

The Promise is Made



Advent 2024


CENTURY OF SERVICE
THE
MADELEINE
PARISH & SCHOOL

Promises Made, Promises Kept

Advent 2024 theme song • Words by Marilyn Robb

REFRAIN:

*Promises made, promises kept,
Our God has promised to always love us.
We walk in faith and promise to live, like Jesus,
With kindness and caring for all.*

VERSE ONE:

*Life is such a challenge, Lord,
We struggle and we fall,
You promise to be near us Lord,
You hear us when we call.*

VERSE TWO:

*Come to us O Holy One,
We long to see your face,
Ignite us with your Spirit's fire,
And bless us with your grace.*

VERSE THREE

*Come to us God's only Son,
We celebrate your birth,
Fill us with hope as we await
For your return to earth.*

Dear Madeleine family and friends,

Welcome to the new church year. Welcome to Advent 2024. This season we are focusing on promises; promises made to God's people since the beginning of time, promises made to us today and promises we make to God and to each other.

The daily reflections are written by members of the parish, parish staff and beloved friends of the parish. Each person has shared their faith with the hope that your faith will be strengthened as you journey to the promise of Christmas.

The Sunday meditations are written in a faith sharing format and can be shared with a group or read and thought about privately.

Thank you to each of you who have shared your faith with us on these pages. Thank you to the production staff who have brought this book to life, and a special thank you to Hugh Hammons, whose creative and artistic touch so beautifully illustrates our theme. Finally, thank you Fr. Bonaventure for being our spiritual guide.

God has promised to be with us always until the end of time, so let us go forth with rejoicing and share our light and love.

—Marilyn Robb

First Sunday of Advent

The Promise Made to Us

Introduction

As I began gathering my thoughts for this first Sunday in Advent, I was on retreat in Montana. It was the longest day of the year, the beginning of summer. From my balcony I watched the pastels of twilight color the sky as evening descended over the valley. The only sound was the chatter of the birds as they nested in the trees, settling down for the night. The few clouds that lingered in the sky soon turned pink and melted away. God's created cosmos had come to rest. Later that evening I had a front row seat to the rising of a full moon as its light broke through the distant fir trees and the stars took their assigned places in the night sky. Everything was happening just as God had created it to happen, yet, in Sunday's gospel, Jesus promises his disciples and all of mankind...including us, that all of this will change when it is time for him to return.

Share: *What changes in nature and the cosmos would cause you to be afraid?*

† Read: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Share: *Where do you find hope in this passage?*

Commentary

How many times have we read these words? This promise made to people who were actually in the presence of Jesus when he said them. Now, here we are, centuries later, hearing these words being said to us. Do we take them seriously? Do we take them personally? Scientists and environmentalists keep us aware of changes on our planet. Is the alignment and balance of God's creation going to fall apart before Jesus returns and puts it back together?

Share: *How do you explain this promise?*

Reflection

Jesus promises us that he will return, but before he returns, the cosmos as we know it, will change. It will be a time of chaos and fear. But we are encouraged to remain vigilant and continue to live our lives as God's beloved children. In Sunday's second reading, St. Paul tells the Thessalonians how to conduct their lives as they wait for Christ's return. As we journey through this week, we will take a closer look at Paul's instructions and see how they fit into our lives today as we wait for the second coming of Christ.

Share: *Would you live differently if you knew Christ was returning this week?*

Prayer: Lord, help us to live each day with the hope and joy of knowing you will keep your promise to someday return and make all things new. Amen

Monday, December 2

Early Into Advent

† ***1 Thessalonians 3:12***—*May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all.*

The closest New Seasons Market to The Madeleine is over on 32nd and Broadway, a five-minute drive from church. The reason for the image is that we've begun a "new season," introduced through the purple vestments of Mass. The month provides time to practice and prepare for the high point of the season: pregnancy and labor pains, the promise of delivery and new life.

