

**Church of the Divine Love**  
**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT**  
**DECEMBER 24, 2023 10:15 AM**  
**HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II**

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#56, vs. 7&8 – O come, O come, Emmanuel**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16**

Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

Second Lesson: **Romans 16, 25-27**

Gradual Hymn **#66 – Come, thou long expected Jesus**

Gospel: **Luke 1: 26-38**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#59 – Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer B page 367

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 367
Hymn during Consecration printed on insert	
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #68 – Rejoice! rejoice, believers	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn #265 – The angel Gabriel from heaven came	
Dismissal	

### **Sermon Sunday December 24, 2023**

2 Samuel 7:1-11,16; Psalm 89:1-4,19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38.

#### **Sisters and brothers in Christ,**

There's something about Mary. The Archangel Gabriel, God's own messenger, declares her to be the "favored one" (Lk. 1:28). God is with her. Her cousin, Elizabeth, says Mary is blessed among women (Lk. 1:42). Even Mary knows this about herself saying, "All generations will call me blessed: the Almighty has done great things for me" (Lk. 1:48-49)

We don't know what Mary was doing when the Angel Gabriel showed up. Holy scripture doesn't tell us. I'm willing to bet, however, that getting pregnant with and ultimately giving birth to the Son of God was not on her to-do list for the day. Whatever she was doing Gabriel interrupted her day; physically, emotionally, and spiritually. With Gabriel's announcement Mary's life and world are interrupted. Her plans and expectations are interrupted.

Look at your relationships, friendships, your family and marriage, your jobs and careers, your education, your home. All of those are attempts to create your life. That is not necessarily wrong. We have decisions to make and opportunities before us. The difficulty comes when we start to believe and carry the burden that we are the ultimate creator of our life. Seems that is what happened to King David when he decided

that God needed a big fine cedar house like his. David was convinced that he was the one to build a house for God. Until God said, No. God reminded David that God is the builder and creator of life. It has been that way from the beginning. For in the beginning, God said and there was. God said let there be light and there was, let there be sky, dry land, earth that brings forth vegetation, fish that fill the waters, a sun and a moon. Let us create humankind in our image and likeness. God said let there be all these things and there were all those things. Creation is the larger context for today's gospel, the Annunciation to Mary.

God speaks the creative word. Today, however, we remember Mary's words, "Let it be." "Let it be with me according to your word." Mary's words, "Let it be," echo God's words, "Let there be." It is like an ongoing call and response between God and humanity. God prays creation into existence and Mary says, "Amen. Let it be." This is not an ending to the creation story but the continuation of creation and the beginning of our salvation. Think about this. God says, "Let there be" and his words bring forth creatures into the world. Mary says, "Let it be" and her words will bring forth the Creator into the world. How amazing is that? Jesus is able to take flesh because Mary's humanity gives him that possibility. This could only happen with Mary's "Let it be." Her gift to God is her humanity and through her our humanity. The incarnation of God in Jesus is not, however, limited to Mary. It is an affirmation of God's creation and the goodness of humanity. God chooses human flesh, not a cedar house, as the place of God's dwelling. Each one of us can stand as the "favored one," the one with whom God is. Each of us is called to grow up to be God-bearers, to carry the life of God within our own humanity.

God's favor and blessing do not necessarily mean life is easy, we get our way, or we live happily ever after. It is not God's reward for right behavior or right believing. It is rather a state, a condition, a way of being. Mary's "yes" to God is not the source of or reason for her favoring and blessing. Rather, her favoring and blessing are the source and origin of and the means by which she can say "yes." Mary understands that her favoring and blessing by God are not dependent upon or determined by the circumstances of life. So often we look at what is going on around us, the circumstances of our lives, and then declare ourselves or another to be blessed or not. Mary, however, teaches us to look and live more deeply; to look beyond the circumstance of life and see God within us.

It means trusting that God sees more for and about us than we often see for ourselves. That's what Mary did even as she asked, "How can this be?" She trusted God more than her life's situation. She felt the movement of God within her, the kick of new life, and the growth of something holy. The favoring and blessing of God wasn't around her. It was within her. It is who she is. It is also who we are. We too are favored and blessed but we must look deeper than the changing circumstances of our lives. Even when we do not see it or understand it God is deep within us, working secretly, creating new life where we thought there could be none. "For nothing will be impossible with God" (Lk. 1:37). Nothing. Like Mary we must go to that deep place where we ponder and treasure.

Mary is a part of us. She is that part of us that is womb-like, the part that gives birth to Christ in our world. To reject Mary is to say no to God. To reject Mary is to reject the holy of holies within us. To reject

Mary is to end the ongoing story of creation and salvation. To love and venerate Mary, however, is to discover the life God is creating in us and who are to be when we grow up. Mary teaches us how to say, "Yes." Each one of us is to echo Mary's words, "Let it be." Don't hear this as passivity. It means we must be vulnerable, open, receptive. It means that we must let down the veils that we think separate us. Mary sees her virginity as a veil of separation. "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" Not only that, but Mary is weaving a new veil for the temple.

Sacred tradition says that Mary was one of the virgins chosen to weave a new veil for the temple. The veil was the curtain that separated humanity from the holy of holies, the place that God lived. Neither the temple veil nor Mary's virginity, however, can separate God from humanity. As the Archangel Gabriel declares, "Nothing will be impossible with God. "We all live with veils that we think separate us from God. There are veils of fear, shame, and guilt. Independence and individualism become veils of isolation. Sometimes we are veiled in logic, rationalism, and unable or unwilling to abandon ourselves to the mystery. Often our veils are the life we have created for ourselves. God looks through our veils to see the "favored one" even when we cannot see ourselves that way. God's words of possibility speak across our veils announcing that God is with us and that we will conceive within us God's own life. God is always stepping through our veils to choose us as God's dwelling place.

"How can this be?" With those words Mary acknowledges that the life Gabriel announces is not the life she was creating for herself. "Let it be." With those words Mary receives the life God is creating in her. Between "How can this be?" and "Let it be" the impossible becomes a reality, the never before heard of will forever be spoken of, and the veil between divinity and humanity has fallen. Offer whatever excuses, reasons, and veils you have why this cannot be true for you. Gabriel will tell you differently. "Nothing will be impossible with God. The Annunciation to Mary is nothing less than God's invitation for us to participate in God's favoring and blessing of our lives. **Amen!**

4 ADVENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	

CHRISTMAS EVE	7:30 PM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	
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MONDAY/CHRISTMAS DAY	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	
	8:30 AM	AA MEETING	

WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING	
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THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
	8:30 AM	AA MEETING	
SAURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
4 ADVENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	

PARISH ANNUAL MEETING – SUNDAY, JANUARY 14TH

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Jess Berbeck	Jess Berbeck
Coffee Hour	Jess Berbeck	Nolans

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

### PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella

Donna Edwards

Jess

Bob Curley	Beverly Noel	Art
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Judy
Christopher	Warren	Kristen
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Mo	Phil Ryder	Carolyn
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Robert Hosey	Lourdes S.	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Carol K.
Mary & Family	Ciara	Jan
Nathan Treadwell	Gladys Hadija	Vincent
Jean Estinvil Quatorze	Jean Wildy	Nicolas
Matthew & Anne Marie Treasure		Michael & Family

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disasters.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.  
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the

spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you,  
from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that  
with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may  
worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ  
our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,

Lay my life before you,

How I love you.

(Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus  
and third verse starting with Spirit.)

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn

but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So  
mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that

all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince

of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions

and glory, now and for ever. Amen





