



## Fourth Sunday of Advent December 19, 2021

O LORD of hosts,  
look down from heaven and see;  
take care of this vine,  
and protect what your right hand  
has planted.

— Psalm 80:15–16

### AUDACITY

There is a spirit of audacity in our readings today. During a time of injustice and threat of invasion, the prophet Micah boldly announces that the God of insignificant Israel will raise up a leader from backwater Bethlehem, and this leader will bring justice and peace to the whole world. In the Gospel, Elizabeth and Mary, marginalized women, brazenly celebrate that their sons will be world-changing instruments of God. We further learn that this audacity is rooted in trust in God. The author of Hebrews describes the faithful obedience of Jesus. Mary is shown as the exemplar of faithful trust in God. This is the way God often seems to work, in the ordinary and marginalized in our world. Those who seem weak have learned to trust in God's strength. These have the audacity to become instruments of God's peace and justice. -- © J. S. Paluch Co.

### PRAYER OF THE WEEK

#### Fourth Sunday of Advent

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.  
Who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
God, for ever and ever.

### Reflection question:

How can I make known to others the Incarnation of Christ?

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### READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Monday: Is 7:10-14; Ps 24:1-6; Lk 1:26-38  
Tuesday: Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a; Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Lk 1:39-45  
Wednesday: 1 Sm 1:24-28; 1 Sm 2:1, 4-8abcd; Lk 1:46-56  
Thursday: Mal 3:1-4, 23-34; Ps 25:4-5ab, 8-10, 14; Lk 1:57-66  
Friday: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29; Lk 1:67-79  
Saturday: Vigil: Is 62:1-5; Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Mt 1:1-25 [18-25]. Night: Is 9:1-6; Ps 96:1-3, 11-13; Ti 2:11-14; Lk 2:1-14.  
Dawn: Is 62:11-12; Ps 97:1, 6, 11-12; Ti 3:4-7; Lk 2:15-20. Day: Is 52:7-10; Ps 98:1-6; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18 [1-5, 9-14]  
Sunday: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or 1 Sm 1:20-22, 24-28; Ps 128:1-5 or Ps 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10; Col 3:12-21 [12-17] or 1 Jn 3:1-2, 21-24; Lk 2:41-52

### SAINTS AND SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

Tuesday: St. Peter Canisius; Winter begins  
Thursday: St. John of Kanty  
Friday: The Vigil of Christmas  
Saturday: The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)



*Please see insert in this bulletin for  
our Christmas Mass schedule and  
Pastor's Christmas letter.*

**Finance Corner: Your generosity is greatly needed and appreciated!** For the month of **October** offerings: PLEASE put in Mass collection box or mail to St. Philip/St. Teresa Parish, P. O. Box 339, Occidental CA 95465. Or donate at our website [www.stphilipstteresa.org](http://www.stphilipstteresa.org) via Paypal or card. Please include your offering envelope # [if you have one] with your donation. Bless you!



12/5-12/8: \$1129 & \$46. 12/12: 1<sup>st</sup> coll: \$2202. Retirement Fund Religious: \$245.

**12/19: Capital Expenditures. 12/24: Operating Expenses.**

**12/25: Christmas. 12/26: Rural Food.**

### Mark your Calendar for Future Events & Meetings:

**Parish Council [PC]:** TBA

**Finance Council [FC]:** TBA

**Liturgy Committee [LC]:** TBA

**St. Teresa Ladies Guild:** Contact Diane, 823-6044

**St. Philip Ladies Guild:** Contact Penny, 559-367-7403

### ✠ ♥ ✠ Mass Intentions ✠ ♥ ✠ Schedule

12/18 Sat. 5pm Mass ✠ Brendan Smith  
12/19 Sun. 8am Mass ✠ Tina Bartolo  
12/19 Sun. 9:30am Mass  
12/19 Sun. 11:15am Mass for the People  
12/24 Fri. 3:30pm Children's Mass, Occidental  
5pm Christmas Eve Mass, Bodega  
10pm Christmas Eve Mass, Occidental [carols @ 9:30pm]  
12/25 Sat. 8am Occidental & 9:30am Bodega: Christmas Day Masses (NO 5pm on 12/25 at Bodega)  
12/26 Sun. 8am Mass ✠ Johnny Gonnella  
12/26 Sun. 9:30am Mass ✠ Arthur Munson & Papke grandchildren  
12/26 Sun. 11:15am Mass for the People

