

Here's a text if you've only a minute ...

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and shall call his name Emmanuel.

First Reading

Let the Lord enter; he is the king of glory.

Psalm

Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife,
for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

Gospel

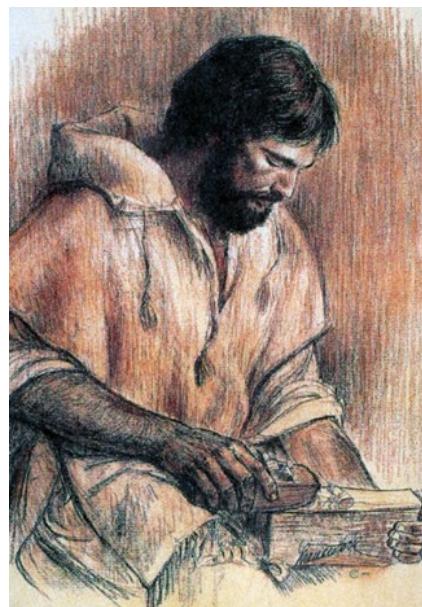
Let us pray, as Advent draws to a close,
that Christ will truly come into our hearts.

Lord, fill our hearts with your love,
and as you revealed to us by an angel
the coming of your Son as man,
so lead us through his suffering and death
to the glory of his resurrection. *Old Opening Prayer*

This week's texts if you want to reflect further:

Isaiah 7: 10–14; Psalm 23 (24); Romans 1: 1–7; Matthew 1: 18–24

Frances Hook, *The Carpenter* (1981)
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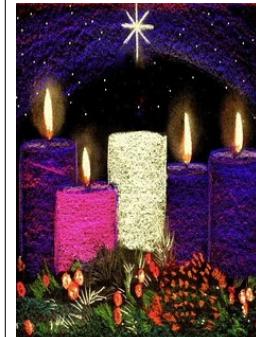


Joseph ...
a just man

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PREGO LEAFLET

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Year A, 21st December 2025

Let the earth be opened
and bring forth a Saviour!

Advent, a time of waiting, of patience, is drawing to a close, and the readings reveal our excitement. The time to welcome our Saviour is drawing near.

In our **First Reading** we have the prophecy of Isaiah. Weary of the kings of Israel, Isaiah foretells the child who is to be born of a virgin and named 'God with us'.

The **Psalm** speaks of the all-powerful God, who created the earth. Those who follow him will receive blessings from the One who comes to save us.

St Paul (**Second Reading**), proclaims Jesus, descended from David in the flesh, but Son of God in the power of the Spirit and the resurrection.

In the **Gospel**, we hear Isaiah's prophecy again. It is through Joseph's trust in God, and his obedience, that God's plan is fulfilled with the birth of Jesus, Son of Mary, Son of God.

As **Pilgrims of Hope**, we rejoice in this season of hope and the coming of the Light of the World. As the Jubilee year draws to a close, we might consider how, despite the often tragic state of our world, we can still place our trust in Jesus Christ our Saviour.



Opening Prayer

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of an Angel,
may by his Passion and Cross
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.

First Reading Isaiah 7: 10–14

In those days: the Lord spoke to Ahaz: ‘Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be as deep as Sheol or high as heaven.’ But Ahaz said, ‘I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.’

And Isaiah said,

‘Hear then, O House of David!
Is it too little for you weary ones,
that you weary my God also?
Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.
Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and shall call his name Emmanuel.’

I come to pray, perhaps relieved that, in this busy season, I have found some time to spend quietly with the Lord.

I take a few deep breaths and relax into silence, aware that I am in God’s loving presence.

When I’m ready, I read the passage slowly a couple of times.

Ahaz is privileged that the Lord speaks to him, and is open to Ahaz asking for a sign. Why, I wonder, does Ahaz refuse?

Perhaps Ahaz wants to go his own way, and is not open to the Lord’s guidance? When, or in what ways, am I tempted to behave or to pray like this?

I ponder, and speak to the Lord.

I read Isaiah’s words carefully. Despite our recalcitrant ways, God really wishes to impart hope, to give us a sign:

‘The virgin shall conceive and bear a son.’

How do I respond to these words?

I allow myself to put this into some form of prayer ... of praise, awe, wonder, thanksgiving, love ...

Perhaps I can take time to savour the name *Emmanuel* – ‘God with us’ – and ponder the revelation of God made flesh in our world.

I might choose to spend the rest of my prayer in silence before this wonderful mystery.

I end my prayer in gratitude, ‘Our Father ...’

Gospel Matthew 1: 18–24

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel’ – which means, God with us.

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him: he took Mary as his wife.

As I prepare to pray, I may light a candle. On this fourth Sunday in Advent, the wreath is almost complete. Christmas is all around in the shops and in the media. I may ask the Lord to be with me as I pray to deepen my understanding of this wonderful feast, so that Jesus can be born in me. In time I read the text slowly.

I consider Joseph’s story, his journey, his fears, his love for Mary, his pain, his desire to extricate himself, his hesitation ...

Perhaps I can identify with some of this. Maybe the Lord sent an angel ... someone to support or help me?

I speak of this to the Lord.

I can also ponder Joseph’s commitment to his wife, Mary, and to the son he names Jesus.

I consider how God works – through the goodness and humility of an ordinary couple. How have I seen this in my family, in the people around me, in my community?

I turn to the Lord with thanksgiving. Jesus, Emmanuel, is coming, is already present among us.

Mary does not appear directly in this story, but mindful of her presence, I close my prayer with a quiet ‘*Hail Mary ...*’