



Welcome to **Waiting in Joyful Hope!** This is the Jesuit School of Theology's online daily prayer experience for Advent.

In each of the Advent days to follow, you will receive an email with a link to the Scripture readings of that day together with a reflection on those readings. The reflections are written by the students, faculty, staff, board members, and alumni of the Jesuit School of Theology or other members of Santa Clara University. Our hope is that these beautiful reflections will deepen your experience of Advent and Christmas.

Consider these daily emails as an invitation to a retreat experience. Find some quiet in your day to review the readings and the accompanying reflection. Let the reflection inspire your own praying and thinking. Ultimately, Advent is a time to know God's love for us in Christ more deeply and to respond more completely to this love in our daily choices.

At JST, we pay attention to the situation of our world and our communities as we study and minister to others. If the Spirit moves you, bring the very ordinary routines of daily life into your own prayerful reflections by asking yourself, *What is God trying to teach me at this moment?*

We make this Advent journey in supportive companionship. First of all, the Lord walks with each of us, relating to us uniquely and offering divine friendship. Moreover, we make this retreat together, thousands of people in the wider Santa Clara community united virtually through a common desire to grow in faith, hope, and love. You might wish to reach out to a friend to share your experiences through the weeks. Or you might journal about what you are experiencing and learning.

St. Ignatius of Loyola insisted that generosity is the most important spiritual disposition for our prayer life. Generosity is a largeness of heart that is open to God's creativity in our lives. Signing up for this online retreat underscores the generosity of spirit and time that you now offer to God and to those on this pilgrim journey with us. God's abundant blessings for the adventure ahead!

In our Lord,

Joseph G. Mueller, S.J.
Dean
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

First Sunday of Advent - Nov. 29

[Isaiah 63:16B-17, 19B; 64:2-7, Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19, Mark 13:33-37](#)

During Advent the Church focuses on the two comings of Jesus Christ. Christmas celebrates his coming over two thousand years ago as a child who grew to be the man who preached God's kingdom, cured the afflicted, died on the cross, and rose from the dead. But that first Christmas and all Christmases point us to the second coming of Jesus in glory to bring all things to completion for the eternal praise of God and for the healing of those who await the final, unbeatable mercy and justice that Christ will bring forever through the resurrection of all the dead.

Today's Gospel (Mark 13:33-37) tells us that none of us knows when this second coming of Christ will take place. The world is a tangle of good and evil that we can only partially unravel, and God alone knows how close any of our steps brings us to the glorious, everlasting end. But through Christ God gives us gifts of the Holy Spirit to keep us ready for that day to come. These gifts help us to care for the household of which Jesus is the master and we are the other members. Treasuring each other and our common home is the way we can stand ready at the door for the hour of our Master's return. Through the Spirit, Christ is at work in our care for nature and our neighbor, and we can thank Jesus for working to bring his second coming so near.



Joe Mueller, S.J., is the Dean of JST

Feast of Saint Andrew, Apostle - Nov. 30

[Romans 10:9-18; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11; Matthew 4:18-22](#)

How little we know of them, those first disciples of Jesus. Today, a bibliographer would seek so much more: news about their early years, their family influences, their life with Jesus, etc. Of Andrew, we know only that he was born in the village of Bethsaida; and like his brother, Peter, was a fisherman. John's Gospel tells us that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist who introduced him to Jesus: "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" It was Andrew who told Jesus of the boy with the loaves and fishes and of the Greeks who were seeking him. And, the Gospels tell us, Andrew was present at the Last Supper. Beyond that the tradition recalls that Andrew preached around the shore of the Black Sea and that he was martyred in Patras, bound to an X-shaped cross, thinking himself unworthy to be crucified on a cross like Jesus's. Andrew was one of Jesus' intimate friends, but of his life, his deeds, we know so little.

And yet, we know everything—everything that really matters. Andrew was an apostle, in Greek, one who is sent. And for John's Gospel, to remain in Jesus, to abide in his saving love, is to be sent; just as in being sent, the apostle remains in Jesus. The Gospels give us not a biography, but an invitation: Andrew's life is an Advent lesson for us, written in blood of martyrdom: "Look, here is the Lamb of God!...Come and see" (Jn. 1:36, 39).



Bill O'Neill, SJ is professor emeritus of JST and currently serves with the Jesuit Refugee Service in the Kakuma refugee camp in northwestern Kenya.

Tuesday of the First Week of Advent - Dec. 1

[Isaiah 11:1-10, Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17, Luke 10:21-24](#)

Today's first reading describes the Immanuel for whom we wait during this season of Advent. Don't our hearts long for Immanuel and his kingdom, especially as we pass through this tumultuous, anxious year? We, like the Israelites, are in need of rescue! Who among us has not longed for a wise leader, guided by "a spirit of wisdom and understanding?" Who among us is not longing for justice? "Justice shall be the band around his waist." And who is not yearning for an end to conflict and division? Who is not yearning for peace? We read "the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to lead them," scenes we recognize from Christmas cards. Scenes of peace. The responsorial psalm, "Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever," promises our longing and yearning will be satisfied. Like the disciples in today's Gospel, we rejoice that Immanuel has chosen to reveal himself to us. We can wait in hope. We do not wait alone.



Dear Jesus,

In this season of anxious waiting for a vaccine to end the dreadful pandemic which plagues your entire world, in the midst of so much suffering and need, even as we await the joyful celebration of your coming among us, please guide me to do something every day to help hasten the coming of your compassionate kingdom of justice and peace. Amen.

Kathy Enright is a JST Emerita Board Member.

Wednesday of the First Week of Advent - Dec. 2

[Isaiah 25:6-10A, Psalm 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6, Matthew 15:29-37](#)

“They all ate and were satisfied.” This is what speaks to me in today’s gospel. I have selfishly and ungratefully told close friends and families that I am not satisfied with who and where I am. I complain about my restlessness, stress, and anxiety. I fret about what will happen tomorrow and the years to come. Today’s readings are telling me to stop. Just stop. And listen.

Imagine being in that crowd of thousands. Did they expect Jesus to feed them? If they wanted food, surely, they would not have followed Jesus for three days. Instead, I imagine the crowd wanted to stop and listen. Perhaps they desired to step away from the anxieties of their lives and follow a man who satisfied their hearts, not their stomachs. To their pleasant surprise, Jesus satisfied all their needs.

After you read the following prayer, I ask that you take one minute to stop what you are doing. Simply stop and listen. Listen to your heartbeat, your breathing, and the Spirit within you. One minute to satisfy your soul. One minute to let God cradle your being and quiet the restlessness.



