



# Come Lord Jesus

The Advent season is a special time in the Church Year. Advent holds out the hope and desire to see the light of Christ shine through the darkness of our world. Advent literally means “*coming*” and during this season we are urged to remain watchful and vigilant as we wait in joyful anticipation for the coming of the Christ Child. Pope Francis stated, “*We Christians are called to safeguard and spread the joy of waiting: we await God who loves us infinitely.*”

Like John the Baptist, we are to prepare the way of the Lord. During Advent we are challenged to truly embrace the Gospel message and show our love for others through our prayers, our spiritual reflections, our charity, and our random acts of kindness.

I invite you to participate in the many opportunities for spiritual growth which we have provided during the Advent season, including availing yourself of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

I also invite you to make a brief daily examination of conscience as we prepare to encounter the Lord who loves us.

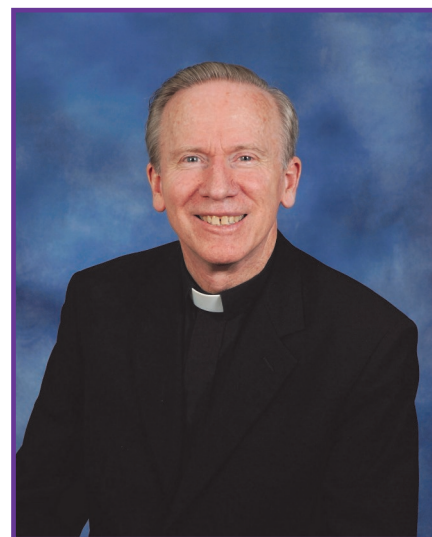
In this booklet there are many resources that can assist us spiritually. Included also are scheduled events intended to enhance our Advent journey.

I pray that you will wholeheartedly embrace the season of Advent as we anxiously await the birth of Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Prayerfully yours in Christ,

*Reverend Father Neil Herlihy*

Reverend Father Neil Herlihy, Pastor



# Saint Brigid Catholic Church 2019 Advent Calendar of Parish Events

Day/Date	Time	Event	Location
Friday 11/29	10:00 AM - 6:00 PM	MOSB Christmas Tree Lot Opens	Parking lot
Sat/Sun 11/30 & 12/1	All Masses	Giving Tree collections through 12/15	Outside Corbett Hall
Sunday 12/1	Regular Mass Times	<b>The First Sunday of Advent</b>	Main Church
Monday 12/2	10:00 AM - 11:00 AM 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM	<b>Parish Advent Mission</b> The Three Theological Virtues as Revealed By St. Joseph, presented by the Very Rev. Francis Reque, O.S.B. <b>NO CONFESSIONS WED. EVENING</b>	Main Church Must RSVP for Childcare in Youth Center at <a href="mailto:childcare@saintbrigid.org">childcare@saintbrigid.org</a>
Tuesday 12/3	10:00 AM - 11:00 AM 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM		
Wednesday 12/4	10:00 AM - 11:00 AM 7:00 PM - 8:00 PM		
Thursday 12/5	2:30 PM - 7:00 PM	Adopt A Family Gift Drop Off	Parking Lot
Saturday 12/7	8:00 AM - 12:00 PM	Breakfast with Santa	Corbett Hall
Sunday 12/8	Regular Mass Times	<b>The Second Sunday of Advent</b>	Main Church
Monday 12/9	6:30, 9:00 AM, 7:00 PM	<b>The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary</b>	Main Church
Friday 12/13	11:30 AM - 12:30 PM	Day School Christmas Pageant	Corbett Hall
Sunday 12/15	Regular Mass Times	<b>The Third Sunday of Advent</b>	Main Church
Sunday 12/15	10:00 AM - ?	Last day for MOSB Christmas Tree Sales	Parking Lot
Wednesday 12/18	6:00 PM	Extended Evening Confessions	Main Church
Sunday 12/22	Regular Mass Times	<b>The Fourth Sunday of Advent</b>	Main Church
<b>Tuesday 12/24 Christmas Eve</b>	3:30 PM	<b>Children's Christmas Pageant and Children's Choir</b>	Holy Redeemer Gym
	4:00 PM	<b>The Nativity of the Lord Masses</b>  <b>CHRISTMAS EVE - Parking Instructions</b> Starting at 2:30 PM, shuttle buses will be provided from the Mt. Pisgah Athletic Center (9825 Brumbelow Rd) for the 4:00 PM and 6:00 PM Masses.	Holy Redeemer Gym, Main Church, Corbett Hall & Chapel
	6:00 PM		Main Church, Corbett Hall & Chapel
	8:00 PM		Main Church
	9:30 PM		Main Church
	Midnight		Main Church
<b>Wednesday 12/25 Christmas Day</b>	9:00 AM	<b>The Nativity of the Lord Masses</b>	Main Church
	11:00 AM		Main Church
	1:00 PM		Main Church
Sat/Sun 12/28 & 29	Regular Mass Times	<b>Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph</b>	Main Church
Tues. 12/31 & Wed. 1/1	4:00 PM Vigil, 9:00 AM, 11:00 AM	<b>Mary, The Holy Mother of God</b>	Main Church
Sunday 1/5	6:00 PM	<b>Epiphany Family Festival</b>	Corbett Hall

