail to recognize and respond to God's movements and invitations daily? How often do our expectations about God get in the way of our actions? I miss God's invitations more often than I'd like to admit. In the moments I neglect to give my attention to a student because I am preoccupied with other tasks or don't have the headspace to take on another person's 'problems'; when I don't listen to a friend because I disagree with what they say; or when I decline to see an unhoused neighbor as I go about my Christmas shopping- these are the many ways I miss God's invitations to act in my daily life. I fail to respond to God's invitation to be patient and loving and honor the dignity and worth of others as coming from God.

"But wisdom is vindicated by her works." Advent is a time to be mindful of how God works in our lives. Pay attention! It is only then that we can recognize God prompting us to act. When I practice being attentive, I remind myself that people are never an inconvenience; the tasks that I am preoccupied with will be there after I take the time to accompany a student through their struggle, listen to a friend, or take the time to smile and pray for the person I pass by on the street. How is God inviting you to act this Advent season?

AMANDA BIELAT
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
CAMPUS MINISTRY

DECEMBER 14, 2024
MEMORIAL OF SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS,
PRIEST AND DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH
MATTHEW 17: 9, 10-13

The purpose of Advent is to prepare our hearts for the miraculous birth of our Lord, Jesus. Nonetheless, what does this mean? Jesus comes to strengthen and redeem our hearts through the fire of the Holy Spirit more often than we think. Advent reminds us to focus and not “fall asleep” when God extends his friendship into our hearts through the birth of his Son. However, this extension of grace to experience God’s friendship happens daily, not just during Advent. The question is, have we prepared our hearts through faith and prayer to recognize this friendship when it is burning with fire at our door?

There are times in our lives when we encounter a suffering Christ, reaching out his hand and calling us to carry our cross beside him with hope in our hearts. This suffering Christ is often present in the heart of another who happens to cross our path. Maybe that person has lost their way through their suffering. When we recognize the suffering Christ in that person, we can help that person find the love and mercy of Christ within their broken heart.

At other times in our lives, we are the ones suffering and searching for God’s friendship. Maybe we have gone astray, like the lost sheep, and are blinded to God’s presence and grace. The beauty of the Advent season encourages us to prepare our hearts to recognize God’s friendship, even when we are suffering. On the days when we can’t seem to find it or feel his presence, remember that he comes for us like a “whirlwind of fire. “When we open our hearts to his love and mercy, he will find a way in.

He may lead us to an unfamiliar place, just as he led Mary and Joseph to the stable where Jesus was born. Nonetheless, when we follow the stars with faith and courage, a miracle is born in our hearts.

ELIZABETH MCBRIDE
CLASS OF 2016
POLITICAL SCIENCE

DECEMBER 15, 2024
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT
LUKE 3: 10-18

Following this gospel, John the Baptist tells the people they must repent. In the verse right before this passage, John says, “Even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” How shocking would it be to hear that in real life! But these people did not run away—they did not cower at this news. They asked him what we hear at the beginning of this gospel: “What then shall we do?”

This gospel can be hard to hear, especially during Advent as we approach the joy of Christmas. However, I think there are two key things we can take away from this Gospel today. Just as John the Baptist was preparing the way for Jesus in their time, we can listen to his news as we prepare for Jesus’s coming this Christmas. How can we prepare the way? As John also told the people, we can repent and give to others.

Lord Jesus, as St. John the Baptist prepared the way for your coming, grant that through his intercession, we may also prepare for your coming during this advent season. Amen.

CATHERINE HASS
CLASS OF 2025
PSYCHOLOGY

DECEMBER 16, 2024
MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
MATTHEW 21: 23-27

In today's first reading, God looks out over humankind and delights in the goodness He perceives there. Like a mother who gazes at her newborn child, God loves the potential He has placed within us. Great capacity for kindness, empathy, compassion, and virtue of all kinds lies within the spiritual core of human beings.

Then, we have the Gospel story that focuses on the shadow side of humanity. Filled with pride, envy, and self-serving, the religious leaders try to trap Jesus so as to undermine His authority. They fail to recognize the divine and instead fear His power as a threat to their own.