Loving God, at this moment, I ask for your Spirit to cascade into my being. Encompass all that I am. Calm my fears, stress, and anxiety so that I am satisfied by You. Hold me in your essence so that I may know your love and am content in that love. Rest in me so I can rest in you...

Elise Dubravec is a second-year Master of Divinity lay student at JST.

Memorial of Saint Francis Xavier, Priest - Dec. 3

[Isaiah 26:1-6, Psalm 118:1 AND 8-9, 19-21, 25-27A, Isaiah 55:6, Matthew 7:21, 24-27](#)

In today's reading we hear the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, a discourse in which Jesus gives detailed moral instruction to his followers. It contains some of Jesus' most famous words, beginning with the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) and culminating in the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). But the sermon is more than a collection of sayings. Jesus declares that "these words of mine" are the very things we must do if we wish to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Advent marks the beginning of a new liturgical year. During this season we wait for Christ's coming with patience, hope, and expectation. Our waiting need not be passive, however. Ignatian spirituality asks us to be contemplatives in action. As we reflect on the challenges that the past year has brought us—and in 2020 they have been monumental—we ought to consider how next year might be different. Saying "Lord, Lord" is not enough if we seek to draw closer to the kingdom of heaven. What else will we do for Christ's sake in the new year that is unfolding?



Lord, Lord, we cry out to you. Help us to become not only hearers, but doers of your word. May we learn to love our enemies as well as our friends. May we always treat others as we ourselves wish to be treated. Let these actions be the rock upon which we stand, the foundation on which our character is built, and the means by which we conform our lives to God's will. Amen.

Ed Stewart recently began his second year serving in the Dean's Office at the Jesuit School of Theology, after completing graduate studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.



Friday of the First Week of Advent - Dec. 4

[Isaiah 29:17-24; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14; Matthew 9:27-31](#)

Ponder the reversals in our holy texts today: from fear to trust; from gloom to joy; darkness gives way to a light so fecund that it repairs blindness; a desert becomes an orchard; arrogance dissolves and reverence emerges. These reversals satisfy because they are so familiar to us. Our humanity is always on the hunt for trust. Fear will find us; we need not go looking.

It is helpful to maintain a conversation between the particular reading of the day during Advent and the Sunday that anchors that week. The Church crafted these readings so that we might hear them “in stereo” if you will. On Sunday, Jesus sounded like a man on fire as he told us to “Be alert! Watch!” Today we are told more precisely what to look for, what to watch for: “Wait for the Lord, with courage; be stouthearted and wait for the Lord.” God’s transforming goodness is on the move, drawing us forward, demanding our attention.

As you move more deliberately into this holy season, for what are you “watching?” Where is your desert, your private gloom? For what might you be alert during this time? Cultivate the practice of attention; keep looking because God promises to fill the entire horizon if only we would look. “Watch!”



Sally Vance-Trembath is a Senior Lecturer in the Religious Studies Department at SCU.

Saturday of the First Week of Advent - Dec. 5

[Isaiah 30:19-21, 33:22, 23-26, Psalm 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5A, 6-8](#)

Matthew recalls for us the words of Jesus to the disciples, “Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.” This reminds me of the Prayer for Generosity, attributed to St. Ignatius, in which we pray that we may, “give and not count the cost...labor and not ask for reward, save that of knowing that I do your will.” Though we pray this often at the high school where I teach, I wonder how often we (faculty and students, alike) stop to really reflect on these words. How much do we mean it? It’s a pretty big ask, after all, to keep giving without getting anything in return! However, Jesus prefaces this ask by reminding us, “Without cost you have received.” Indeed, we have received. And what a perfect time – during Advent – to remember all we have received! Just as God entered humanity through the person of Jesus Christ, God enters our lives on a daily basis, often through those who love us and through the inspiration to love others. It can be easy at times to focus on what we lack and on those who we feel wronged us. Inevitably, though, there have been moments of inner peace, moments when someone loved us without asking for anything in return, moments when we felt the serenity of loving others without any expectations. So during this Advent season, let’s take a moment to reflect: Who has shared God’s love with me? With whom have I shared God’s love?



Karen Chambers is a JST alumna who is currently the Director of Campus Ministry and a Theology teacher at Verbum Dei High School in Los Angeles, a member school of the Cristo Rey Network.

Second Sunday of Advent - Dec. 6

[Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15a; Mark 1:1-8](#)

In the Gospel, Mark begins with the prophecy that was claimed by the Prophets of the Old Testament (Isaiah and Malachi) about the Good news of the coming of the Messiah. “A voice proclaims: in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!” (Isaiah 40:3). This prophecy is also echoed by John the Baptist, who, like his predecessors, declares himself to be the ‘preparer’ of the way of this Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ.

John’s message to the Jews (and us today) is to prepare for this coming of the Messiah ‘by seeking forgiveness.’ Like the Jews, their biggest sin was idolatry of their own created gods, and for Africans, our biggest sins are tribalism, greed, and abuse of power. These vices contradict the Gospel of Jesus. They are to be eliminated from our lives. For Jesus requires from us a radical change of lifestyle. He brings us his life, death and resurrection.

How am I waiting in joyful hope for Jesus at Christmas this year? I should consider radically turning my life around and leaving my old ways. I should be inspired to put God first in everything.



“Lord, grant that I may see you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day” (Spiritual Exercises #104).

David Masikini, S.J. is the Parochial Administrator at Saint Patrick Church in West Oakland.

Memorial of Saint Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church - Dec. 7

[Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 85:9AB and 10, 11-12, 13-14; Luke 5:17-26](#)



Gretchen Markle, *Phil and Catherine*, watercolor on paper, ca. 2017
(used with permission)

In late summer of 2019, my friend Phil Volker, who has been living with stage IV cancer for 8 years, gathered together his friends and family for a celebration of life. Phil is a veteran, a grandfather, and a pilgrim. A general do-it-yourselfer, he also mapped a scaled-down version of the Camino de Santiago, or Way of Saint James, onto his backyard. Many have found consolation in walking and praying with Phil along the simple circuit.

Phil's backyard pilgrimage trail was blazed at the beginning of his journey with cancer. Today's reading, too, is a pilgrimage from suffering into consolation and hope. God is here to guide us through the wilderness, the 'parched land' of pain and anxiety. We are shown a road, a 'holy way', that appears before us during this Advent season of joyful hope; 'it is for those with a journey to make.'

