

Fourth Week of Advent

Prayer for Emmanuel's Peace

Give us peace, dear Lord,
the calm understanding that you are
Emmanuel,
that you are with us.

You sent your Son to be the Prince of Peace.

Be Emmanuel in the heart of each
one of your children in this world.

Be Emmanuel in our families who may be
separated by distance or disagreements.

Be Emmanuel in our nation and
Emmanuel in all the nations of the world,
so that all may grow and manifest your love.

Be Emmanuel in the hearts of those
who mourn,

that they may experience what you promise
during this blessed season.

Give us your peace, Emmanuel,
and good will toward all. Amen.



December 23, 2007

Be a Sign of God with Us

Sometimes unexpected events can throw us off our spiritual balance. A family member becomes ill or a friend lets us down. Perhaps important plans have to change suddenly. In today's Gospel reading, Matthew 1:18–24, Mary and Joseph could understand what that is like. How would they ever explain Mary's pregnancy to their family and friends? It was a miracle, and it was certainly confusing. However, Joseph received a sign from the Lord that made him decide to stand by Mary. Mary said yes when the angel asked her to be the mother of Jesus, and Joseph agreed to his role when the angel came to him in a dream and explained what was happening. From then on, the couple trusted in God's plan, even in the midst of

these unexpected circumstances. They had faith when things were difficult, faith that God would be with them and help them.

It helps us if we can imagine what it was like for Mary and for Joseph in their situation. Some experiences require us to let go of trying to control things and trust that just as the Holy Spirit guided Mary and Joseph, the same Holy Spirit will be our guide as well. The signs of God's presence with us, signs that help us trust, are all around if we can only see them. We can be a sign for others of God's abiding love when we encourage them during a difficult time, supporting them in whatever ways we can and by praying.

This Week at Home

Monday, December 24

Christmas Eve

Give each other the precious gift of time today. Plan some time to be together and enjoy each other in a quiet atmosphere at home without interruptions. Perhaps agree not to answer the phone during this time. Enjoy some special food. Review your Advent time together, telling each one what they liked and would hope to do again next year. Talk about the mystery of Christ coming to us as a child. Savor each other's presence quietly as Mary and Joseph savored each other during this most important day.

Pray together: *God our loving Father, the child born to us brings forgiveness for our sins and light to us in our darkness. He guides us to the path of peace. We receive these things because of your generous love for us. Help us open our hearts to receive these gifts. We ask this through Christ your Son, Our Lord. Amen.*



Tuesday, December 25

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

The shepherds came to visit the Holy Family, and Mary and Joseph welcomed them. To this day, Christmas is a time of visiting, welcoming, and being welcomed. As you gather with family or friends to celebrate this Christmas Day, remember the source of this tradition of gathering, the stable in Bethlehem. As you share time, a meal, and perhaps gifts with those you love, remember to be grateful that you are blessed in this way. As you bless the food and as you say a prayer at bedtime, ask God to be with those who have no one with whom to share this holy day. The season of Christmas begins

today and goes through the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. (The 12 days of Christmas go from Christmas to Epiphany (when Epiphany is celebrated on January 6)). It is a time to make the effort to share your time with someone who is alone. Be a shepherd and visit them, knowing that Christ is there when you do.

Wednesday, December 26

Saint Stephen, the First Martyr

Saint Stephen, whose feast we celebrate today, was a remarkable individual. The community trusted Stephen because he was considered both a wise man and a skilled debater with those who charged him with blasphemy. Eventually Stephen was stoned to death for his faith and for what he preached. He is considered the first Christian martyr.

Thursday, December 27

Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist

Saint John, the brother of James and the son of Zebedee, was a special friend to Jesus. Jesus asked this saint to care for his own mother, Mary, as he was dying on the cross. We can follow his example during this holy season of Advent and Christmas. Look around and care for people who are alone during this season of togetherness.

Friday, December 28

Pray for the Innocent

On this feast we honor the young children killed by Herod's orders when he wanted to eliminate anyone who might be the messiah, a threat to his power. Today, on Holy Innocents Day, let us pray for all the innocents who have no voice and are killed by abortion, genocide, or other evil motives of those who have power over their innocent lives.

Saturday, December 29

He Is in Our Midst

The Gospel reading today, Luke 2:22-35, tells us again of Simeon who was at the temple when Mary and Joseph came. This holy man recognized that their young child was the Messiah of the Lord. He took the child into his arms and blessed the Lord, saying that now he was ready to go in peace because he had seen the Lord. When we look with eyes of faith we, too, can see the Lord in our lives.

