



Celebrate

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2025

Today Isaiah prophesies that a young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. The gospel is Matthew's account of the annunciation and birth of the one named Emmanuel, God-with-us. During these final days of Advent we pray, "O come, O come, Emmanuel," a beloved hymn based on the O Antiphons, ancient prayers appointed for the seven days preceding Christmas. On this final Sunday of Advent we prepare to celebrate the birth of the one born to save us from the power of sin and death.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Isaiah 7:10-16

An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹"Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." ¹²But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test." ¹³Then Isaiah said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel. ¹⁵He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted."

Psalm

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; refrain, Ps. 80:7



Let your face shine up - on us, and we shall be saved.

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph ¹ like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- ¹ on the cherubim.

²In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, ¹ and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and ¹ come to help us.

³Restore ¹ us, O God;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ shall be saved.

⁴O LORD ¹ God of hosts,
how long will your anger fume when your ¹ people pray? **R**

⁵You have fed them with the ¹ bread of tears;
you have given them bowls of ¹ tears to drink.

⁶You have made us the derision ¹ of our neighbors,
and our enemies laugh ¹ us to scorn.

⁷Restore us, O ¹ God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ shall be saved.

¹⁷Let your hand be upon the one at ¹ your right hand,
the one you have made so strong ¹ for yourself.

¹⁸And so will we never turn a- ¹ way from you;
give us life, that we may call up- ¹ on your name.

¹⁹Restore us, O LORD ¹ God of hosts;
let your face shine upon us, and we ¹ shall be saved. **R**

Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ²which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ

our Lord, ⁵through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel

Matthew 1:18-25

Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be pregnant from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to divorce her quietly. ²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to

name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." ²²All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

²³"Look, the virgin shall become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us." ²⁴When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife ²⁵but had no marital relations with her until she had given birth to a son, and he named him Jesus.

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

In our waiting and watching, we come to you in prayer, O God, trusting your promise to renew the church, the nations, and the whole creation.

A brief silence.

In the anticipation of these days, prepare our hearts for your arrival. Stir our spirits through the gifts of artists, musicians, poets, and preachers, as together we proclaim your advent among us. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

The earth breaks forth in singing as it heralds the Messiah's coming. Fill our hearts with wonder as we join heaven and nature in announcing this holy birth. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

You send your saving grace and peace to the nations. Lead us in work for justice and care for the common good. May we meet the Christ-child we seek in the faces of our neighbors. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

When tears of grief, exhaustion, or loneliness come, or physical or emotional hurt overwhelms us, come to our aid. Uphold all who are anxious, who know the challenges of depression, or who are ill (*especially*). God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Surround expectant parents and those suffering from infant loss with communities of support. Bless young children and new parents. Guide us in ways that provide safety for all children and those who care for them. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for all who have treasured the gospel and lived in faithful service. Strengthen our earthly journeys until, at the last, your face shines upon us and we are held in your love. God of grace,
hear our prayer.

Draw near to us, O God, as we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday 1 Samuel 2:1-10. **Tuesday** Genesis 21:1-21. **Wednesday** (Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Eve) Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]. **Thursday** (Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day) Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1:1-4 [5-12]; John 1:1-14. **Friday** (Stephen, Deacon and Martyr) Matthew 23:34-39. **Saturday** (John, Apostle and Evangelist) John 21:20-25. **First Sunday of Christmas** Isaiah 63:7-9; Psalm 148; Hebrews 2:10-18; Matthew 2:13-23.

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