The summer gathering at Phil's ranch lasted for three days. He and his wife, Rebecca, graciously shared their summer harvest; corn roasted on the open fire and blackberry cobbler from the brambling bushes along the Camino trail.

Rebecca, who has also been living with Phil's chronic illness, belongs to the Threshold Choir. It is a vocal group originally founded by Kate Munger in California which took seed in the late nineties. The choir sings at bedsides and hospices for those going through major transitions and facing 'death, grief, or suffering'. On Saturday evening Rebecca, with three of the women from the local Threshold Choir, led the gathering in a simple chant by Ram Dass with lyrics attributed to Rumi: 'We are all just walking each other home.' We sang for Phil, who has been hovering in that liminal borderland between life and life eternal for quite some time.

We sang for the caregivers, the healers. We sang for each other and for God.



Dear God, show us the holy way in times of suffering and grief as we await your coming through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Kathryn Barush, D.Phil.

THOMAS E. BERTELSEN JR. ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ART HISTORY AND
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Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Dec. 8
Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Psalm 98:1, 2-3AB, 3CD-4; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38

Many of us aspire to be servant leaders. We strive to be women and men for others. And, as we walk this path, we all like to choose the ways we will serve. But, sometimes, we are surprised and disconcerted by what is asked of us, either by others or by God. God does things through us that we ourselves cannot do, or even measure... often in ways we don't understand. The supreme example of this phenomenon is the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary that we celebrate today. The feast, often confused with the Annunciation, is preparing Mary for her future role as she is conceived without original sin. Eventually, asking her to be the mother of God was not on Mary's agenda. She was, in fact, taken aback and perplexed by the appearance of the Angel delivering this news at the Annunciation. Filled with uncertainty and no small degree of anxiety, she responds with generosity and trust: *Here I am the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word. Luke 1. 27-29*



Good and gracious God, as we wait in joyful hope for your coming, let me let you do what you want to do through me today. Let me serve you with generosity and trust.

Jacqueline Powers Doud is a member of the JST Board of Directors and president emerita of Mount Saint Mary's University.



Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent - Dec. 9

[Isaiah 40:25-31, Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10, Matthew 11:28-30](#)

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” These words from today’s gospel offer us balm as we navigate the global pandemic, and this challenging year draws to a close. Ours is a God who intimately knows our hopes, joys, and sorrows, and who walks with us. Our loving and merciful God understands our burdens, weariness, and labors.

Jesus encourages us to take his yoke, which is easy, and his burden, which is light. In Matthew’s gospel, as scripture scholars note, Jesus is the personification of divine Wisdom. Jesus’ yoke refers to his vision of justice and mercy, and he invites us to learn from his gentle heart.

Today, consider taking a few quiet moments to reflect on Jesus’ invitation: “Come to me...and I will give you rest.” Can you bring your labors, and your intentions, to Jesus’ wise and compassionate gaze?



Loving God, as we prepare to celebrate the mystery of the ever-present gift of the incarnation in our suffering world, help us to build your kingdom of justice. Inspired by the words of Isaiah in today’s first reading, we pray that we may renew our strength in you. We pray that we may run and not grow tired; that we may walk in your light and not grow weary.

Deborah Ross is Lecturer and Director of Ministerial Formation at the Jesuit School of Theology.

Thursday of the Second Week of Advent - Dec. 10

[Isaiah 41:13-20, Psalm 145:1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13AB, Isaiah 45:8, Matthew 11:11-15](#)

My immediate reaction upon reading today's first reading from Second Isaiah was, "Isaiah, you are so harsh!" Prophetic messages are not necessarily comforting. In fact, they should shake us from our spiritual Complacency and self-reliance. Isaiah uses the terms 'worm Jacob' and 'maggot Israel' to remind his people that they were not always faithful to their Lord. They had ears but did not always hear. So too with us. Sometimes we don't want to hear the difficult words God wants to say to us. And, sometimes we do not want to do God's will because we want to be in control.

Despite his harsh rhetoric, Isaiah's message is ultimately one of hope. He assures us of God's abiding presence and care which will be manifest in the needy becoming the privileged, deserts becoming marshlands, and parched lands becoming springs of water. The prophet is thus urging us to admit our need for God this Advent, especially in light of what we have all experienced in this difficult year. As you prepare for the coming of Emmanuel, what are the dry and arid parts of your lives that need the saving spring of Christ's life and love?



Gracious and merciful God, show us your kindness by watering the dry and arid parts of our hearts that are parched with thirst for you. Help us to prepare for the One who is to come by increasing our trust in you and loving you in all things. Amen.

San Mai, S.J. is a Jesuit alumnus of JST and associate pastor at St. Aloysius Parish in Spokane, Washington.

Friday of the Second Week of Advent - Dec. 11

[Isaiah 48:17-19; Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6; Matthew 11:16-19](#)

Matthew 11: 16-19 *Look, he's a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.*

A LETTER TO JESUS

Jesus, My Companion,

How was it that you felt so free? How was it that you felt free enough not to worry about being associated with *those people*? I mean, don't get me wrong: I'm totally in awe of it. Not only that, I actually think I want to commit my life to at least attempting to do a similar thing. But when push comes to shove, Jesus, I have a reputation that I cling to. I'm obsessed with being seen as "good." And yet, there you are again, hanging out with *those people*.

Can you do me a favor, Jesus? I want you to show me how it is that you got to the point of being detached from your reputation, how it is you loved so scandalously. I really need help with that. Because, you know what? I just feel really trapped sometimes by our religious institutions that often become "who's in, who's out" clubs.



Jesus, the more I contemplate your life, the more I see how The Way you lived was an embodied practice of scandalous love. Somehow, you were able to remain committed to the religious practices from which you came, while at the same time being free enough not to become trapped in a religious club of self-righteousness. How did you do it? Please show me The Way. And while you're at it, can you please show what person or persons I can love a bit more scandalously today? Amen.

Tony Cortese, SJ, is a Jesuit scholastic of the Jesuits West Province and Program Manager for Ignatian Spirituality at the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education here at Santa Clara University

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe - Dec. 12

[Zechariah 2:14-17; Judith 13:18BCDE, 19; Luke 1:26-47](#)

The gospel of Luke (1:26-38) gives us a scene where ‘hopelessness’ becomes hope and an act of trust. The narrative tells us how God communicates with Mary through an Angel named ‘Gabriel’. This angel transmitted a message to Mary in the small town of Galilee. Even though she was afraid and doubtful, according to Luke, Mary assumed that the mission came from God, which means her willingness and bravery contributed to the plan for salvation. Now the people of God have a new leader--a king, who comes to restore human dignity.