It seems we, humans, must forever struggle between the light and the darkness within us. There was an ancient Indian tale that told of a young warrior who was being trained by a wise medicine man. The teacher said to him that within each man are two wolves: one that is pure, truthful, honest, kind, and noble, and the other that is selfish, prideful, dishonest, and cunning. The two are ever at war within us. Troubled by the story, the young warrior asked, "But which one will win?" The wise man replied, "The one you feed."

"Teach me your ways, O Lord" is an apt prayer during the time of Advent. Often a time of waiting, expectation, and searching for light in the darkness, Advent allows us to reflect deeper on the path God has set out for us and the direction for our lives. Let us look deeply into our actions and motivations and ask God to fill our shadows with light. Let us remember that God knows and loves us as we are, limited and weak but with great potential for goodness. In our daily lives, may we always strive to feed the right wolf.

SISTER. ELIZABETH MONICA ACRI, IHM, PSY.D
PROFESSOR EMERITA
PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING

DECEMBER 17, 2024
TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
MATTHEW 1: 1-17

In today's Gospel, we are presented with Jesus's genealogy. This passage lists 42 generations, beginning with Abraham and concluding with Jesus Christ. The individuals mentioned are not described; instead, they are merely names, spouses, and historical milestones.

While this passage is seemingly straightforward, it also subtly invites us to reflect on the perfection of God's timing. Throughout the dozens of generations listed, God could have inserted Jesus anywhere. For that matter, God could have inserted Jesus into a completely different lineage. However, Jesus entered the world exactly when and where He was needed. In our lives, we may often fall victim to comparing our circumstances to our neighbors. Today's Gospel reminds us that, although we sometimes feel small, we fit perfectly into God's plan.

In addition, the brevity of today's Gospel emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the past but always remaining in the present with a hopeful attitude toward the future. While the past may have helped shape us into the people we are today, we are not bound by our own past mistakes or the mistakes of our ancestors. Instead, we are called to embrace our histories while we work toward living in a more perfect union with Christ. We can chart a new way forward for us and future generations with our free will. May we thank God for the ways He has worked in our lives and remain hopeful for the plans that have yet to come.

NICOLE DEORZIO
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF RESIDENCE LIFE
RESIDENCE LIFE AND HOUSING

DECEMBER 18, 2024
WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
MATTHEW 1: 18-25

I think that for those of us like myself who were raised Catholic or any other kind of Christian, many of the truths of our faith, due to routine reflection and interaction, can lose their shock value. We hear “God loves you” so much that we forget how personally impactful and formative that statement should be. We hear “Jesus died for you” so often that we lose sight of what His death means for us and our lives. In today’s gospel, I think we come across another example of one of the truths of our faith that should, but sometimes may not, carry shock value: “God is with us.” What statement could have any more weight to it than this? The God who formed all things has become a part of His creation. What statement could require more of a response on our part? If this God of all has come to us, the only response that makes sense is to give ourselves entirely in love to Him. If God is with us, everything about our lives should reflect it.

Now that Jesus has ascended, I think asking whether God is still with us is essential.

The answer is yes, praise God, and I believe there are three main ways He is: in prayer, the sacraments, and the poor. In prayer, we get to speak with and rest in God intimately. In the sacraments, we experience the healing, grace, and salvation He gave us when He was here on Earth. In the poor, we get to experience an incarnation of Him crucified and get to, in some mystical way, alleviate His pain through alleviating theirs. For the rest of Advent, I want to make it my goal to meditate on these three realities and grow in each with God’s grace. If you feel called, I invite you to do the same!

THOMAS BABCOCK
CLASS OF 2025
PSYCHOLOGY & THEOLOGY

DECEMBER 19, 2024
FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
LUKE 1: 5-25

The gospel offers a powerful message of hope in the unexpected possibilities that can arise in our lives. Zechariah and Elizabeth are struggling with infertility like so many couples today. Despite their struggle, they demonstrate that faith can lead to miraculous outcomes. We should be reminded that God hears our prayers, even when the answers seem delayed or improbable.

The appearance of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah highlights that God's timing is often different from our own and that our circumstances can produce joy and fulfillment. We often face moments of doubt or discouragement in our lives. When things seem hopeless, the gospel reminds us to remain encouraged and open to all possibilities. Continue to have faith and trust that God is at work in ways that we may not immediately see.