Paul, in today's First Letter to the Thessalonians, points the way. Isaiah, from the first reading of the day, visualizes for us: "In days to come, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it." A promise made—some six hundred years before the birth of Christ, gradually brought to fruition through a virgin birth—a promise kept; brought back into our lives these days, anticipating birth and new life: "It came upon a midnight clear..." With the Psalmist of the day, we "...go (up) to house of the Lord," and as the centurion of the gospel story of the day, we take heart, in Jesus' reassuring words: "You may go, as you have believed, let it be done for you." And at that very hour his servant was healed."

—MSGR. TIM MURPHY

Lord, let us go forth with love into this season of Advent. Amen.

Tuesday, December 3

Blameless to a Fault

† **1 Thessalonians 3:13**—*Strengthen your hearts to be blameless in holiness before our God at the coming of Lord Jesus.*

Jesus first was human; this gives me hope. Why? Because he acted genuinely human. The faults he displayed are my faults: Jesus unleashed anger against the moneychangers in the temple. He was crushed by grief for Lazarus. Fear shook him in the darkness of the garden. Jesus was—is, human, just like me.

And yet, rather than deflect or deny his faults, he drew on faith and strength of spirit to transform his human weakness into the blamelessness of the lamb: Abba, not my will, but yours.

Jesus blazed the path to holiness, mindful that we can't get up without first falling. Embracing our shortcomings, perhaps we can celebrate fear, acknowledging that it's a signpost directing us to courage. That anger might compel greater acts of mercy. Or that grief discovers a heart brimming endlessly with love. Our human faults owned, affirmed—and transformed—into holiness.

Firm in faith. Strong of heart. Blameless before God.

—DANIEL O'BRIEN

Strengthen us, O Lord, to live in your holiness. Amen.

Living to Please God

† **1 Thessalonians 4:2**—*Conduct yourselves to please God.*

Holy Scripture tells us to be humble, to be as mindful of our flaws as of our strengths. This helps us to be more compassionate and patient with others. We try to do our best as spouses and parents. We try to be loving and forgiving.

We participate in the Christian mission of support by being generous in donating to organizations such as Catholic Charities and St. Vincent de Paul.

We strongly value being kind and respectful to people in our lives and people we meet. For example, when we are driving on the freeway, it is easy to get annoyed with other drivers who seem to be driving aggressively; we try not to judge them and tell ourselves they may be having a stressful day.

By doing our best to live according to the Christian message, we are happy and content. Our souls are fed weekly as we attend Mass at the Madeleine.

—MARY AND DAVE KRUG

Guide us Lord, to always conduct our lives in a way that pleases you.

Amen.

Thursday, December 5

Preparing the Way of Peace

† **1 Thessalonians 5:13b**—*Be at peace among yourselves.*

In this season of Advent, “Be at peace among yourselves” is a call to cultivate inner and communal peace as we prepare our hearts for Christ’s coming. Advent invites us to reflect on our relationships, to consider the ways we nurture - or neglect - peace within them. True peace is more than the absence of conflict; it’s the presence of compassion, patience, and understanding.

Paul’s words remind us that peace requires our active participation. How often do we rush through life, caught up in our own needs, losing sight of the people around us? This Advent, let’s pause to recognize the gift of those in our lives and strive to bring gentleness into each encounter.

As we light the candles on the Advent wreath, each flame is a reminder of Christ’s peace illuminating our hearts and homes. May this light inspire us to foster unity, forgive freely, and serve one another with kindness. In doing so, we welcome the Prince of Peace more fully into our world.

—TRESA RAST
PRINCIPAL, THE MADELEINE SCHOOL

Help us to know and share your peace, O Lord. Amen.

Friday, December 6

Festive Fatigue

† **1 Thessalonians 5:15** —*Do not return evil for evil, rather always seek what is good for each other.*

I recently read about a woman who felt exhausted by “decision fatigue,” so turned to AI to make all of her decisions for a week. Whether to invite her mother-in-law over, what color to paint her office, if her daughters should watch TV before breakfast. At times I feel as though I’m receiving an endless string of queries, a sentiment intensified by holiday marketing. Today’s verse offers a divine algorithm for modern life: seek what is good for each other. It is a reminder that not every ping, tweet, post, or email from the ever-present Apple in my hand requires a decision or even a response. What is good for the people I care about most is my love and undistracted attention.

—CATHERINE GLAVAN

Open our eyes Lord, to see the good in each other. Amen.