Occasionally, our lives can draw uncertain, unclear, unshaped, and doubtful moments with external or internal factors, not controllable. For example, a few months ago, we did not know we would learn how to live physically-distanced from relatives, friends, loved ones, and coworkers. We also did not know that we would use a mask in public or private spaces for more than eight hours a day. In the middle of this “new normal,” we should take the figure of Mary as a model and submit ourselves to God’s presence and trust because there is always a new tomorrow and the salvation plan appears in new contexts.



Prayer: God, the giver of life, we are grateful for the essential workers, for those who risk their lives on the farms and supermarkets providing food. And for those who spend uncountable hours working in hospitals and labs, in an attempt to minimize the impact of the virus on our lives. Thank you, because we learned how meaningful the simple things are in life.

Diego Salazar-Galvis is a JST alumni and Theology-Social Justice teacher at Convent Sacred Heart in New York City

Third Sunday of Advent - Dec. 13

[Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; Luke 1:46b-55; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28](#)

Growing up, the third Sunday in Advent meant the pink candle in our Advent wreath, and my excitement for Christmas grew. I didn't realize it, but my feelings were right on point. Guadete Sunday is halfway through Advent and we pause from waiting and repenting to rejoice in Christ's coming soon. Guadete actually means rejoice, and the readings emphasize this. Both readings use the word rejoice, and in the responsorial psalm we hear Mary's Magnificat and repeat her proclamation "my soul rejoices in the Lord." The Gospel recounts how John the Baptist showed his zeal to prepare the way of the Lord. I picture his enthusiasm as he convinces people to come into the water for baptism and readiness for Christ. Isaiah's "year of favor" is finally at hand, and John wants to make sure everyone is ready for the celebration.

The Church urges us to be joyful today. Something very difficult to be this year as we are faced with one hardship after another. In his letters to the early Christians faced with persecution, Paul tells how. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in all circumstances give thanks. In the Ignatian Examen, which Ignatius encouraged his companions to pray twice daily, we give gratitude for blessings big and small before praying anything else.



Pray the Examen today and take extra time to rejoice in the blessings in your life, and look forward with excitement to celebrate Christ's birth which brings glad tidings, healing and liberty as promised in Isaiah.

Sarah Bonini works in the Alumni Association and graduated with her J.D. in '93 and will receive her M.A in the GPPM program in June.

Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, priest and doctor of the Church - Dec. 14
Nehemiah 24:2-7, 15-17A; Psalm 25:4-5AB, 6 AND 7BC, 8-9; Psalm 85:8; Matthew
21:23-27

A few years ago, I was stuck in a situation where differences led to deep division. Some checked out. Others stewed in growing resentment. All sides dug in. Feeling helpless, I did not know what to do. A wise Jesuit friend shared with me the sage advice of St. John of the Cross, whose feast we celebrate today: “Where there is no love, put love and there you will find love.”

Taking the Carmelite saint’s counsel to heart, I looked for ways to offer kind words and encouraging gestures. I tried not to take things personally. With those I was growing particularly frustrated, I prayed, “Lord, I am having trouble loving this person. Please show me what you love in them so I can love them too.” Small, simple steps, but they made a difference for me. Divisions gradually healed; the ice of indifference slowly melted.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus had a choice. Confronted by his adversaries seeking to trap him, he could have responded with righteous indignation, condemning them in a rhetorical display. Instead, in this acrimonious situation, Jesus chose to put love: a gentle rebuke in the form of questions, hopefully guiding them to understanding.

Putting love where love seems absent is a fitting Advent practice, like lighting a candle in a dark room, the glow spreading to every dark corner. As with light, love is easy to notice once we put it there.



Lord, where there is no love, help me to put love, so that I and others may find love more easily.

Kevin O’Brien, S.J., is president of Santa Clara University and former dean of the Jesuit School of Theology.

Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent - Dec. 15

[Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Psalm 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 AND 23; Matthew 21:28-32](#)

In today's gospel, Jesus illustrates his lesson with a tale of a father and two sons. The father orders one son to work in the vineyard. He adamantly refuses, "No, I will not." Then the father orders the second son to do the same. He respectfully agrees, "Yes, sir." By the end of the day, the first son reconsidered and actually did what his father demanded. The second son, who'd been so agreeable, never did.

I am pondering St. Ignatius' presumption of goodwill with these two. We've all seen – or been – that surly teenager refusing a parent's request. What made him reconsider? What made him place his relationship with his father ahead of his own dreams or "to do" list that day?

And then we have the second son. Did he intend to ignore his father's request from the start? Or was he simply distracted by urgent matters or people who desperately needed him that day?



Teach us to be more honest with ourselves and You, O Lord our God. Guide us to reconsider our first responses, keeping our minds and hearts open to Your will and surprises. Help us value relationships with You and others more than "to do" lists and well-crafted life plans.

How will we answer God's call today?

Lisa Kloppenberg is Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Santa Clara University.

Wednesday of the Third Week of Advent - Dec. 16

[Isaiah 45:6C-8, 18, 21C-25; Psalm 85:9AB AND 10, 11-12, 13-14; Isaiah 40:9-10; Luke 7:18B-23](#)

This Advent season we search for joy amid uncertainty that surrounds us. In today's Gospel we are reminded by John's actions and Jesus' response to lean into our faith and to trust God during times of doubt. "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them..." We are called to gravitate toward God, especially when our path appears hopeless or too challenging.

Isaiah reminds us that God is the creator of all, "the designer and maker of the earth who established it, not creating it to be a waste, but designing it to be lived in." Isaiah proclaims, "kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss. Truth shall spring out of the earth."

As we await the "clouds [to] rain down the Just One and the earth bring forth a Savior," today's readings reveal how joy is to be found during this time of uncertainty. Joy is found in cherishing our earth and in caring for all that comprises our shared home. Joy is found by accompanying others, especially the most vulnerable among us. Joy is found in actions calling us to interact with kindness, empathy, respect and justice; cornerstones of a nurturing community in God's home. Joy is found in leaning into our faith and trusting God always, but most especially in times of uncertainty.