I am reminded of my favorite Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God." This gospel echoes that message: God can bring hope into our lives no matter how impossible things may seem. Faith can enable us to face our challenges with courage and optimism, knowing that we are never alone in our journey.

MARIA C. SMEYKAL, M.ED.
CLASS OF 1983
BIOLOGY SECONDARY EDUCATION

DECEMBER 20, 2024
FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
ISAIAH 7: 10-14

Today's readings are a study in contrast, the first featuring an immoral, egotistical king and the second, a virtuous, humble girl. Some background on Reading 1: Ahaz has already planned an alliance with Assyria to defend an impending attack. Isaiah conveys God's message that Israel and Syria would fail to conquer Judah. Ahaz could ask for anything as a sign of confirmation, and God would comply.

The false piety of Ahaz (...I will not tempt the Lord) reminds me of instances when we are invited to trust God but do not want to risk surrender, reverting to a childhood "Do by self!" While God demands, "Let go!" our grasp only tightens. If you want to know how that usually works out, just do further research on Ahaz.

Receiving God's invitation, Mary was truly amazed to be found full of grace and in God's favor. The reward for her trusting response was the child born of her, the Son of God.

So today and every day, we have a choice to be Ahaz or Mary. Neither prophet nor angel will likely appear to us, but God acts through others. Someone (older, wiser, more virtuous) might challenge us to be more than what we are and encourage us to grow with God's grace. We can say, "I will not tempt (test) the Lord, or declare, "Be it done to me." What music will be my theme song? "I Did It My Way" or "I Say 'Yes,' My Lord"?

SISTER. CATHERINE KAPORCH, IHM
PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELING

DECEMBER 21, 2024
SATURDAY OF THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
LUKE 1: 39-45

In this reading, we see how God brings people together. When Mary found out she was going to be the mother of God, she likely experienced a lot of excitement and fear. I imagine that while she trusted God, she was still scared. This was not how she thought her life would look, and she knew that she would have to make a lot of sacrifices. It would have been tempting to isolate herself. But Mary chose to visit with Elizabeth, another pregnant mother so that they could walk through their experiences together. It is beautiful how God gives us the gift of other people so that we can encourage each other. Mary sets an example of sharing the gift of Jesus with others. We can allow people to share in our faith journey through all the joys and struggles in our lives.

Mary probably passed by so many people on the road who had no idea God was present with her. Even as an adult, Jesus encountered many people who did not recognize who was before them. And if I am honest, I can sometimes go through the day without seeing God's presence all around me! Elizabeth's faith allowed her to be sensitive to Jesus' presence. She spent her life seeking God, so she knew it was Him when He arrived at her door. Her striking humility in saying, "How does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" reminds us how lucky we are that God is available to each of us. This Advent, we can ask God to help us pay attention to his presence. To help us recognize Him in the face of those we love, in the Eucharist, in the outdoors, in small moments in our daily routines, and in the silence. The more we are in tune with God, the more joyful we will be.

This is a joyful season! The entire world rejoiced when Jesus came to earth. Why? Because he came to save all of humanity. He came to give His life so we no longer have to be separated from God. He proved that God's love for us is infinitely more powerful than any of our sins or struggles. That is a reason to be joyful this Advent! It is easy to become weighed down by stress and anxiety. But as Christians, we are called to live this joy and share it with others.

REBECCA LORENZ
CLASS OF 2025
EXERCISE SCIENCE

DECEMBER 22, 2024
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT
LUKE 1: 31-45

Do you ever feel unworthy to accept good things, especially when they come directly from God? Personally, I know I have, and in this Gospel, we can see that Elizabeth is too. Mary and her cousin Elizabeth are pregnant, and Elizabeth is farther along than the two. Mary's act of charity to travel to see and serve her cousin nearing the end of her pregnancy is a true act of mercy and love. This authentic love can be hard to accept, especially if we seek out a mediocre form, such as partaking in lustful behaviors or lowering our standards for immediate gratification. Perhaps there's unresolved conflict, grief, or trauma between another or ourselves where we think we deserve to feel less than others.

