

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Stand as Prophets

Father of all and sender of prophets,
in their old age, you gave Zechariah and
Elizabeth a Son called John.

Growing up strong in the Spirit,
John prepared a way for the Lord.
Through your holy prophets,
you give new sight to the blind,
set the lame walking, cleanse the lepers,
give hearing to the deaf, raise the dead,
and proclaim your good news.

With yearning and trust, we await
your Son.

As baptized believers,
may we who await the coming of
your kingdom
be strong of heart.

Help us to live in holy unity
and stand as prophets of Christ's
healing and peace.

Maranatha! Come Lord Jesus!

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Sunday, December 15, 2013 The Kingdom Breaking In

Today's Readings: Isaiah 35:1–6a, 10; Psalm 146:6–7, 8–9, 9–10; James 5:7–10; Matthew 11:2–11. Today the prophet Isaiah describes a desert that is parched and yet will “blossom abundantly, and rejoice with joy and singing” because the Lord is coming. And once God arrives, the blind, deaf, lame, and mute will be healed! These same transformations appear again in the Gospel. They are the signs of the Kingdom breaking in—and Jesus tells the disciples of John the Baptist to carry this news to him, in prison. For Isaiah's people, for John the Baptist, and for us, the coming of the Kingdom is good news indeed! God is in the world, and in spite of our fears and febleness, he is coming to save us.

The world around us holds up different signs—enticements to buy and spend and strive. It is a challenge to follow the advice of James, in the Second Reading, to wait patiently in joyful hope and “strengthen our hearts.” The Church leads us on a counter-cultural path, for good reasons. At the end of the Gospel, Jesus explains that: “no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” The Kingdom Jesus is bringing will make even greater deeds and insights possible! How can we help to bring that Kingdom? What good news could we share and what healing and caring deeds could we perform as we wait? Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 16

Las Posadas

The Spanish word, *Las Posadas*, meaning “lodging” or “accommodation,” names a traditional nine-day novena that includes walking each evening through neighborhoods to commemorate Mary and Joseph’s search for lodging in Bethlehem. On Christmas Eve, doors will open to feasting and welcome. Consider joining in at a parish in your area that celebrates *Las Posadas*. As Mary and Joseph are refused shelter by many Bethlehem innkeepers, Jesus is refused understanding by the chief priests and elders in today’s Gospel. Today’s Readings: Numbers 24:2–7, 15–17a; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8–9; Matthew 21:23–27.

Tuesday, December 17

O Sapientia, O Wisdom

Today begins the proclamation of the O Antiphons, familiar to us from the beloved Advent hymn, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” These ancient poetic verses (actually the antiphons for the Magnificat at Evening Prayer) express our yearning for the Lord and describe him as wisdom, root, key, star, king, and God-with-us. How is the wisdom of God directing your life during this season? Today’s Readings: Genesis 49:2, 8–10; Psalm 72:1–2, 3–4ab, 7–8, 17; Matthew 1:1–17.

Wednesday, December 18

O Adonai, O Lord of Lords

As the chosen people were led out of bondage in Israel and were later led home from exile, so we ask God to redeem us with his justice in today’s antiphon. The one whose powerful outstretched arm created, redeems, and continues to embrace the cosmos in love is worthy of our trust. In today’s Gospel we read that Joseph trusted the guidance God sent him in the form of a dream. What challenges do you trust the Lord to

help you overcome today? Today’s Readings: Jeremiah 23:5–8; Psalm 72:1–2, 12–13, 18–19; Matthew 1:18–25.

Thursday, December 19

O Radix Jesse, O Root of Jesse

From humble peasant roots, King David emerged as a mighty and powerful tree for the people of Israel. Now from the same humble beginning we await the King of kings, Lord of lords, and Prince of peace who comes without the trappings of an earthly king. In what ways are we freeing ourselves from the trappings of materialism and power? Don’t miss the beautiful story about John the Baptist’s parents, Zechariah and Elizabeth, in today’s Gospel. Today’s Readings: Judges 13:2–7, 24–25a; Psalm 71:3–4a, 5–6ab, 16–17; Luke 1:5–5.

Friday, December 20

O Clavis David, O key of David

Jesus is the key of David, who opens hearts and minds that are locked in fear, disease, and sin. We await the key that will open our own hearts and empty them of what is keeping us from becoming who we are called to be. In what ways is God’s grace transforming our lives and leading us to full personhood? How did Mary respond to God’s grace in today’s Gospel? Today’s Readings: Isaiah 7:10–14; Psalm 24:1–2, 3–4ab, 5–6; Luke 1:26–38.

Saturday, December 21

O Oriens, O Rising Sun

In the midst of winter darkness in the northern hemisphere, we wait for the sun of justice to rise. Christ is the light of the world; he is brightness and warmth, dispelling darkness and supporting life, physical and spiritual. In today’s Gospel, Anna welcomes Mary and teaches us about the dynamics of hospitality. We open our homes so that Christ, hidden in each visitor, may come in. In what ways is Christ, the sun of justice, becoming more visible to us as we open ourselves to his presence? Today’s Readings: Song of Songs 2:8–14; Psalm 33:2–3, 11–12, 20–21; Luke 1:39–45.