Lord, help us find the gift of joy this Advent season. Give us grace and strength to open our hearts to see and feel your presence. Encourage us to reach out to those who are lonely or in need, care for our shared home, and be present in ways that are meaningful to others. Guide us to act with kindness, respect and empathy. Help us remember that while we are physically apart, our faith and love continue to hold us together as we strive for a kind and just world. Guide us to find the gift of joy as we await the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Molly McDonald is a graduate of the SCU School of Law and serves as chief of staff to President Kevin O'Brien, S.J.

Thursday of the Third Week of Advent - Dec. 17

[Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 3-4AB, 7-8, 17; Matthew 1:1-17](#)

“Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever.”

Today’s Responsorial Psalm uses the royal psalm composed by Solomon as its foundation. It is essentially a prayer for the king, that his rule be righteous and just in the eyes of God.

The words Justice and Peace are repeated throughout today’s prayer. Solomon’s words are a powerful reminder that our pursuit of a just and peaceful world is the pursuit of God’s ambition for us.

The psalm is also a reminder that we are expected to pray for these things, that to simply expect justice and peace from our leaders or each other is never sufficient. Our faith tells us that the power of prayer will make the difference, and each of us makes a difference through our faithful prayers and adoration.

So, as we continue to wait in joyful hope, let us remember what we seek - a world of justice and peace which can only be realized through our Messiah.



God of justice and peace help us have faith that we can each shape the world through our faith and our prayers. Amen.

Peter Gibbons is a board member of the Jesuit School of Theology.

Friday of the Third Week of Advent - Dec. 18

[Jeremiah 23:5-8; Psalm 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19; Matthew 1:18-25](#)

In a passage that begins with an ethical question and ends with the Virgin Birth, Joseph is confronted with a recurring choice in the New Testament, “Should justice or compassion prevail?” Doubtlessly, he was confounded by the news of Mary’s pregnancy. Surely, she was not the kind of girl who got into trouble! Yet all indications were a child was growing within her. Raised in the confines of his Galilean culture he knew Scripture condemned women for this. He wanted to live according to the law but loved his betrothed. Divorce would split the difference. Possibly, the child’s father would take Mary as his wife; a chance to avoid humiliation and death by stoning. Then, in a dream, the solution comes to Joseph. Marry her anyway, accept the child as his own. An angel confirms his resolution and prompts salvation history to run its course.

New Testament stories prize compassion over justice; often to the astonishment of Jesus’ audience. Whether it is his love for little children (Mat 9:14), letting an adulteress off the hook (Jn 7:53-8:53) or paying everyone a living wage (Mat 20:1-16) the bible acknowledges the value of justice but comes down squarely on the side of mercy. This radical approach to life is risky: we can be taken advantage of, it doesn’t employ good business sense and our compassion might be mistaken for lack of moral courage. Yet, Jesus makes clear this is the logic of God’s kingdom.



Fr. Nicholas Glisson is Pastor at Saint Mary Magdalen Church in Berkeley. He completed his Ph.D. at the Graduate Theological Union in 1997 and serves on the JST Board of Directors.

Saturday of the Third Week of Advent - Dec. 19

[Judges 13:2-7, 24-25A; Psalm 71:3-4A, 5-6AB, 16-17; Luke 1:5-25](#)

Zechariah's Doubt.

I love today's classic Lukan story engaging the emotions of fear and anxiety, joy and gladness, doubt and amazement.

We have the setup of the righteous but barren couple Zechariah and Elizabeth. Then the appearance of a divine messenger to Zechariah and Zechariah's reaction of anxiety and fear. Gabriel's announcement of a child, a seemingly impossible promise of joy and gladness. Zechariah's doubt. Zechariah being struck dumb. The crowd's amazement. Elizabeth's pregnancy. The promise fulfilled.

I have often been like Zechariah. Fearful. Anxious. Doubting. Dumb. Today stuck in my own fearful imaginings around the pandemic, the economic crisis, and personal struggles, rather than open to the possibility of God's infinite love and goodness.

Ignatius provides a clue to obtain this openness. For Ignatius our relationship with Jesus is nourished through our conversation as between friends, listening and paying attention to our emotions and the movements of the heart and the spirit. What if in our divine conversations, we closed our mouth and opened our ears to God's amazing promise of joy and gladness?



Prayer: Jesus, I am filled with doubts and fears like Zechariah. Help me quiet my mind and my heart, so I can be open to the movement of your Spirit.

Sit. Breathe. Empty your mind of words. Wait. Listen. What amazing joyful message do you hear God saying to you today? What are you being invited to experience?

Gregory Kepferle is an alumnus of JST and is CEO of Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

Fourth Sunday of Advent - Dec. 20

[2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Luke 1:46b-55; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38](#)

Almost ten months into this time of pandemic, we have experienced profound limits on personal encounters with family, friends, colleagues, community groups, congregations. So I find myself absorbing Luke's account of Mary's encounter with Gabriel with greater appreciation. The encounter itself transforms her. Gabriel's greeting, offering peace and affirming God's deep love for her, helps Mary to move from fear to freedom. Even in her confusion, she musters the courage and trust to say "Yes!" to God.

This Gospel invites us to reflect on those encounters with companions in faith which enable us to say "yes" to our God. As Christians we are known, called, and sustained with a faith that is enfleshed: through Jesus himself, to be sure; through Mary, with her gutsy "yes" again and again; and also through persons who have served as messengers of God's love and call to us.

We might ask ourselves: Who are the Gabriels in my life? Who has helped me to say "yes!" to the God of peace and justice, the God of compassion and healing, the God revealed through Mary? And to whom am I called to serve as a messenger of God's peace and love so that they may grow in freedom? May we be grateful for all those grace-filled encounters in our own lives.



Jack Treacy, SJ, is a JST alumnus and serves as University Relations Chaplain at Santa Clara University.

Monday of the Fourth Week of Advent - Dec. 21

[Song of Songs 2:8-14; Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Luke 1:39-45](#)

Today, let's remember that we were created for companionship. Whether it's the lover we yearn for (as vividly described in the Song of Songs) or the family member we turn to for support, the Word makes clear that we are drawn to one another. Mary's hasty trip to Judah in Luke's Visitation shows us how God gifts us with the people we need on our life's journey, with its unexpected twists and turns. Mary has said her "yes" and takes off. Not to face her mission alone, but to share this exciting news with her cousin. Perhaps Mary also seeks comfort in the face of the uncertain and dangerous road ahead. God puts Elizabeth on Mary's path, a woman who knows what it means to trust in the Lord despite all odds. An elder with her own wisdom, but also with the capacity to recognize the unique strength of her teenage cousin. She proclaims a blessing of encouragement upon Mary: "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." Generations apart, God has gifted these two women with new life that will become the foundation of their salvation and ours. And, God has gifted them with each other, to share in the weighty challenge and more brilliant joy that this promise will bring.