**Parish Offices Closed Friday 12/20/2019 through Thursday 1/2/2020**



**SAINT BRIGID**  
Catholic Church



**Catholic Current**

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# ADVENT PREPARATIONS AT CHURCH AND AT HOME

*“Each Advent season, in prayer and humility, we pray and prepare for Christmas. We call to mind the love of the Father reflected in the presence of his Son among us who came to teach us, forgive us, and make us holy through His gift of new life in the Holy Spirit. We and the world can never be the same.”*

**T**he liturgical year begins with the season of Advent and includes the four Sundays before Christmas. While in the secular world, the preparation may be more focused on decorating and shopping before Christmas, as Catholics we are called to focus our attention on waiting, conversion, and hope, while also recognizing His presence among us even now. As Christmas draws nearer, our focus shifts to preparing for the Nativity of the Lord.

“As believers in Christ, we find His presence most perfectly in the Eucharist, as well as in prayer, in His Church, and in our brothers and sisters, especially those most in need of our love. We are encouraged to pray often during this Advent season and to attend daily Mass as our schedules allow. It is also a time to be generous with our patience, our giving of ourselves, and our concern for those in need.”

As we prepare for Christmas, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* notes some differences to the Mass that should be observed during the season. For one, you’ll notice that the priest will wear violet or purple during Advent, except for the Third Sunday of Advent, or Gaudete Sunday, when

rose is worn (GIRM, no. 316). Aside from what the priest wears, other aesthetic changes in the Church include a modestly decorated altar. “During Advent the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this time of year, without expressing in anticipation the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord” (GIRM no. 305).



In addition, the Gloria in Excelsis is not sung during Advent, to reflect the solemn character of the season (GIRM, no. 53). Outside of Mass, you may also choose to use symbols like the Advent wreath to prepare for Christ’s coming in your own home. “The Advent wreath is an ancient Christian tradition. Just as we long for the brightness of the summer sun during the winter’s cold, so does the gradually brightening light of this wreath herald the dawn of Christ, the Light of the World!”

Traditionally, Advent wreaths are a circle of evergreen branches into which four candles are inserted, representing the four weeks of Advent. Ideally, three candles are purple and one is rose, but white candles can also be used. Many parishes and other organizations sell Advent wreaths, but it is also easy to create one. The progressive lighting of the candles on the Sundays of Advent symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord’s first coming into the world.”