Saturday, December 7

Living the Promise

† **1 Thessalonians 5:16-17**—*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances.*

Advent is a season of anticipation, a time when we await the fulfillment of God's promise—the return of Jesus Christ. Amidst the chaos and uncertainty that may surround us, Paul's exhortation to the Thessalonians serves as a guiding light. He invites us to rejoice always, not because every moment is joyful, but because our hope rests in a faithful God whose promises are sure.

To pray without ceasing is to live in constant communion with the Divine, allowing every breath and action to become a prayer. It is through this unbroken connection that we find the strength to navigate tumultuous times. In cultivating a heart of gratitude, we give thanks in all circumstances, recognizing that even in trials, God's grace is at work.

As we wait for the glorious return of our Savior, let us embody these virtues. Rejoicing anchors us in joy, prayer connects us to God's will, and gratitude transforms our perspective. By living out this triad of rejoicing, praying, and thanking, we not only prepare our hearts for his coming but also become beacons of his promise to a world in need.

—FR. ANTHONY AHAMEFULE

God our creator, teach us to rejoice always and talk to you often with grateful hearts. Amen.

Second Sunday of Advent

The Promise Keepers

Introduction

“O Jesus, I have promised to serve thee to the end. Be thou forever near me, my master and my friend.”

These words were sung by me and my confirmation class in the Spring of 1955. We were all awkward thirteen-year-olds preparing to leave our childhood behind and venture forth into the unknown adult world. As we knelt at the communion rail on that day of our confirmation, we took the blessing we received and the promises we made seriously, because fifty-four years later we found ourselves kneeling once again at that same communion rail. It was the weekend of our fiftieth high school reunion, and for the members of my confirmation class it seemed the perfect time to return to our hometown church and worship together. We had all kept Jesus as our “master and friend,” although we now represented a variety of faiths. We had taken seriously, the promise made so long ago...and God had blessed us by remaining near to us.

Share: *Do you consider yourself a “promise keeper”? Why or why not?*

† **Read: Luke 3:1-6**

Share: *Do you think John knew his purpose in life before God’s word came to him in the desert?*

Commentary

In Sunday's gospel we read about three people involved with promises. First, the prophet, Isaiah who promises the people that God would send a special messenger who would prepare them for the coming Messiah. To make that happen, the angel Gabriel promises Zachariah that his son John would be that messenger. John kept the promise for which he had been conceived and born. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. When the time was right, he went about the countryside preaching a baptism of repentance and forgiveness as he prepared the people for the promised Messiah.

Share: *What do you imagine the growing up years were like for John the Baptist?*

Reflection

Take time this week to think about promises. As children, we make promises to be good, to do our chores, to respect others...especially adults. As we grow older, we promise ourselves to meet certain goals. We promise to be a faithful partner to the person with whom we plan to share our lives. If we are blessed with children, we promise to be a good parent. But what about the promises God has made to us and the promises we have made to God? Think about those things this week.

Share: *How has God been a part of your promise making and keeping?*

Prayer: Lord, make me aware of the many promises you have made and are making to me. Help me to be a good promise keeper. Amen

According To Your Word

† **Luke 1:37**—*Nothing will be impossible for God.*

Not many of us have had a visit from the angel Gabriel lately.

Have you received an occasional thought or insight, an inspiration or surprise answer to a prayer? Maybe you have felt an urge to let go of a resentment or an irritation? (It felt like a freeing of a painful thought.) How about a moment of feeling loved or feeling love toward another?

The moments of God's communication to us are going to be surprising and like a whisper.

"I stop long enough to welcome a word from the quiet one." And like Mary, receive these graces with a gracious "Yes."

—SR. LIZ SCHILLE, RGS

Let us never forget Lord, that with you nothing is impossible. Amen.

Tuesday, December 10

Entering Advent With Enthusiasm

† **Philippians 1:6**—*He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.*

When we begin a new project, excitement propels us onward. Small setbacks seem like nothing. Likewise, we might enter Advent with enthusiasm for deepening our faith. In the first days, we excitedly start a new prayer routine, offer up distractions, and seek out more acts of service. We make it a whole joyful week before obstacles arise—obligations to work and family, other projects, etc. The good work which once brought joy becomes dry or tapers off. We might feel discouraged and tempted to just “make it through” the busy holidays.

