

Church of the Divine Love

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 21, 2025 10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

A Morning Prayer – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn - (see hymn board for all hymns)

Opening Acclamation page 355

Gloria page 356

Collect for 4 Advent page 212

First Lesson: **Isaiah 7:10-16** (*pages 591 in the Bible*)

Psalm 80: 1-7, 16-18 page 702

Second Lesson: **Romans 1:1-7** (*page 977*)

Gradual Hymn

Gospel: **Matthew 1:16-18** (*page 835*)

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

The Confession page 393

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer A	page 361
Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	
The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace	page 815
Prayer for the Parish	page 817
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn	

Sermon Sunday December 21th, 2025

Isaiah 7: 10-16; Psalm 80: 1-7, 16-18; Romans 1: 1-7; Matthew 1: 18-25.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, how is it possible for a virgin to be pregnant let alone give birth? That does not fit with what we know about how babies are made. It just doesn't make sense. There is no rational explanation for Jesus' conception and birth. That's where most of us get stuck with this reading. That's where Joseph got stuck as well. So, he "planned to dismiss her quietly."

Joseph has decided to dismiss Mary. He'll send her away. They can just go their separate ways and get on with their lives. We shouldn't be too surprised. Isn't that what we tend to do when we don't understand? We dismiss what makes no sense. We turn away from possibilities that don't fit with our ideas, beliefs, and experiences. Joseph knows better than to believe babies are made without a man. So do we. Joseph knows what he believes and believes what he knows. And that's the problem. It's too small. It's too narrow. It's too limiting. I suspect there are times when we're probably a lot like Joseph.

How many relationships have been lost because it just didn't make sense that those two should be together? Race, money, religion, families. For whatever reason we just couldn't imagine it ever working so we never gave it a chance. Have you ever given up on someone because it seemed all they did is offer one unbelievable excuse after another? Did you ever pass up an opportunity or let go of a dream because it seemed too implausible? So, we chalk it up to just another crazy, irrational, irresponsible idea.

Have you ever misjudged someone because you couldn't accept their explanations and later learned what they said was true? Think how many arguments and conflicts are based on different expectations and experiences. Sometimes we assume that if it's not our experience it can't happen. It can't be true so it can't be another's experience. Have you ever had that deep sense of joy and excitement about something you really wanted to do or be only to begin hearing the negative chatter? You? Ha, no way! That could never happen. You know better than that. Certainly, we've all had those times when we dismissed and walked away only to later wish we had waited a bit longer, made a different decision, or spent more time asking, seeking, and knocking.

We dismiss people, relationships, ideas, opportunities, vocations, dreams all the time because we don't understand. Because they do not fit our usual experience or expectations. Because they don't make sense. Because the explanations are unbelievable. In dismissing what makes no sense, that which we don't understand or can't explain, we are refusing to open ourselves to something new. Sometimes that means we refuse to open ourselves to God. Isn't that what Joseph is doing when he decides to quietly dismiss Mary? Joseph is dismissing the mystery of Emmanuel, God with us. He is dismissing not just Mary but the mother of God, the very one who will give God human flesh, a body, the one who makes Emmanuel possible. That's what often happens when we are dismissive. We foreclose the life and opportunities God wants to birth in us and through us. I am not suggesting that we ought to be naive, that we should be gullible, or that we should fall for anything and everything. I wonder, though, what we lose when we demand answers and refuse to live with questions. I wonder how often we miss our own life because we limit it to what we know, what's familiar, what makes sense, and close ourselves to the not-knowing, to something new, different, or unexpected. I wonder if we dismiss God with us by our searching for explanations and understanding rather than trusting and entering into the mystery.

Ultimately, Joseph took Mary as his wife. However, he first had to move beyond what he understood and what made sense. He had to allow God with us to transcend the limits of his knowledge. He had to let go of trying to put it all in terms of a rational explanation. None of that, however, could happen between he and Mary. It would first have to happen within Joseph himself and it must first happen within us as well. It is a shift that happens within us. Mary and Joseph cannot simply talk it out or work through it. Think about it. Joseph notices Mary's belly is growing. She's gaining a few pounds. He is hurt and disappointed. He's got questions. Where've you been Mary? Who is it? Was it that time I was out of town? Why? There's really only one conclusion Joseph can reach. There is no other explanation that can make sense of all this. You can be pregnant or you can be a virgin but you can't be both. Mary knows that as well as Joseph. It leaves her rehearsing what she will tell Joseph, deciding when and the best way to tell him, all the while knowing that he'll never understand. How could he? She doesn't understand. It makes no sense to her either.