### Prayer Requests: Please leave a message at 707-408-2650.

Teresa K., Pat K., Thomas T., Susan B., Lorri McC., Sarah, Clifford J., Terri A., Fred P., Theresa S., Sara, Mary Anne P., Barbara, Dave C., Jim P., William, Parson P., Dave, Mary O., Bill Z., Daniel, Sally T., Michael D., Richard M., Kathleen, Peter, Rosa S., Susan B., Joyce D., Anita C., George H., Mimi H., Steve, Barry, Lorrin K., Hugh P., Robert S., Britney N., Chuck, Rebecca A., April K., Jacinta G., Leo A., Ed C. family, Kathy R., Donna W., Jim K., Sherry S., Gail F., Marie N., Christine, James G., Gary S., Peter R., Gerry N., Diane K., River M.; Nikkie; Mr. C., Michelle, Christian A., Samantha S., Gary E.

### Mission San Francisco de Asis (link)



(the California missions are featured in our current bulletins)

### LIGHT

All the darkness of the world cannot put out  
the light  
of one small candle.

—Anonymous



## RURAL FOOD PROGRAM UPDATE for December 2021

On Tuesday, December 14, 56 families (135 individuals) received nutritional support and more during our distribution at the St Philips Parking lot and parish hall. Gift cards were presented to all families in our Star Child Program. Each member of every family was presented with a blanket and their choice of a scarf or hat to help with cold winter weather. Each member of every family also received sugar cookies compliments of The Union Hotel. What a festive day it was for all!

We also honored our volunteer **Sylvia Melrose** who retired this month after 27 years of dedicated service to the Rural Food Program. She was honored with a certificate of appreciation, kind words from all who worked with her, many thank-yous, and a well deserved round of applause.



If you are aware of a family which needs nutritional assistance, please let them know about our program. Leave a message at the parish office, (707) 408-2650 to get a call back with additional information.

This program is funded through monthly Rural Food Collection, private donations and the dedicated, awesome volunteers. **Thank you for your generous donations as we strive to meet the nutritional needs of all attendees at our food distributions.**

**RURAL FOOD VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES in the Parish Hall and parking area: Saturday, January 8, 9-10:00am** repackaging; **Monday, January 10, 9-11:00am** set-up; and **Tuesday, January 11, 7:30-11:00am** to distribute food to clients.



[The Bamboo Organ Church, or the St. Joseph Parish Church, of Las Piña City in the Philippines during "Simbang Gabi" or Night Mass on Christmas Eve.](#)  
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*The crowds asked John the Baptist, "What should we do?" He said to them in reply, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none."*

And that person should be [Ebenezer Scrooge](#) because as he is described in Charles Dickens's seasonal "A Christmas Carol": *The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shriveled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his lips blue; . . . A frosty rime was on his head, on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office at Christmas. Indeed he was cold even beyond feeling either cold or heat – as the story continues: External heat and cold had had little influence on Scrooge. No warmth could warm, no wintry weather chill him. No wind that blew was bitterer than he, no falling snow was more intent upon its purpose . . . But what did Scrooge care! It was the very thing he liked.*

Obviously this is hardly a biological description of Scrooge. I mean, even if his bodily temperature measured factually at 98.7 F, Dickens's *metaphorical* description is much more accurate. The chill became obvious to the two charitable men who came to his office requesting a Christmas donation for the poor. Scrooge inquired: *Are there no prisons? . . . workhouses? . . . The treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigor then? . . . I'm very glad to hear it.* Nevertheless when the visitors asked, "What shall I put you down for?" "Nothing!" Scrooge replied. "You wish to be anonymous?" "I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. Brrr.

Dickens is offering us a caricature of the materialist world which has arrived full blown in the commercialism of our own times in which, for example, while you are trying to read an Internet article on the sources of the Nile the screen is interrupted with almost frantic high tech gadget ads among others. Money in terms of budgets, celebrity salaries, deficits, inflation preoccupies the media.

While Dickens makes little mention (if at all) of the Gospel birth narratives, he does subtly suggest why this

materialist chill has come over Scrooge and later generations. It's that scene where Scrooge on Christmas Eve returns to his gloomy suite of rooms to sit by his fireplace and sup upon his nightly gruel. The fireplace supplied a very low fire indeed – it was an old one *paved all around with quaint Dutch tiles, designed to illustrate the Scriptures. There were Cains and Abels, Pharaoh's daughters, Queens of Sheba, Angelic messengers descending upon clouds, Abrahams, Belshazzars, Apostles putting off to sea in butter-boats, hundreds of figures* (images not dollar signs) *to attract his thoughts* . . .