Paul wrote to the Philippians while he was imprisoned for his faith. Throughout his ministry, he met with one obstacle after another. I imagine he was tempted to be discouraged. He must have wondered if he had failed the mission God called him to. Yet Paul recognized that the mission was not his own, that the growing Church belonged to God, and God would fulfill his promises.

God promises to be with us. Are we trusting in him to complete the good work he has begun in us? I pray that in this season of waiting and trusting, we may see God working in us through every obstacle.

—LAUREN CRAIG (FAITH FORMATION)

Lord, make us aware of your work in our lives. Amen.

Wednesday, December 11

God Promises!

† **Isaiah 40:31**—*Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.*

If we put our hope in people's promises, we are often disappointed. "I'll pick you up at 7:00 pm," or "I just want to borrow your book for a week," or "Vote for me, and you'll be wealthy." Before we get very old, we realize that many people-promises simply don't pan out. The Advent Scriptures encourage us to put our trust in God's promises. God is so trustworthy! Those promises always pan out, maybe not today, but in God's good time; perhaps not the way we hoped for, but God knows best. And God gives us patient strength as we wait for God's way. God promises!

—FR. JOHN MCGRANN

Thank you Lord, for daily renewing our strength. Amen.

Thursday, December 12

Abide With Me

† **John 15:4**—*Remain in me and I will remain in you.*

This beautiful verse speaks to the inherent relationship we have with God. We are attached to him as indivisibly as a branch is attached to the vine, whether or not we recognize it. I became acquainted with this verse through the sweet and simple hymn that also uses the metaphor of water from the well being supplied by the sea. Because of the mystery of life and of free will, it is easy for some to think they have mastery over their lives, when in actuality, everything is given to us, like the nutrients provided to plants and all living things.

Nothing can change the eternal nature of God within, but opening our hearts and minds to his love can change everything for us! I have found that when I am able to allow God to act through me, my life is easier and the outcomes are better. The fog of emotions and difficult situations separate us from our Source. I sing “Abide with Me” but what I mean is help me to abide with you, oh God.

—TERESA NIPPOLT

I need your presence Lord, as you abide in me, I will abide in you. Amen.

Happy Are Those Who Walk in the Ways of God!

† **Isaiah 48:17**—*I the Lord your God, teach you what is good
and lead you on the way you should go.*

Listening to God’s word is wisdom, for no one is wiser than God. He fulfills promises for those who heed him:

1. Peace of soul: Doing God’s will brings inner peace, knowing one has done right. Isaiah says, “If you had paid attention to my commandments, your peace would flow like a river, and your righteousness like the waves of the sea.”
2. Abundance of descendants: “Your descendants would be as countless as the sand, and your offspring as innumerable as its grains.” God views children as blessings, a perspective often neglected today.
3. Eternal remembrance: “Your name will never be erased or forgotten from my sight.” Those who walk with God will never be forgotten.

Each life stage has its own challenges, and God’s promises are fulfilled according to individual circumstances. Some promises are universal, while others are uniquely suited to each person. Trust in God’s wisdom, for he knows what is best for each of us. Those who follow his ways find peace, blessings, and eternal recognition.

—MY SCHONING

Thank you Lord, for always being there to lead us. Amen.

Saturday, December 14

May We Go Rejoicing

† **Psalm 126:5**—*Those who sow in tears shall reap rejoicing.*

My eyes are filled with tears as I am writing this. The tears are both sad and happy tears. My husband Tom passed away unexpectedly last summer. It was only a matter of hours between a massive stroke and his death. It was indeed a very tearful moment at that time but also in the months that have followed. Looking back now, I can remember being surprised how at peace Tom looked in his final minutes. I knew—and Tom knew—that God was waiting for him at the gates of heaven. Tom was ready. Only two days after his death, I sat down in my usual church pew at The Madeleine and looked up at the worship monitor. The first song we were to sing at that Mass was “Here I am, Lord. I have heard you calling in the night...I will go, Lord, if you lead me.” It brought happy tears back to my eyes as I remembered that look of peace on Tom’s face. May we all be ready as God promises to welcome us through those heavenly gates. Rejoice!