Who has God gifted you with to accompany you on your particular path? How have you recognized each other's God-given strength? Proclaim a blessing on that person in prayer or directly to them today.



Catherine Holcombe is a JST alumna and Theology teacher at Saint Joseph Notre Dame High School in Alameda

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Advent - Dec. 22

[1 Samuel 1:24-28, 2:1, 4-5, 6-7; Luke 1:46-56](#)

Our readings today are a treat for anyone among us who draws special inspiration from stories of women in the Scriptures. Today we read about two beloved daughters of the Lord God. Hannah, in the first reading and the psalm, and Mary, in the Gospel, are strong, faith-filled women who overcome with gratitude to God for God's intervention in their lives. We understand them to be devout believers in the God of their forefathers. But today's readings reveal something much more than a "belief" in God. Rather, we are witnesses to their deep, visceral and personal experiences of God's mercy and might.

Imagine the immense joy that Hannah felt when, after years of misery, sadness and humiliation from being barren, at long last she is blessed with a child! The Lord heard her persistent pleas and brought an end to her long darkness with the birth of a son. And how does Hannah respond? The magnitude of her thanksgiving seems incomprehensible as she offers her very son to the One who showed her mercy. Hannah's story reminds us that God's mercy can be so profound, so upending, so unimaginable, that it gives rise to a response also profound and unimaginable. We just need to be open to it.

Mary's Magnificat is a poetic hymn of thanksgiving to God - that she, a humble woman would be lifted up and collaborate with God in the redemption of the world! Her hymn joyfully expresses her personal gratitude and announces the depths of God's mercy in the world: "The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty." Through Mary's "yes", we too can feel overcome with thanksgiving - God is ever-present in the world and our redemption is at hand!



Gracious God,

In this season of Advent, like Hannah and Mary, may we brim over with awe and thanksgiving to God – for the gift of God's Son made possible by Mary's "yes." Help us experience the joy of recognizing God's mercy among us and strengthen us to say "yes" to God, to assist in God's redemptive work in the world.

Amen.

Anne McMahon received her MA degree from Santa Clara University and serves as the Assistant to the President for Communications.

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Advent - Dec. 23

[Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Psalm 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14; Luke 1:57-66](#)

In today's gospel reading, we hear Elizabeth's barren womb brought into the world John, the precursor, a gift of the Lord's mercy. Zechariah, the unbelieving father, regains his voice singing the irruption of God in history through this unexpected child. Through the Holy Spirit's power, Elizabeth, who was sterile and advanced in age, conceived and bore a son. We can, therefore, believe with certainty that life is a gift from God. The right attitude of human beings before the greatest gift of life is that of gratitude and reciprocating this gift by safeguarding the sanctity and purity of life. It was a custom among the Jews to give the new-born the father's or a relative's name. However, through divine intervention, the child receives the name 'John.' He will break down old pious traditions. This novelty is found in John because he is the one to prepare the way for the one who will make everything new. In Jesus, there is the beginning of a radically new story, a new way of understanding and knowing our God. The waiting for advent is almost complete: The Lord is near.



Prayer: Lord, in this world of consumerism, please help us slow down and be entirely present for you this Advent Season. Help us to be fully attentive to the wonders of your creation that you have laid out before us, and be more appreciative of the things we are blessed with. Fully open our eyes, ears, and hearts to all of the beauty and blessings you lay out before us so we may know You and Your love more intimately. Amen.

Alendro DaCosta, a Jesuit Scholastic, 1st-year M.Div. and STB student at JST.

Thursday in the Fourth Week of Advent - Mass in the Morning - Dec. 24
2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16; Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29; Luke 1:67-79

Sometimes, in our zeal to build, create, and produce, we forget about God's ability to provide for us, protect us, and to, ultimately, have our best interest at heart. In our first covenant reading, God tells the Prophet Nathan to remind the zealous King David that it is God who first cares for God's own people: "I will fix a place for my people Israel...I will give you rest from all your enemies." Sure, our (human) aspirations and pursuits are noble and good, but let us not lose sight of where our ultimate provision and protection comes from. Only in this humble space of holy consciousness can we then, and most appropriately chant: "Forever I will sing the goodness of the Lord."

As good as our creation is, and as great as we may think of ourselves, we still depend on the provision of God; the sustenance that comes from Heaven; the salvation that flows from God's grace. Today, on this Thursday in the fourth week of Advent, we prepare for the coming of God's most amazing expression of grace and greatest gift to the world: our Lord and savior, Jesus Christ. He is the gift that was "swore to our father Abraham"; He is the gift that "would save us from our enemies [and sometimes we are enemies unto ourselves]"; He is the gift that shines "on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death...to guide our feet into the way of peace."



Lord, in your grace, remind us more clearly of the greatest gift given to the world in the person and principle of Christ. Save us from every enemy of our souls; provide for us, as only You can, and show us the best way to be the people of God. Come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Medene J.R. Presley is a 3rd-year M.Div. student at JST

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Christmas - Dec. 25

[Isaiah 62:11-12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:14, 2:15-20](#)

The readings for Christmas morning at dawn are a present worth unwrapping, hopeful as a new sun rising: Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord asks us to “See . . . your savior comes.” The Promise has arrived, ‘pitching his tent among us’ as God’s gift to humankind.

Notice the surprise gift inside this message: “Here is his reward *with him*. . . . They shall be called the holy people, the redeemed of the LORD.” Emmanuel is God-*with-us*. We who seem to feel so unworthy at times, so “not up to the task,” especially in these Covid days, are found today under the Tree of Life, wrapped up in grace, and tagged with a name: “the holy people,” “Frequented,” and “not forsaken.”

Here is a Christmas contemplation: Remember as a child the excitement of gifts under the tree, the shaking of the packages, and looking at the tag to see whose it was? Imagine today, amid all the many concerns we have, that the Divine gift arrives, wrapped in swaddling clothes, so very poor. God’s gift, the long-awaited Savior, delivered into humble dependence, saves from the ground up where we are, making us part of His Body, offered back to His Father in praise and thanks. “All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds,” Luke says. “And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” Maybe that is a way to pray on this busy day.



“God of surprises, thank you for giving us the Gift of the Incarnate One among us - not only today, but every day, every moment. We sing with the angels, “Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. Es justo y necessario.”

Fr. Paul Janowiak S.J. teaches sacramental and liturgical theology at JST.

