

# ST. THOMAS INDIAN MISSION

4th Sunday of Advent, C  
December 19, 2021

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Fr. George "of the desert" Decasa  
Pastor

**Entrance Hymn:** — 311  
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel  
(verses 1-3)

**Recessional Hymn:** — 311  
O Come, O Come, Emmanuel  
(verses 4-6)

## SATURDAYS:

3:15 pm to 4:15 pm – Holy Hour  
and Individual Confessions  
4:30 pm – HOLY MASS

## SUNDAYS:

7:15 am to 8:15 am – Holy Hour  
and Individual Confessions  
8:30 am – HOLY MASS

## Religious Give Thanks

A sister writes, "Our prayers belong most of all to the generous benefactors whose donations have made this financial assistance possible." Thank you for supporting last week's Retirement Fund for Religious collection. Visit [retiredreligious.org](http://retiredreligious.org) to learn how your gift supports elderly sisters, brothers, and religious order priests.

## December 25 and 26 Schedule:

**Dec. 25 (Saturday) – Christmas Day/Nativity of the Lord:**  
Mass at 8:30 am.

**Dec. 26 (Sunday) – Feast of the Holy Family:**  
Mass at 8:30 am.

## Staying the Course

This kind of back-to-back schedule is meant to allow us to celebrate the Mass as one parish family together on Christmas Day as well as on the Feast of the Holy Family, to emphasize the value of celebrating on the actual feast as one parish family.

We encourage families to open their gifts on Christmas morning and come to Mass after opening their gifts to give thanks to God for all the blessings they have received. In this way, we remember the true meaning of giving at Christmas.

To all, please take home with you a 2022 calendar, available at the Church entrance.

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To those concerned, please pick up your box of 2022 contribution envelopes at the church entrance.

## The Mystery of Faith:

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

## Prayer of the Faithful

### Celebrant:

No one is so small or so lowly or so young or so old that God would overlook them, and so with confidence we bring our needs before the Lord. Let our response be: *Be born in us, be born in our world.*

### Lector:

For the Church, that like Mary we may eagerly bring Christ to our neighbors, rejoicing in God's presence in our world, we pray... *Be born in us, be born in our world.*

For all those in leadership positions, that they may uphold the dignity of all the people they serve, particularly those deemed insignificant or unimportant, we pray... *Be born in us, be born in our world.*

For all who are traveling to visit loved ones, that they may find joy in each other's company and may return home safely, we pray... *Be born in us, be born in our world.*

For expectant mothers, that they may realize their blessedness and the blessedness of the fruit of their womb, we pray... *Be born in us, be born in our world.*

For all of us, that our hearts may be worthy dwelling places for our Lord, enabling us to bring Christ to all whom we encounter, we pray... *Be born in us, be born in our world.*

For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, we pray... *Be born in us, be born in our world.*

### Celebrant:

Eternally faithful God, you created us in your own image, guided us along your paths, called us back to you, and sent your Son to redeem us. Find our prayers worthy of your compassion and grant them through your Son, our Lord, whose coming we proclaim in joyous expectation. Amen.

# **THE READINGS . . . SOME REFLECTIONS . . . AND GUIDEPOSTS.**

## **Introduction to the Liturgy of the Word**

God's ways are not our ways. Today's readings point to the unlikely sources for the blessed event we are about to celebrate.

Christ will be born in Bethlehem, a town unnoticed and forgotten. The Son of God will be born to Mary, a seemingly insignificant teenage girl.

John the Baptist will be born of Elizabeth, a woman supposedly past childbearing age.

**As we listen to the word of God, WE ARE REMINDED OF GOD'S TENDENCY TO DO THE UNEXPECTED.**

## **1st Reading – Micah 5:1-4a**

Thus says the LORD: <sup>1</sup>You, Bethlehem-Ephrathah too small to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. <sup>2</sup>Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth has borne, and the rest of his kindred shall return to the children of Israel.

<sup>3</sup>He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD, in the majestic name of the LORD, his God; and they shall remain, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; <sup>4a</sup> he shall be peace.

*The Word of the Lord.* **All: Thanks be to God.**

## **Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19)**

**“Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.”**

<sup>2</sup>O shepherd of Israel, hearken, from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth. <sup>3</sup>Rouse your power, and come to save us.

**R.**

<sup>15</sup>Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, <sup>16</sup>and protect what your right hand has planted the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

**R.**

<sup>18</sup>May your help be with the man of your right hand, with the son of man whom you yourself made strong. <sup>19</sup>Then we will no more withdraw from you; give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

**R.**

## **2nd Reading – Hebrews 10:5-10**

Brothers and sisters: <sup>5</sup>When Christ came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not

desire, but a body you prepared for me; <sup>6</sup>in holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight. <sup>7</sup>Then I said, ‘As is written of me in the scroll, behold, I come to do your will, O God.’”

<sup>8</sup>First he says, “Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in.” These are offered according to the law.

<sup>9</sup>Then he says, “Behold, I come to do your will.” He takes away the first to establish the second.