If you have been to Mass and have seen Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament, the Eucharist, you have seen true, merciful love. This love likely drew Mary to visit and serve Elizabeth, even though she was also pregnant and could have easily used that as an excuse to relax. Jesus worked through Mary while in her womb to show this wonderful and pure love, which was recognized immediately as, "For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy."
(Lk 1:39-45).

The takeaway from this reflection is to allow Jesus into your heart and surrender your feelings of unworthiness, which are holding you back. We were made to share in this sacrificial love, a love unmeasurable compared to the shortcuts we seek in daily life to find tepid happiness. May you feel so joyful that your soul leaps this Advent season.

MIA MULLIN
CLASS OF 2025
NURSING

DECEMBER 23, 2024
MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT
LUKE 1: 57-66

This passage from the Gospel tells the story of John the Baptist's birth, focusing on the moment when his parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah, defy the expectations of their community by naming him "John." The miracle of his name and the fact that Zechariah's speech is restored after he obediently confirms it with his writing underscore the theme of God's plan and the fulfillment of divine promises. It's a decisive moment that reveals the importance of trusting God's will.

Elizabeth's neighbors and relatives rejoice with her because they recognize that the birth of her son is a sign of God's great mercy. Her pregnancy, after so many years of infertility, is a miraculous gift. In our everyday lives, we can find reasons to celebrate God's mercies, even in the small, everyday things that might not initially seem miraculous. I have experienced God's mercy in my life through answered prayers, unexpected blessings, or simply the ability to cope with life's challenges.

The people who witnessed Zechariah and Elizabeth's actions were amazed and wondered what John would become, recognizing that "the hand of the Lord was with him." This shows that people around us often watch and wonder how God is at work in our lives. Our actions and our trust in God can inspire others to reflect on God's presence and purpose. I try to show God's hand at work in my life through kindness, faithfulness, and trust in God during difficult times.

The story of John's naming reminds us that God's plans are often surprising and can challenge social norms. It encourages us to trust God's will, listen to Him even when it's hard, and celebrate His mercies and wonders. In doing so, we deepen our faith and become living witnesses to others of God's goodness.

In my everyday interactions, I try to show kindness through my words and actions. Even when I'm busy or stressed, I remind myself to take a moment—whether it's offering a smile, sharing a word of encouragement, or lending a hand with a small task. I've realized that kindness isn't about grand gestures but the little moments of connection we offer to others. We make the most meaningful impact in those simple, everyday acts.

PATRICIA CANTERINO
VICE PRESIDENT
STUDENT DEVELOPMENT



DECEMBER 24, 2024
TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT
LUKE 1: 67-79

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; for he has come to his people and set them free.”

The first verse of this Gospel passage is a true testament to our beliefs. “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel”. Blessed be the Lord! The Lord is the only one who deserves our praise. He is all good all the time. It is easy to forget God's goodness in times of pain or stress.

The holidays are a beautiful time, but not for everyone. It can be a time of struggle, stress, sadness, and many other emotions. It can be hard to remember God's goodness. No matter how we feel, we need to praise God. By praying this first verse repeatedly, we can praise God without thinking of our own words.

The following line, "for he has come to his people and set them free," is the most significant news in the history of the world. Jesus came down from heaven to save us. His birth is celebrated tomorrow on Christmas day. He could have come onto the earth as an adult with worldly strength and power. Instead, He came as a baby and experienced life as we all do. Then He died for us, so none of us have to experience death. What a reason to celebrate and praise the Lord!

MARIE WADLINGER
CLASS OF 2024
COMMUNICATION

DECEMBER 25, 2024
THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD
CHRISTMAS
LUKE 2: 15-20

Merry Christmas!



Who doesn't love Christmas? It's the most wonderful time of the year. Because of all the commercialization that seems to have drowned out the true meaning of Christmas, we sometimes forget the significance of this special day. Christmas, to me, is a day of hope. It is a reminder of what God did to give us hope. He sent us his only son.

So, as we enjoy this holiday season with family and friends, shopping, wrapping presents, and preparing traditional meals, let's not forget the true meaning of Christmas. It is a time to celebrate the message of love, hope, and joy.

I am personally going to work harder to focus on the true meaning of Christmas and be thankful for the GIFT of Jesus, who brings us hope. Given the state of our world today, we could use a message of peace and hope.

BARBARA LETTIERE
PRESIDENT
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT



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