Feast of Saint Stephen, First Martyr - Dec. 26

[Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Psalm 31:3, 6, 8, 16, 17, 118:26, 27; Matthew 10:17-22](#)

December 26th, the Day after Christmas, brings a certain amount of sadness with it. Usually, all the gifts are open, the Christmas celebrations are over, the advent wreath is put away, and we brace ourselves as we head into the cold months of winter. This year there is an extra sense of sadness as numerous people are ill, many are alone, and all of us deal with isolation due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Time and time again we hear the scriptures calling us to not worry and trust in God, but how to do that, especially in this time of so much grief and uncertainty. In my graduate studies at JST, I took a class called Pneumatology, the study of the Holy Spirit, and what I learned about the Spirit transformed how I see God working in our lives. It is through the Spirit that God meets us in our sadness and transforms our grief into newness. In today's Gospel, Jesus tells the disciples that they should not worry about the judgment or condemnation they will receive when they speak about their faith for the Spirit will be with them. "For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you." The Spirit guided them, and I believe through this time it will guide us. How do we trust? How do we persevere through this? The Spirit will guide us, as God tells us over and over again. Let us lean into our sadness and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us into our new year! How are you allowing the Spirit to transform your life?



Prayer: Loving God, during this Christmas season allow our hearts to rest in you and deeply trust in the unknowns of life. This day is the first day of Kwanzaa, which lasts for seven days and is a celebration of culture for the African American Community. Out of the seven themes of Kwanzaa, the last one is Imani (faith). Let us pray to have faith like St. Steven did and follow the Spirit wherever it may lead. Amen

Bio: Mary Reilly graduated from JST in the Spring of 2019 with her Master of Divinity. She is now a Religion Teacher at St. Francis High School in Mountain View, CA.

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph - Dec. 27

[Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5; Colossians 3:12-21; Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19; Luke 2:22-40](#)

In today's Gospel, we read about Jesus' Presentation in the Temple and meet Simeon, a devout old man. Coming to the temple, where Mary and Joseph present Jesus to God, Simeon takes Jesus in his arms and encounters the gift of his salvation, for which he had been waiting his whole life.

Simeon's encounter with Jesus reminds me of my father's passing. My devout dad, after suffering a heart attack, was in a coma for days. As my family surrounded him in prayer, waiting for the Lord to take him back home, the miraculous occurred - slowly, both of his arms elevated, high into the air, as if he was reaching to embrace Jesus. After they returned to his side, he took his final breath. We have faith that our beloved father took Jesus in his arms and encountered the gift of his salvation for which he had been waiting his whole life.

My father was a model of faith to his 8 children and 22 grandchildren, and his last moments validated our trust in eternal life. Pope Francis said, "If you want to be hope for the future, you have to receive the torch from your grandfather and your grandmother." Today, on the Feast of the Holy Family, I invite you to reflect on the gift of elders in your family. How have your elders instilled faith in you? How can you "pass the torch" of faith to the young in your family?



Lord, like Simeon, make me more aware of Your Holy Spirit's nudges. Help me hear your call to bring comfort to my elders who are isolated as they yearn for connection with family. Move me to be more selfless and thoughtful in sharing my love with them. Inspire me to live like Simeon, recognizing that every moment of my life is a gift to be used for your Greater Glory. Amen.

Dianna Finocchiaro Gallagher is the Director of External Relations at the Jesuit School of Theology and is a graduate of Santa Clara University.

Feast of the Holy Innocents, Martyrs - Dec. 28

1 John 1:5—2:2; Psalm 124:2-3, 4-5, 7-8; Matthew 2:13-18

“Behold God beholding you, and smiling.” This quote from Anthony de Mello, S.J. was shared with me while making Spiritual Exercises after completing a grueling meditation on all the personal and social sins I had committed. This is one of the most baffling mysteries of the First Week: that God knows us intimately, even the most broken parts, and still loves us.

When I imagine being “beheld,” I think of infants between 6 and 18 months. Old enough to lock eyes but not to speak, they can gaze and smile at you for seconds that feel like hours. No matter the gazer (your own child, nephew, grandchild, or a stranger on the subway), being beheld like this is a significant experience. It is a treasure to be seen, and even more to be enjoyed.

The inherent goodness of children makes Herod’s crime in today’s Gospel all the more heinous. We learn “he ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity, two years and under” after hearing the magi’s prediction about Jesus’ Kingship. Driven by fear and an obsession with social status and power, Herod commits mass infanticide and forces the Holy Family to become refugees.

While this act seems unconscionable, we still read stories today of refugee children separated from their parents at the U.S. border, child victims of war in Myanmar, sex trafficking in Kenya, and innumerable victims of abortion across the world. They too, are Holy Innocents, and deserve not only our prayers but also our protection and advocacy.

Let us acknowledge today that we have not done enough to protect the children in our world, ask for God’s forgiveness, and pledge together to do more to care for our Holy Innocents, that we (and they) may walk in the light of God.



O God, we remember today, the slaughter of the holy innocents of Bethlehem by King Herod. Receive, we pray, into the arms of your mercy all innocent victims; and by your great might, establish your rule of justice, love, and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. -Book of Common Prayer of the U.S. Episcopal Church

Dan Dixon, S.J. is a Jesuit scholastic in his first-year of the Master of Divinity program at JST.

The Fifth Day in the Octave of Christmas - Dec. 29

1 John 2:3-11; Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 5-6; Luke 2:22-35

“For the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness.” 1 John 2:8

In Rwanda, I met Severaina, a woman who was attacked by her neighbor during the genocide. Years later, the neighbor returned after serving time in prison and asked Severaina for forgiveness. Terrified by his presence, she told him that she would think about it. He asked if he could build her a new house. Severaina agreed. In the process of building the house, several times he asked for forgiveness. Each time Severaina told him she would think about it. When the house was done, the community had a celebration. The man confessed what he had done in front of everyone gathered and asked for forgiveness again. This time, Severaina granted it. After that, Severaina and the man lived as neighbors. Her son grew up and fell in love with the man’s daughter. Today the son and daughter are married and have a child. “We live as family now,” Severaina said.

I have thought of Severaina and others I met in Rwanda often this past year. The stark reality of divisiveness present in our country troubles me. And it lives in me; I confess that I often default to seeing “my side” as morally right and want to judge harshly those “on the other side.” Some of those people are in my own family. Yet the people I met in Rwanda, the light that I felt in their presence, challenge me to seek another way.