**“Just as we long  
for the brightness  
of the summer  
sun during the  
winter’s cold, so  
does the gradually  
brightening light  
of this wreath  
herald the dawn  
of Christ, the  
Light of the  
World!”**



# *first* SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup>

## ■ LIGHT THE ADVENT WREATH

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ... Come Lord Jesus, be our light! Help us prepare our hearts for your coming at Christmas.*

## ■ READ THE GOSPEL

The First Sunday of Advent, Cycle A,  
Matthew 24:37–44

## ■ REFLECT WITH A STORY

Jesus gives us a very clear image in this Sunday's Gospel: a thief in the night. Of course, we say, if we knew the hour that someone was going to break into our house, we would be prepared! We would call the police. We would lock the doors. We would make sure all of our valuables were hidden away. But, as Jesus points out, we so rarely can know in advance when such things will happen. The only real solution is to plan ahead—and be prepared.

Joseph Muchina, the director of Trinity Jewellery Crafts in Nairobi, Kenya, helps us understand what it means to prepare. Joseph grew up in a very poor community and didn't know where his next meal would come from. He learned that it is impossible to be prepared for unexpected challenges—like getting sick, for example—when you don't have any extra money.

Joseph cofounded Trinity Jewellery so he could help other people in his community have a more stable income and be better prepared for emergencies. The people who work at Trinity take part in a savings plan where they can save 10 percent of their income to prepare for the future.

Planning ahead for what we can expect, as well as for events that are simply unpredictable, is the kind of preparation we're called to during Advent. When Jesus tells us to "stay awake" in the Gospel, He's not saying we should never go to sleep! Rather, He is encouraging us to ready our hearts for what's to come. We can do this by asking ourselves what we need to change in our lives in order to better love ourselves, our neighbors and our God. By reflecting on the changes we need to make, we prepare our hearts to welcome Christ into our lives in a new way this Christmas!



Photo by Brian Backe/CRS

### PRAY

Christ Jesus, you want to make a home in my heart this Christmas. Help me to use this Advent season as a time to better prepare for your coming. Amen

### REFLECT

What changes do you want to make in your life this Advent to be ready for Christ at Christmas?

### ACT

Make a list of small acts of kindness you can perform throughout Advent. Each week, select a different one, and remember that you are performing them for Christ in preparation for Christmas.

### GIVE

Help families like Joseph's prepare for unexpected challenges by purchasing handmade jewelry. Your commitment to buying ethically produced gifts like Trinity Jewellery, allows families like Joseph's the opportunity to save for the future. Visit [crsfairtrade.org](http://crsfairtrade.org).



✠ A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away.

So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left.

Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left.

Therefore, stay awake!

For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.

Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into.

***So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."***

## THE BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

*The use of the Advent Wreath is a traditional practice which has found its place in the Church as well as in the home. The blessing of an Advent Wreath takes place on the First Sunday of Advent or on the evening before the First Sunday of Advent.*

*When the blessing of the Advent Wreath is celebrated in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another member of the family.*

**All make the sign of the cross as the leader says:**

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**Response (R/):**

**Who made heaven and earth.**

**Leader read choice of Scripture:**

Isaiah 9: 1-2, 5-6 or

Isaiah 63: 16-17, 19 or

Isaiah 64: 2-7

**Reader:** The Word of the Lord.

**R/: Thanks be to God.**



**With hands joined, the leader says:**

Lord our God, we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: He is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, He is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, He is the Savior of every nation.

Lord God, let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath.

May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May He come quickly and not delay.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**R/: Amen.**

**The blessing may conclude with a verse from the song:**

**"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":**

O come, desire of nations, bind in one the hearts of humankind; bid every sad division cease and be thyself our Prince of peace.

Rejoice! Rejoice!

Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.



# second SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 8TH.

## ■ LIGHT THE ADVENT WREATH

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ... Come Lord Jesus, be our light! Help our lives bear good fruit.*

## ■ READ THE GOSPEL

The Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle A,  
Matthew 3: 1-2

## ■ REFLECT WITH A STORY

It sounds like John was having a bad day. The Pharisees and Sadducees arrive on the scene and John nearly loses it. He calls them a brood of vipers, compares them to stones and then tells them that if they don't change their sinful ways, they'll be cut down like dead trees. He says, "Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

It's a harsh image and one that might be difficult for us to relate to. Why would we destroy trees that don't bear good fruit? But farmers around the world today who depend on their fruit trees for their income know that one bad tree can hurt their entire crop.