—DIANNE JOHNSTON

Thank you Lord, for turning our sadness into joy. Amen.

Third Sunday of Advent

The Mysterious Promise

Introduction

Once upon a time, there was a mysterious person who slipped briefly into my life, but long enough to change the way I see things...especially people. It was a pre-spring day in early March. I was helping deliver meals with “Maddie’s Cart.” We had just arrived in the parking lot of “Immaculate Heart” parish with food for St. Vincent de Paul. As I opened my door and stepped out of the van, I was greeted by a person with the appearance of a “bag lady.” She was looking for food but starving for attention and someone with whom to have a conversation. She was eager to share her story. She prided herself in being trans-gender. She had had both a husband and a wife. Her clothes were worn and dirty and she needed a shower. She knew her outward appearance was not appealing. She likened herself to a geode. She assured me that anyone who got to truly know her would find her beautiful and radiant on the inside.

Who is this mysterious person about whom John the Baptist speaks?

Share: *Have you ever met someone whose appearance changed as you got to know them. Explain.*

† Read: Luke 3:10-18

Share: *How would you describe this “mysterious” person about whom John speaks?*

Commentary

If you think about it, John never got to know or be with this “mysterious” person about whom he preached. When they finally met in person, it was so John could baptize Jesus. At that moment God revealed his Son, the promised Messiah to John, but then they went their separate ways. As far as we know, John never heard Jesus preach and never saw him perform a miracle. It wasn’t until John was in prison and about to die, that he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask if he was indeed the person for whom John had been preparing the world.

Share: *Share your thoughts on John’s relationship with Jesus.*

Reflection

This third week of Advent is a good time to think about your relationship with this “mysterious” promised Messiah. Is he just someone to hear about when you attend Mass or occasionally read about when you open your Bible? Is Jesus just a mysterious “geode” to you, or have you discovered the beautiful unending love he has for you? Have you opened up yourself to accept that love? As you read the reflections shared this week, hopefully you will get to know Jesus a little better.

Share: *How would you describe your relationship with Jesus today?*

Prayer: Mysterious friend, we long to get closer to you and discover the love you have for us. Amen

Trust Versus Fear

† **Isaiah 12:2**—*God indeed is my savior; I am confident and unafraid.*

This verse calls us to remember or re-establish our full trust in the Lord as our salvation. This verse follows a prophesy about the return of the exiled Jews from Assyria and their joyful reunion with the Jewish remnant in the devastated homeland of Israel. It reminds the Hebrew people that YHWH was with them even in slavery in Assyria and poverty in Palestine. The prophet reminds us that trust drives out fear. Although God did not save Israel from captivity, he was with them and knew their suffering. God still wants relationship with them and to save them from sin and eternal death, just as he wants a relationship with us.

In difficult times, this scripture reminds us that although the Lord does not promise us a life free of pain, the Lord does promise that we are his. Though evil is strong, it cannot take us from our Lord's hands. Eternal life is ours. Where, O Death, is thy sting?

—AMY PITZER

I place my trust in you, my Lord and Savior. Amen.

Tuesday, December 17

Our Salvation in Peace and Trouble

† **Isaiah 12:2b**—*For the LORD is my strength and my might,
and he has been my salvation.*

This verse reminds me that God is our salvation from all our problems, big and small. It encourages us to lean on him at times of uncertainty or fear and that we can always rely on him when the path ahead seems to be unclear to us. To me, faith is not simply a feeling, but a choice to trust in God. When one truly trusts in him, courage and resilience naturally follow and allows us to face the challenges ahead. It teaches us that our strength does not come from our own capabilities, but from our relationship with God.

This Advent may we always remember that God is our salvation in times of peace and in times of trouble. May we trust in God completely so that we may navigate all of life's challenges with confidence and grace. Oh God, strengthen our faith day by day so that we may always reflect your love and strength.