So, Joseph awoke in the morning and did what he had to do. He began emptying himself. He let go of fear. He let go of the villagers' voices and stares. He let go of his doubts and questions. He let go of his own reputation and standing in the community. He let go of his ideas and hopes for what his marriage to

Mary could have been. He let go of the law and punishment. With each letting go Joseph emptied himself so that, by God's grace and mercy, he might become the womb that would protect, nourish, and provide security to Mary and her child. He would be the womb that sheltered Mary and Jesus from Herod's rage and the slaughter of the innocents. He would be the womb that safely took Mary and Jesus to Egypt. He would be the womb that sustained their lives in that land. He would be the womb that brought them back to Nazareth when the time was right. Isn't that what wombs do? They are the place where life is created and sustained, nourished and grown. They offer security and protection. They are that deep interior place where God's life and breath meet and unite with ours to create something beautiful and sacred. The womb Joseph offered was as important as the one Mary offered. Even as God was acting in Mary's womb to create new life, divine-human life, so God was acting in Joseph's womb to sustain that life.

At one level today's gospel is about Mary and Joseph but at another level it is about you and me. It is about us becoming more open and receptive, more womb-like in this final week of Advent so that we all might give birth to God's Son in our time and our culture. Joseph guides us to Christmas reminding us that before a womb can be filled it must first be empty. He invites to enter the night of faith and to begin emptying ourselves of all that keeps our womb closed. We must let go of all those things that make our womb inaccessible. Things like fear, guilt, resentment and anger, the villagers' voices and stares, the thoughts that say we are not enough, the doubts of God's presence, the isolation and loneliness of loss and sorrow. Letting go creates space, openness, and opportunity for God.

Over and over, we let go, emptying ourselves until we find that we are nothing and have nothing. That nothingness is our empty womb offered with scandalous faith that it will be filled with God, we will be re-created, the world will hear good news, and once again we will discover God is with us. **Amen.**

All baptized Christians, regardless of age, are welcome to receive communion in the Episcopal Church.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS
MONDAY	8:00 PM	AA MEETING
TUESDAY	6:00 PM	BIBLE STUDY
WEDNESDAY - CHRISTMAS EVE	7:00 PM	AL-ANON MEETING
	7:30 PM	CAROLS
	8:00 PM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

THURSDAY - CHRISTMAS DAY	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II
SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP
THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Deb Giordano	Dana Kenn
Coffee Hour	Jess Berbeck	Janet Croft

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:

Barbara Curran	Betty Curley	Martin
Bob Curley	Steve Curley	Joseph
Chris Dickson	John Roccoo	Deb P.
John Mulligan	Marjorie Guerrier	Bobby
Scottie Credendino	Michael	Ryan
Sister Eddie	Bernie Walther	Celeste
Beverly Noel	Phil Ryder	Warren

Anthony Paribello	Jonathan	Del
Donna Amundsen	Kate Jones	Jan
Shannon & Family	Vincent & Barbara	Sandy
Mary & Family	Wendy	James
Gladys Hadija	Sophia	Aidan
Michael & Family	Brooke & Kylee	Mo
Michelle & Family	Christopher	Annie
Timothy Treasure	Donna A.	Aika
Moises Parra	Misael Varas	Jay

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

The homeless and food insecure.

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.

To add or make changes to the prayer list during the week,

email Janet Croft at jmc220@optonline.net.

A Morning Prayer

Father in heaven, I stand ready to receive Your wisdom and guidance. In each decision, big or small, lead me to discern your will and to act accordingly. Help me to understand the depth of Your wisdom, finding guidance

in Your word and through prayer. Teach me to be patient as I wait for Your direction, trusting that Your timing is perfect. May I navigate this day with the assurance that Your wisdom is a treasure far greater than any earthly knowledge. Guide my thoughts and actions, that they may be a reflection of Your discernment and love. In Your guidance, I find the path to a life of purpose and peace. 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 forever. Amen