It summoned the attention of this man obsessed with modern accounting to those alternative accounts of biblical events and exemplary characters, of ancient episodes of faith, hope, justice, love, solidarity – things with which the Christmas season still confronts us – despite the commercial racket and music that celebrates snow and sleigh bells and chestnuts and raises excessive lighting displays that blind us to the modest candle light of old that once lit our way through winter darkness into a world of mystery.

--Geoff Wood, 12/09/2021



## Spend yourself, joy will come. Spend it with Christ, your joy will last.



### A reflection by [Daniel Torchia](#)

Daniel Torchia, APR, is a Communications consultant who lives with his wife and children in Uxbridge, Ontario. From 2009 to 2011 he worked at Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation.

How did you *spend* your day? That figure of speech has been on my mind lately. I can honestly say I had previously never given this phrase, especially the use of the verb *spend*, any thought until it came across my mind like a lightning strike a few weeks ago. In that flash, I was reminded that we're called to *spend* things we have – all of it, given or earned – on others and in praise and glory to the One we are indebted to for everything. We hear about corporal works of mercy in the first part of the [Third Sunday of Advent] Gospel: give away the extra tunic or food. This altruistic lifestyle, clearly prescribed in the Bible, does yield peace and satisfaction, but it's not fool proof and certainly not always possible or achieved. But if we *spend* our days in relationship with Jesus and His Word, the Bible asserts we'll find ourselves immersed in an inextricable joy.

**“Rejoice** and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!” - Zephaniah 3:14-18.

**“Rejoice** in the Lord always; again I will say, **Rejoice**. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. **Do not worry about anything**, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And **the peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” - Philippians 4:4-7

Staying intentionally focused on Jesus's words and plan of salvation will, sooner or later, elevate us into the realm of mystical ecstasy or, if you will, BIG and LASTING JOY. Over the course of history, including my humble life, these passages from Sacred Scripture have proven to be true. So many saints and fellow faithful have witnessed to it. I've seen it in my own life; the more time I spend in God's living word, meditative prayer of intentional gratefulness, the more I can love and feel alive no matter whether I'm helping the needy, sweeping my kitchen floor, or lying ill in bed.

### Fear - a big obstacle in our way or a gift to harness?

A wise monk recently said these words to me: “Fear is very natural to humans – and needed. Regrettably, there is a lot of misplaced fear, especially today. It's *fear of the Lord* that we're wired for.” That kind of fear (more closely associated with wonder or reverence directed at God's grandeur) is perhaps our most certain path to rock-solid, everlasting joy. We are called to fear the Lord. If we harness properly our inclination to fear (aligning it toward God), it leads to the peace and joy we hear about in this weekend's readings. But we can only fear or revere God if we get to know him. The mere process of doing so gives us the graces and wisdom we need to not only get through the day but to find this priceless joy. Sadly, the wrong kind of fear is growing these days. Many people and groups are using fear as a strategy for their own gain. There's even a marketing term being bandied about in boardrooms (and among youth), “FOMO”, or *Fear Of Missing Out*. Yikes.

So what do we do, especially during Advent, to find and spread peace and help people find the joy they are so desperately seeking? The readings of the Advent season offer us indications. Here are some that speak to me:

1. Prepare the way of the Lord: purify our hearts
2. Watch and look for him in the most humble and ordinary areas of life
3. Read and learn about Him, following the Magi as models
4. Listen to His voice, trust His word, and act on it in the model of St. Joseph
5. Say yes and magnify His words and deeds, in the model of Our Blessed Mother
6. Bring Him your gifts, even your song!
7. Share your experience of Him with your neighbours, like the shepherds

Given the dominance of fear, increase in mental illness and addictions, and the expansion of the culture of death in our world, I'm sure you'll agree it's time for all of us to walk up the steps to the highest lampstand and share our light and joy with the world with charity and clarity. The world has set the stage for us to light our candles. With the darkness around us, a brightly lit candle can do a whole lot of good. This Advent and Christmas, let us hold even firmer to Jesus' hand and resolve to encourage those around us to open the living Word of God – the Bible. Who knows, maybe like shepherds finding the Messiah in a manger, our loved ones can find peace and joy in what appears by our modern standards to be a humble book.



***(12/24/21 Friday)***

**DECEMBER 24: CHRISTMAS VIGIL MASSES**

**3:30PM CHILDREN'S MASS ST PHILIP**

**5PM CHRISTMAS EVE ST TERESA**

**10PM CHRISTMAS EVE ST PHILIP (CAROLS AT 9:30PM)**

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***(12/25/21 Saturday)***

**DECEMBER 25: CHRISTMAS DAY MASSES**

**8AM ST PHILIP**

**9:30AM ST TERESA**

***(note: no 5pm on 12/25 at St. Teresa)***