—MINH-HA NGUYEN

*Continue to remind us Lord, that our strength and courage come
from you. Amen*

Wednesday, December 18

Rejoice in a Minor Key

† **Philippians 4:4**—*Rejoice in the Lord always.*

The scripture verse Philippians 4:4 reminds us that even in the midst of sorrow, we can rejoice in the love of the Lord. Easier said than done!

The other day my mom and I were talking about my sister who passed away from pancreatic cancer. My mom said to me, “I only remember the good.” Without meaning to, my mom reminded me at that moment to rejoice in the goodness of God in my sister’s life.

The same can be true in music. Composers write in major or minor keys to convey either joy or melancholy. Advent songs are a juxtaposition of both - full of joyful anticipation at the coming of Christ, yet often written in a minor key – as if to foreshadow the sorrow that lies ahead in his death.

In the Advent song, O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, each of the seven verses connect the prophecies of the Old Testament to the joy and hope of the birth of our Savior – and yes, it is written in a minor key! The refrain? “Rejoice,” of course!

This Advent, I invite you to lift up your voices and “Rejoice in the Lord always” ...in a minor key!

—MARIA MANZO

Lord, may we always see what is good and rejoice. Amen.

Thursday, December 19

What is in your Wassail?

† **Philippians 4:6-7**—*Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then, the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

It is six days before Christmas...is this putting a sour taste in your cup of cheer?

We are in full Advent gathering gifts, arranging feasts, preparing for guests and returning family who have traveled like the Magi from afar to celebrate the joy of Christmas. What is in your Wassail cup? Is it plastic smiles, just bearing the strain and anxiety of “getting through it?” Does our acceptance of the commercialism, hard-heartedness, and the weights and measures that bind us keep us from searching for that Peace that surpasses all understanding?

Paul reminds us: “Have no anxiety at all.” This is the season of GREAT JOY! Give your petition to God and know it will be abundantly fulfilled! Walk in Advent; the anticipation of celebrating the joy of the birth of great love coming down to us, to pass it on to others whose cup may be empty. What is in your Wassail cup today?

—CARA HAFER

Thank you Lord, for your beautiful gift of peace. Amen.

Mary, Mother of God, Light our Way.

† **Psalm 71:5**—*You are my hope, O Lord; my trust O God from my youth.*

St. Juan Diego, pray for us.

As we reflect on this feast day I invite us to place ourselves in the presence of Mary, the Mother of Jesus and St. Juan Diego. I wonder if this verse from Psalm 71 was spoken as prayer in their hearts from their youth. Was the sense of God's presence within them what graced them with the courage to say yes when faced with an amazing invitation from God. These two lines in Scripture live within me. Can you open to the grace they may hold for you as we live Advent 2024? God desires to be your Hope. You are great in God's eyes. Can you allow God to love you out of fear and into acceptance of your own greatness?

—THERESE FENZL

Jesus, You are with us, loving us beyond what we could ask for or imagine. May we rest in your love today and say yes to whatever God desires for us. Amen.

Saturday, December 21

Renewed

† **Zephaniah 3:17**—*The Lord, your God is in your midst, a mighty savior, who will rejoice over you and renew you with his love.*

“A mighty savior” does not begin life in a stable. Or stay trapped in poverty. Or have the leaders of the religion he loved call him a heretic. Friends don’t abandon saviors. Civil authorities don’t condemn a mighty savior to a humiliating, brutal death. The evidence is very clear; no one is going to be saved by this guy. We’re so sure about what we think we know.

And meanwhile, God is revealing mysteries in our midst. If we choose to see it, we are being renewed by Love.

—DEACON MIKE

O Mighty Savior, renew us with your love. Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Accepting the Promise

Introduction

A few months before my fourth birthday, my parents surprised me with the news that I was soon going to have a baby brother or sister. I was delighted to think we would soon have a real live baby in our house that I could cuddle and feed and dress and care for...no more pretending with my doll. When the big day arrived, I was whisked off to my Aunt Esther's to stay until my mom came home from the hospital. She was not my favorite aunt. Her house was always perfect, and she expected me to be perfect. I tried, but I was glad when the time came to return home and finally get to hold my new baby brother. But it turned out to be not as I had expected. He took the attention away from me. He was fussy and cried a lot and had smelly diapers. He made us a family and we had the usual sibling squabbles growing up, but he turned out to be a wonderful loving brother and we have shared the joys of raising our own families, the love of music and a deep faith in God.