Take Fidencio, for example. He is a coffee farmer who lives in Narino. Fidencio and his family's well-being depends on his ability to continue to produce good fruit. To do that, he has to pay close attention to the coffee trees that do not bear good fruit, and make sure they do not affect the rest of the crop. This is a very real concern for farmers like Fidencio, because many coffee trees where he lives are infected with a deadly fungus called leaf rust that can spread to other trees. Sometimes the farmers have to cut down infected trees to save the rest of the crop.

Just as Fidencio must rid his coffee farm of disease that will damage his trees, we must prune our lives of the things that damage our relationship with God, ourselves and others. By doing so, we can bear the good fruit John the Baptist talks about.



Photo by Oscar Leiva/Silverlight for CRS

### PRAY

Creator God, you are the master gardener. Help me to bear good fruit in my life—for myself, for my family and for my community. Amen

### REFLECT

What do I need to stop doing or get rid of in my life in order to bear good fruit?

### ACT

This week, prune your life of one or more material items you no longer need and donate them to charity. Oftentimes the clutter of everyday objects prevents us from focusing on what leads us to Christ.

### GIVE

Support farmers like Fidencio by purchasing coffee that bears good fruit! Warm your heart this holiday season with coffee from CRS partners. Visit [crsfairtrade.org](http://crsfairtrade.org).



✠ A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said:

***A voice of one crying out in the desert,  
Prepare the way of the Lord, make  
straight his paths.***

John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned

you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

**A**n essential part of God's plan for the mother of His Son was that she be conceived free from Original Sin. "Through the centuries the Church became ever more aware that Mary, 'full of grace' through God, was redeemed from the moment of her conception" (CCC, no. 491).

In anticipation that she was to bear the Son of God, Mary was preserved from the time of her conception from Original Sin. We call this the Immaculate Conception. No sin would touch her, so that she would be a fitting and worthy vessel of the Son of God. The Immaculate Conception does not refer to the virginal conception

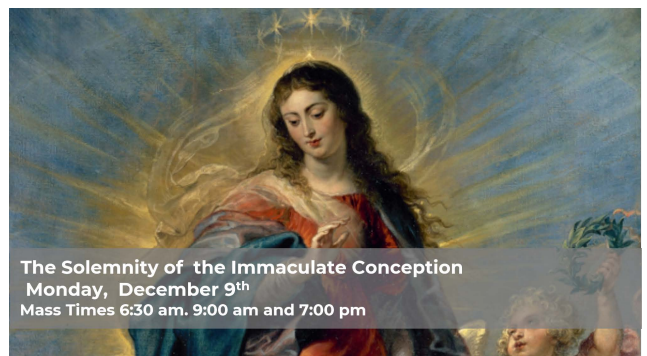
and birth of Christ, but rather to Mary's being conceived without inheriting Original Sin.

In the course of time, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception became more precisely enunciated, as its truth—long supported by the universal popular devotion of the faithful—was better understood by deepening theological inquiry.

In 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed this dogma infallibly: that is, in his role as supreme teacher of the Church, he declared that this doctrine is divinely revealed and must be accepted with faith by the entire Church.

### Memorare

*Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,  
that never was it known that anyone  
who fled to your protection,  
implored your help or sought your  
intercession was left unaided.  
Inspired with this confidence, we fly unto  
you,  
O Virgin of Virgins, our Mother.  
To you we come. Before you we kneel,  
sinful and sorrowful.  
O Mother of the Word Incarnate,  
despise not our petitions,  
but in your clemency,  
hear and answer them. Amen.*



The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception  
Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup>  
Mass Times 6:30 am, 9:00 am and 7:00 pm



# third SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 15<sup>TH</sup>

## ■ LIGHT THE ADVENT WREATH

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ... Come Lord Jesus, be our light! We rejoice as we prepare our hearts to welcome you.*

## ■ READ THE GOSPEL

The Third Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle A,  
Matthew 11: 2-11

## ■ REFLECT WITH A STORY

John the Baptist sent his friends to go find Jesus, and to ask him if he was really the Messiah. Rather than just answering with a simple yes or no, Jesus told them to tell John: "The deaf can hear, the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them."