<sup>10</sup>By this “will,” we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

*The Word of the Lord.* **All: Thanks be to God.**

## **Alleluia – (Luke 1:38)**

**Lector:** Alleluia, alleluia. **All:** Alleluia, alleluia.

**Lector:** <sup>38</sup>Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.

**All:** Alleluia, alleluia.

## **Gospel — Luke 1:39-45**

<sup>39</sup>Mary set out and traveled to the hill country in haste to a town of Judah, <sup>40</sup>where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. <sup>41</sup>When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, <sup>42</sup>cried out in a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. <sup>43</sup>And how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? <sup>44</sup>For at the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. <sup>45</sup>Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

**All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

## **In A Nutshell**

The three readings for today's liturgy present a sequence in the history of salvation:

In the first reading from the prophet Micah, the incarnation or birth of the Messiah is foretold.

Next, the Gospel of Luke tells us that the incarnation has happened; the Messiah is conceived in Mary's womb and is about to be born.

Then the second reading from the Letter to the Hebrews speaks of the new reality resulting from the incarnation, that is, from our God coming into the world. The new reality is that we have been consecrated through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ for all.

## Following God's Ways

Too small, too young. Too Immature. God has a habit of choosing people whom others find wanting:

The prophet Micah (in today's first reading) tells of an entire town, Bethlehem, that was judged "too small among the clans of Judah" (Micah 5:1). Though it was "O little town of Bethlehem," God chose it for the birthplace of our Lord. After all, it was also the birthplace of David, immature himself, the youngest of Jesse's sons, overlooked by his own father. But David became king and from his line was born the Savior of the world.

Moreover, no observer in Judah would have guessed that Mary and Elizabeth---one young and a virgin, the other old and thought to be barren---would be chosen to bear the Son of God and his herald. But Mary and Elizabeth accepted their roles immediately and recognized God's work in each other. "Blessed are you among women," Elizabeth immediately greets Mary, "and blessed is the fruit of your womb" (Luke 1:42).

### Questions to ponder:

As we approach Christmas, can you find God's grace in someone you've overlooked?

Whom can I visit this Christmas season, bearing Christ and bringing joy, whom I hadn't planned to see?

## What Kind of Christmas Gift does God Want?

Have you ever thought that question? We spend the weeks before Christmas looking for gifts for our loved ones. We do this to express our love. But have you thought about what gift you might give to God in gratitude for God's gift to us ---Jesus?

Today's second reading (Hebrews 10:5-10) can be hard to understand at first, but spend some time with it and you will discover that the message is: When Christ came into the world and lived as a human being, he recognized that God did not want a sacrifice of animals, which only signaled an external obedience to the Law. What God wanted was that Jesus sacrifice his body, *which signaled an internal obedience to God's will.*

Similarly, in today's gospel (Luke 1:39-45) the elderly Elizabeth announces that Mary and the child in her womb are blessed, and Mary in particular is blessed because she submitted to God's will: "*Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled*" (Luke 1:45).

What gift, then, can you give God that would be most pleasing? Hint: You won't find it in a mall. Perhaps it has **something to do with discovering God's will?**

## Jesus is the Reason for the Season

A certain mother told the story of her five-year-old son who went on a shopping trip with his mother:

She showed him a simple manger scene to teach him about Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. She told him that the child born in Bethlehem was someone very special in the Christmas celebration.

While shopping, a salesperson showed the boy a sparkling display of Santas, toys, and decorations. He was fascinated, but when he looked around and did not see the baby Jesus, he spoke up and asked, "But where is the baby Jesus?"

**This is exactly the message of today's second reading.** The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us that what we celebrate at Christmas is all about the Good News of what God has done for us in his Son, Jesus Christ. We are reminded that Jesus is the reason for the season.

**We celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation** to enable us to put on the presence of Jesus as the way we decorate ourselves for Christmas. We can decorate houses with lights and flowers. But the only way we need to decorate ourselves for Christmas is the grace of confession that comes from breaking with sin in order to experience Jesus. When we fail to be thus decorated, Christmas becomes a social celebration. Shopping, eating, drinking, and other things become the norm rather than celebrating Jesus Christ.

## At the Visitation

John the Baptist, still unborn, and Elizabeth recognized Mary was carrying within herself the Son of God and they were filled with joy.

The whole passage is bursting with joy. Elizabeth was excited by Mary's visit. John the Baptist, three months from being born, was jumping for joy. The Church has taught that at that moment John was set free from original sin and filled with God's grace. Christ came to him before he was born; John was, as it were, baptized or christened.

Generally, the Church celebrates the feast day of a saint only on their date of death, because that's the day they are born into eternal life. But there are three people whose birthday the Church celebrates – Jesus, Mary, and John the Baptist – because they were already in God's grace before they were born.

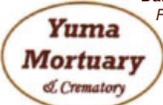
**As Christ came to John before his birth, Christ came to each of us on the day we were reborn through the sacrament of baptism.** That should cause all of us to jump for joy, knowing that Christ has come to us, that he has given us his grace and has chosen us to be children of God.

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