Share: *Who was a baby that impacted your life?*

† **Read: Luke 1:39-45**

Share: *What thoughts do you think were going through Mary's mind as she journeyed to Elizabeth's.*

Commentary

Two pregnant women, both carrying sons within their wombs. Both carrying the promises made by prophets long ago. They knew the demands of the babies they would soon hold. They knew there would be hunger to satisfy, comfort to give and smelly diapers to change, but they had no idea about the “ups and downs,” the joys and pain that were in their future. They happily accepted the promises they had been given. In return they would keep the promises they had made to be mothers to their famous baby boys.

Share: *What did these two women talk about the three months they were together?*

Reflection:

Two ordinary women, chosen to do something special for their God. They did not hesitate, but said “yes,” even though it put them both in uncomfortable and awkward positions. That same God is still “hanging around” today asking us to do things that are out of our comfort zones. As we finish up Advent and once again celebrate Jesus becoming one of us and living among us, let us be open to God’s requests and prepared to say “yes.”

Share: *Have you ever sensed that something you did was fulfilling God’s request?*

Prayer: Help us to hear and understand what you are asking us to do Lord. May we always respond with a “yes.” Amen

Monday, December 23

Keeping Your Promises

† **Psalm 25:4**—*Make known to me your ways, Lord; teach me your paths.*

We all make promises and try to keep them, but sometimes we break our promises. Mary and Elizabeth accepted the promise that God made with them instead of rejecting it. They chose the path leading them closer to him rather than going away from that choice. When I make promises with my sister, I sometimes forget about that promise I made with her and make her get angry. We can all lead ourselves to the path that leads us to righteousness from wrong, and sometimes we make mistakes which is okay, because God has unconditional love for us. Breaking the vow that we make to friends and family doesn't stop us from having the same relation we all have with each other.

—MIKAYLA NGUYEN
STUDENT, THE MADELEINE SCHOOL

Show us your path Lord, and guide us. Amen.

Our Light Shines Before Others

† **Matt. 5:16**—*Let your light shine, so that everyone will see the good you do and praise your Father in heaven.*

God provides us a light to carry out his word. Much like his light given to his only son Jesus, God promises us his light through Baptism to share before others. This discipleship is core to our faith in Jesus Christ.

Saint John Paul II states in his *Veratus Splendor*, “The light of God’s face shines in all its beauty on the countenance of Jesus Christ,” “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15).

Further, Psalms reminds us that “For with You is the fountain of life and in your light we see light” (Psalm 36:10).

“Called to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, the true light that enlightens everyone (Jn 1:9), people become “light in the Lord” and “children of light” (Eph 5:8).

Sharing God’s light radiates to others and may come in many forms. It may come through outgoing faith, kind deeds to others, or quiet reflection and prayer. God only asks that we share his Word and good will to others. Thus, we are letting our light shine before others.

—LESLIE PFAFF

Lord, help us to be your light in this dark world. Amen.

Remember the promise

† **Isaiah 9:5**—*A child is born to us, a son is given to us, upon his shoulder dominion rests.*

Every year the liturgy allows us spiritually to relive Mary's motherhood, and in March on the Feast of the Annunciation, we remember that mysterious virginal encounter and mutual exchange of promises: by Mary, "I am the handmaid of the Lord;" and by the angel, on behalf of God, "the child will be called holy, the Son of God." So many months have passed since hearing the angel's voice, so much has changed for Mary—and for us. And now these promises are nearly fulfilled.

The birth of the child, however, is no time to forget a promise, but rather it is the time to remember. More than ever, "I am the handmaid;" more than ever, this child reveals the inner life of God, the depth and breadth of what it means to be holy, what it means to be God's son, God's daughter. With Mary, we do not have to discover for ourselves and teach this child to be holy; instead, we turn, with loving anticipation and attention, to listen and to learn. Upon his shoulder dominion—and holiness—rests.

—FR. BONAVENTURE

Thank you, Lord, for the promise of your Son. Amen.



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