Jesus is not speaking in code. He is telling us He has come to reach out to the poor and suffering. As his disciples, we are called to do the same.

Who are these people in our world today? They are family members who are sick or lonely. They are our classmates who are bullied. They are the men and women on our streets who don't have a place to sleep at night. And they are the families around the world who, because of poverty or violence in their countries, struggle to make it through each day.

Moo Kho is one of these people. She lived in Myanmar, a country in Asia, but fled to the United States with her husband and child after her village was burned down. She was given the opportunity to work at a candle making company in the United States, Prosperity Candle, which pays her enough so that she can afford food and a safe place for her family to live.

Moo Kho had the Good News proclaimed to her when she was offered a place to live and work in the United States. We can prepare the way for Jesus by reaching out and welcoming those who are most in need, like Moo Kho.



Photo by Erin Mackey/CRS

### PRAY

Jesus, help us prepare our hearts for your coming at Christmas by caring for people in our family, school, neighborhood, and for others in need throughout the world. Amen

### REFLECT

What is one way that your family can reach out to someone in need before Christmas?

### ACT

This week, proclaim the Good News by preparing a meal or care package for someone who doesn't have what they need to make it through each day.

### GIVE

Let Christ's light shine on a world in need. Purchase beautiful candles made by Moo Koo and other women at Prosperity Candle. Visit [crsfairtrade.org](http://crsfairtrade.org).





✠ A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John,

"What did you go out to the desert to see?

A reed swayed by the wind?

Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing?

Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out?

To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

This is the one about whom it is written:

***Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.***

Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

## FINDING CHRIST IN ADVENT

Writer Lisa Hendey thinks "the busyness of the holiday season leaves us too weary and overwhelmed." In her booklet for Advent titled "O Radiant Dawn" (Ave Maria Press), she asks, "How can you renew your spiritual strength this Advent? What will help your spirit soar?"

Her booklet, subtitled "5-Minute Prayers Around the Advent Wreath," is proposed to families as "a doorway into the profound solace of a well-kept Advent." Hendey will be recognized by many as the author of *A Book of Saints for Catholic Moms* and the *Handbook for Catholic Moms*.

"Put away unhelpful expectations of what you think Advent should be, and allow this to be a time of simplicity, focus and sacred longing," Hendey suggests.

She urges that ways be found in families—despite all the season's "to-do lists" - for individual

reflection or "shared conversation about what matters most." To that end, her prayers and reflections for each Advent day include a question to prompt thought or discussion.

It seems to me that these tend to be questions a wife and husband or parents and children could discuss together. For example, she asks:

- How does "faith in God embolden you" to surmount your life's challenges?
- Are there ways to show "love and support" for friends or family members experiencing sadness this Advent?
- Where are you "being sent" to serve "people in need?"

Watchfulness is a major Advent theme. Those awaiting the coming of Christ, both at Christmas and his Second Coming in glory, are



encouraged to watch for signs of His presence now.

Hendey notes how Advent invites Christians to "make room for Christ" daily. Not surprisingly, some of her points for discussion in families hone in on the signs of Christ here and now.

She asks, "What signs in the world reveal that Christ is present?" And, are there ways "your actions help others" recognize Christ's presence?

# *fourth* SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 22<sup>ND</sup>

## ■ LIGHT THE ADVENT WREATH

*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ... Come Lord Jesus, be our light! Help us to trust in you, as Joseph trusted in God.*

## ■ READ THE GOSPEL

The Fourth Second Sunday of Advent, Cycle A,  
Matthew 1: 18-24

## ■ REFLECT WITH A STORY

Joseph and Mary were engaged to be married when Joseph found out that Mary was going to have a baby. After hearing this news, Joseph decided to call off the marriage. But an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him to stay with Mary and take care of her. The angel said the baby was God's son and should be named Jesus.

