

## SUNDAY MASS

### ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:

Drop down dew from above, you heavens, and let the clouds rain down the Just One; let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.

**FIRST READING:** 2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14-16.

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM:** Psalm 89.

### RESPONSE:

*I will sing forever of your mercies, O Lord.*

1. I will sing forever of your mercies, O Lord, through all ages my mouth will proclaim your fidelity. I have declared your mercy is established forever; your fidelity stands firm as the heavens. **R**
2. 'With my chosen one I have made a covenant; I have sworn to David my servant; I will establish your descendants forever, and set up your throne through all ages'. **R**
3. "He will call out to me, 'You are my father, my God, the rock of my salvation.' I will keep my faithful love for him always; with him my covenant shall last." **R**

**SECOND READING:** Romans 16:25-27.

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

*Alleluia, alleluia! Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word. Alleluia.*

**GOSPEL:** Luke 1:26-38.

### COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

*Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and shall bear a son; and will be called Emmanuel.*

## THE WEEK AHEAD

# Live the Word

### Mon 21 Dec (St Peter Canisius, PrD)

Song 2:8-14; Psalm 33; Luke 1:39-45

If the miracle of Jesus' birth came about in less than perfect circumstances and still resulted in human-kind's salvation, why should we doubt what good can come from our own imperfect circumstances?

### Tue 22 Dec Liturgy of the Day

1 Samuel 1:24-28; 1 Samuel 2:1.4-8; Luke 1:46-56

In today's first reading we hear, through Hannah, about the God who listens, and answers her prayer. She expresses her gratitude in a prayer which echoes Mary's Magnificat. Pray this prayer today.

### Wed 23 Dec (St John of Kanty, Pr)

Malachi 3:1-4; 4:5-6; Psalm 25; Luke 1:57-66

'What, then, will this child be?' is a question that could be asked of each of us. Do we prepare a way for the Lord – in our world, in our hearts, and by our lives?

### Thu 24 Dec Liturgy of the Day

2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14,16; Psalm 89; Luke 1:67-79

In more ways than we know and are aware of, or can even predict, our lives impact others. Embrace the Child of Light in your life and carry him wherever you go, so that you, in turn, can bring him to others.

### Fri 25 Dec NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Isaiah 62:11-12; Psalm 97; Luke 2:15-20

God's coming is no less palpable today than it was at the manger. We are like the Magi standing before the crib in awe. In silence, and in the stillness of our hearts, may the newborn child come.

### Sat 26 Dec ST STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR

Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Psalm 31; Matthew 10:17-22

Stephen witnessed openly to his belief in Jesus. As you reflect on today's first reading, ask Stephen to help you find and embrace more clearly the unique and important plan God has for your life.

### Sun 27 Dec HOLY FAMILY

Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3; Psalm 105; Luke 2:22-40

No matter how we feel and believe regarding the politics surrounding refugees, let us have empathy for what they are going through, extend our compassion to them, and pray for them in their struggle for security.

(KEY: **SOLEMNITY**; **FEAST**; **Memorial**; (Optional **Memorial**)  
Pr= Priest; D= Doctor

# Catholic Link

## ADVENT WITHIN-BETWEEN-BEYOND

4th Sunday of Advent • Year B  
Divine Office: Week IV • 20 December 2020

# 4. Advent Beyond-Beyond

**B**eyond-beyond? Yes indeed, the season of Advent not only celebrates the historical coming of the Lord through his birth of Mary, Advent's purpose is also to draw our attention to the Second Coming of Christ at the end of history. In theology this is known as "eschatology", eschaton being the Greek word for end time, or last things. The final chapter of the Vatican II document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, speaks about the "eschatological nature of the pilgrim Church." The Church is (i.e. we are) on pilgrimage towards a destiny beyond history, described by St Paul as our "blessed hope".

Underpinning the season of Advent, both in its temporal dimension manifested at Christmas and in its eschatological dimension at the end of time, is the *virtue of hope*. That is why any discussion of the last things must not be morbid but filled with good news and hope. Our catechism categorises the last things as "death, judgement, heaven and hell".

How, you may well ask, can that last uncomfortable word "hell" be framed in hope and good news? The first thing to do is turf out any medieval imagery you might have of hell as a physical place which is as hot as... The teaching of Jesus and the catechism of the Church regarding hell is simply that it is a concept which respects human free will. God offers abundant, plentiful, copious redemption to everyone, but each has the freedom to accept or reject God. This is the unfathomable dignity of the person made in the image of God: free to choose. In fact, this is where the

"judgement" comes in. Even Jesus in John's Gospel (3:18) declares that judgement is not so much something handed down from above, but something that an individual metes out to himself/herself by personal choice. The good news is that, while the Church has canonised saints to be in heaven, the Church has never declared anyone to be in hell, as we simply do not know the graced experience between God and an individual that occurs in the moment of death.

If "hell" has been given a little more space in today's *Link* than the other last things, it is because it is perhaps the most perplexing item needing clarification. We've also touched on judgement. But what about death? It too is an uncomfortable topic, but ultimately a truly "advent" topic. Death is the

advent of God, the coming of Christ, at our last breath. We do not die into nothingness. We die into God. Our last breath is our greatest prayer, if our heart is in the right place, for in it we are saying with Jesus: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."

But enough discomfort. For when we turn to the fourth last thing, "heaven", we are reminded of a glory that awaits us with the advent of Christ in our last breath; a joy "beyond-beyond" all imagining which Paul describes as something "that no eye has seen, no hear has heard, nor has it been put into the human mind what God has prepared for those who love Him." Or as St John puts it: "We shall become like God for we shall see God face to face."

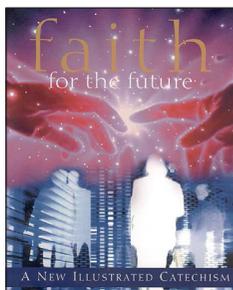
*Come, Lord Jesus!*



Michelangelo's fresco of the Last Judgement in the Sistine Chapel, Rome

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