What might it look like to hold together the clarity of my beliefs AND my love for my brother with whom I disagree?



God, please uproot the spirit of divisiveness in me.

Rosemary Feerick is a JST alum, member of the Board of Trustees and Co-Director of Wisdom & Money.

The Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas - Dec. 30

1 John 2:12-17; Psalm 96:7-8, 8-9, 10; Luke 2:36-40

Raymond E. Brown interprets Anna and Simeon as embodying the piety of the “poor ones”, those who have no else to turn to but God: the poor, the elderly, the sick, the widows, and the orphans. In their utter vulnerability, these poor people place their confidence in God, on whom they depend completely. Anna, an elderly widow who worships and prays continuously in the temple, gives thanks for the fulfillment of God’s promised redemption upon seeing baby Jesus. A prophetess, she announces to all others who have been waiting with anticipation as well.

Such a complete dependence upon God is moving. Anna reminds me of the poor I have met who have profoundly impacted me with their faith, as well as their personal testimonies of how God has been present to them in their vulnerability. “Anas”, like faithful members of the Verbum Dei family, and the Anas at FCI-Dublin, have been eager prophetesses of God who comes to them in their need, even in times of desolation when God seems absent. These women have witnessed that one who places one’s hope in and waits for God will see God. Deep and desperate desires for good things like an early release have given way to peace and gratitude for God’s unconditional love and presence.

As we continue to celebrate and rejoice in God’s coming this Christmas, may we remember and give thanks for the Annas in our lives who have borne witness to new life in God. In gratitude for them, may we be open to the invitation that God may make in our lives to serve the poor. And may we also consider if there is anything we need to let go of in order to be able to embrace new life in baby Jesus in gratitude and joy.



Silvana Arevalo is a third year Masters of Divinity student at JST

The Seventh Day in the Octave of Christmas - Dec. 31

[1 John 2:18-21; Psalm 96:1-2, 11-12, 13; John 1:14, 12; John 1:1-18](#)

In our year-end festival, we rejoice at the light of God's Word that shines in the darkness by coming into a weary world wary of God but also waiting for divine help. That Word has forever taken on our human flesh and life. To everything good and bad in our world, this Word, who is Jesus Christ, brings God's life, grace, and truth. Christ's birth on earth grants us the chance at a birth from heaven, a birth into a life of knowing God, whose truth is otherwise veiled from us. Celebrating Jesus' birth and our own as God's children, we greet tomorrow a new beginning, a new year. We want 2021 to be better than 2020, but what will make it so? By Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God has unsealed for us the anointing of the Holy Spirit so we can form together a great company of those who recognize Christ among us, who cling to God by sharing with each other the divine mercy and love. Masks and vaccines might keep us alive in the months ahead, but really to live in a truly new year, we need only receive the Savior who comes, shining his light through the eyes of those, especially the suffering, whose lives touch ours.



Word of God made flesh, as this year breathes its last sighs, make all things new by the grace of your Spirit, by the divine mercy you grant us through your brothers and sisters, who are ours.

Joe Mueller, S.J., is the Dean of the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University.

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God - Jan. 1

[Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8; Galatians 4:4-7; Hebrews 1:1-2; Luke 2:16-21](#)

Mary, Mother of Trust

The new year begins with a special feast honoring Mary, Mother of God. It reminds us of her central role in our salvation history. The Light of Christ entered the world after Mary spoke her remarkable refrain of trust: "Be it done unto me according to Thy word."

The scene from today's gospel suggests Mary would have needed that trust in her first days of motherhood, crouched low in a barn with an older husband who may have still suspected her, surrounded by strangers, maybe with stinging words of gossip still on her mind, overheard by neighbors back in Nazareth. Lifting Jesus from the hay, it would have been so easy to doubt, and to imagine that she had made quite a mess of her young life.

This is never the face we see of Mary in paintings or the family creche we display with care each year. That Mary is not a panicked teenager, but a beacon of faith in the midst of the scene unfolding around her. St. Ignatius said we should trust in God enough to believe we could cross the sea on a bare plank if there were no ship. Our Holy Mother summoned such hopeful bravery in difficult days. She helps us to have courage now in hard times of our own.

Father Jerome Kodell, a former abbot of a Benedictine monastery in Arkansas, once summarized the entire Bible in three short sentences, seven words our Holy Mother must have accepted on faith: "I'm here. I love you. Trust me." 2020 was a year that may have left us all feeling a little at sea, but a new year is here!



Mary, Mother of God, help us to see beyond the dark clouds! Help us trust that after storms there is always sun!

Joe Kraemer, SJ, is a scholastic of the Jesuits West Province currently in his second year of Masters of Divinity studies at JST.

January 2

Dear *Waiting in Joyful Hope* Subscribers,

Thank you for praying with our community by your participation in *Waiting in Joyful Hope*. This project is a labor of love through which our contributors--students, alumni, faculty, and staff at the Jesuit School of Theology and Santa Clara University--share reflection on their personal journeys..

Over the past six weeks, we closed a historic year joined together as a community preparing in hopeful anticipation to celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In the first week of Advent, Elise Dubravec called us to turn to God to calm our fears and anxieties and to rest in God's infinite love. During the second week of Advent, a letter from Tony Cortese, S.J., to Jesus encouraged us to reflect on how our Savior loved so scandalously. President Kevin O'Brien, S.J., reminded us, in the third week of Advent, to lead with love wherever we go. In the last days of Advent, Greg Kepferle reflected on what it means to be open to the possibility of God's boundless love during this stressful and frightening time. On Christmas Day, Paul Janowiak, S.J., contemplated a new sun rising in our midst, giving us the gift of the Incarnate One. In our final reflection, Joe Kraemer, S.J., looked to our Blessed Mother on the Solemnity of Mary, who found such hopeful bravery in difficult days and inspires us to trust in God in the new year ahead.

We look forward to continuing this journey together. *Waiting in Joyful Hope* will return next year, and our online Lenten retreat, *A Heart Renewed*, will begin on Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2021. All current subscribers will continue to receive future seasonal reflections. If you would like to invite others to subscribe, please refer them to [this link](#).

In the weeks and months ahead, may Christ, the Great Physician, heal all our sick and guide us through this pandemic, even as he grants eternal rest to those who have passed on and comforts us who mourn them with the consolation of his almighty and merciful love. And may the Prince of Peace deepen and widen the blessing of truth and reconciliation throughout our world this year.

In our Lord,

Joseph G. Mueller, S.J.
Dean
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