This was not at all what Joseph had planned! The angel's message was so unusual, and would require so much from him, that it would have been easier for Joseph to pretend he didn't hear it. Instead, he trusted God and did what the angel asked, even though it would change his life.

Like Joseph, a group of Dominican sisters in India had to change their plans in order to respond to God's call. They arrived in India in 1954, intent on opening a new hospital. But at that time, many men were losing their factory jobs, which meant that many women were looking for work so they could take care of their families. The Dominican sisters saw this, and instead of founding a hospital, they started St. Mary's, a sewing and embroidery center, where women could come and work, and be a part of a supportive community.

Because these nuns trusted in God's plan rather than sticking to their own, they were able to help Keechi, an Indian woman whose husband and older daughter had passed away. With the money she makes through sewing and embroidery, she is able to send her daughter, Reena, to school.

The Dominican sisters' example invites us to consider how God may be calling us—like He called Joseph—to trust in Him enough to do things we wouldn't have necessarily planned for ourselves.



Photo courtesy of [www.SERRV.org](http://www.SERRV.org)

### PRAY

Father God, we ask that,  
like Joseph, we will trust in you  
and do your will, even when  
it isn't what we would have  
planned for ourselves. Amen

### REFLECT

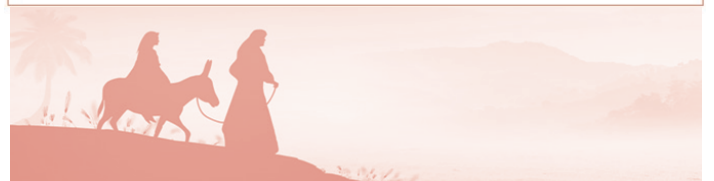
How is God calling you to trust in him?

### ACT

This week, practice this simple prayer each  
night before bed: "Jesus I trust in you."

### GIVE

Help people like Keechi work in a safe place  
and provide for their families by purchasing  
items they've crafted, like accessories and  
gifts. Visit [crsfairtrade.org](http://crsfairtrade.org).



✠ A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew.

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly.

Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her.

She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

***Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,***

which means "God is with us."

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

## NATIVITY SCENE PRAYER



*St. Francis of Assisi made the first Christmas crèche, or nativity scene, for Christmas Eve in 1223. Since then, communities from around the world have taken part in this important tradition, that remind us that Christ was born for the entire human family. Reflecting on the nativity scene can be a meaningful way for families to gather in prayer, mindful of the great joy in Christ that Advent points us toward.*

**LEADER:** In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

During these weeks of Advent, we reflect upon this nativity scene and imagine the individuals present at the birth of Christ. We recognize kings and shepherds, young and old, men and women, rich and poor. We recognize God at work in humble, quiet places, calling each of us by name, together, to do God's good work. We recognize that we are all called, as one human family, to be near to Christ and to one another.

**READER:** *A reading from the Gospel of Luke (2:8-14)*

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and

they were struck with great fear.

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying:

"Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

The Gospel of the Lord.

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

**LEADER:** God of every nation and people, as we look upon this nativity scene, we see a family, not like our own, not so unlike hundreds of thousands of families

all around the world. We see that although this Holy Family came from poor and humble origins, they were surrounded and supported by people who traveled from distant parts of the world. And we see and remember that Christ enters our own life in hidden, unexpected ways, challenging us to reach across the world to whoever is in need of love and support.

God, bless all who gaze upon this nativity scene. As we look at this Holy Family, let us pray for all families—those we know, and those we do not; those who live on the other side of the world, and those who live on the other side of the street. Let us recognize and rejoice in the great diversity of the one family of God as we reflect on and give thanks for those diverse gifts present in our own family. We pray this through Christ our Lord.

**ALL: Amen**