

December 21, 2025

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Is 7:10-14 | Rom 1:1-7 | Mt 1:18-24

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

Throughout my life, I have had a litany of requests for God. I have asked for mundane and ultimately inconsequential favors and also for guidance in much more important matters. But I have often hesitated to ask for the deepest desires of my heart. Those requests feel too big, too impossible, and possibly too selfish — as though asking these things would take away from God's ability to provide for others. But in thinking this way, I am putting limits on a limitless God. In today's first reading, the Lord speaks to Ahaz and tells him to ask for a sign — "let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky!" When Ahaz refuses, God speaks through the prophet Isaiah to deliver the most impossible promise — that "the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel." God wants to give us everything we need to be close to him, so much so that he sent his Son to open the pathway to eternal life with him. God *wants* us to ask for him to do the impossible because he longs to give generously to us.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

God brings about his plan of salvation in an extraordinary way: The virgin Mary conceives Jesus in her womb through the power of the Holy Spirit. Although God does all the spiritual heavy lifting here, notice that our Gospel tells us that he also desired and asked for Joseph's cooperation. "Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home," the angel tells Joseph. The Gospel tells us that Joseph "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him." In our work of evangelization, God does the heavy lifting: it's God who moves the hearts of others to seek him. But the amazing thing is that God still wants us to be part of the way his plan unfolds. We, too, cooperate with God's work of sharing the faith and bringing salvation to others by our actions and obedience.

PRAY

As we begin this final week of Advent, the Church continues to pray with the O Antiphons, which we hear in the hymn, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." Listen to the refrain, which speaks of Israel's immense longing to be set free and for her savior to appear. As you reflect on the first reading and upon this hymn, bring your own deepest desires to the Lord. Spend some time in prayer asking for what you need to draw closer to God.

Church of the Ascension
ascensionsaratoga.org | 408-725-3939

Masses: (Sat) 5p; (Sun) 7a, 9a, 11a, 5p
(Mon-Fri) 8a; (Sat) 9a
Confessions: (Sat) 4:00-4:45pm

Oh, What a Beautiful Morning!

Today we name the Messiah "O Radiant Dawn, Sun of Justice, Splendor of Eternal Light!" Anyone whose morning commute includes a sunrise or who has risen early to watch the sun come up knows why primitive peoples and even our oh-so-sophisticated selves find godliness in a sunrise. At the Easter Vigil we sang "May the Morning Star which never sets find this flame still burning!" While Christmas lights have been shining for weeks, today we can think of them explicitly as a reminder of God's gift of Light to the waiting world. We remember poet Gerard Manley Hopkins' wonderful "Oh!" at the sight of "God's grandeur" and this great renewal: "Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs / Because the Holy Ghost over the bent / World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings."

-Takefiveforfaith.com

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all who served at these recent events:
- Advent Gathering (Dec. 7), a chance to reflect on St. Joseph in the First Advent over a light breakfast.
- Advent Joyful Bites Bake Drive with Coffee (Dec. 14), well-suited for a moderately chilly morning!

Parish Office Holidays Schedule

Our Office will be closed:

-Dec. 25, Dec. 26

-Jan. 1, Jan. 2.

Year-End Giving

Thank you for being a part of our Church of the Ascension and for your support. Let's finish the year strong and work together for a blessed new one. Consider giving a year-end gift to our parish.

WEEKLY OFFERING - Dec. 14

-Total: **\$6,783** (\$4,634 + online: \$2,148). Goal: \$6,800.

-YTD Sunday: **\$147,325**. Budget: \$163,200.

-Retired Religious: **\$2,373**.

-Human Development: **\$140** (YTD: \$2,564)

-Immaculate Conception: **\$627**

-Advent Joyful Bites (Flower Fund): **\$558**.

Thank you for your generosity.

"God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7)

MASS INTENTIONS

Dec 20	Sat	05 pm	Maxine Stice +
Dec 21	Sun	07 am	Agatha Pao +
		09 am	John & Barbara Power +
		11 am	Lawrence Sellers +
		05 pm	Joseph Fiorentino, Jr (L)
Dec 23	Tue	08 am	Joan Braddi (L)
Dec 24	Wed	05 & 08 pm	(Christmas Eve)
Dec 25	Thu	07 & 09 & 11 am	(Christmas Day)
Dec 27	Sat	09 am	The Brazzano Family



Merry Christmas!

May the light of Christ
illuminate your life
and may his peace fill your heart
as we celebrate his Nativity this season.

Fr. Hao, Sharlene, Nomer, Mark, and Charlie

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR SCHEDULE

Dec 24 - Christmas Eve:

5:00 pm | 8:00 pm

Dec 25 - Christmas Day:

7:00 am | 9:00 am | 11:00 am | (no 5:00 pm)

Jan 1 - Mary, Mother of God - Prayer for Peace

9:00 am

ASCENSION PASTORAL PLAN Survey Results

Top three priorities selected in the survey:

Worship (33%)

- Foster a welcoming worship environment
- Understand & appreciate the Eucharist
- Deliver homilies that inspire actions

Family (22%)

- Develop programs for the entire family lifecycle
- Support parents as primary faith teachers
- Foster partnership between parishes & schools

Youth and Young Adults (17%)

- Engage them
- Listen to their needs and desires
- Inspire and cultivate young leaders.

Our Preliminary Action Plan

Our Parish Leadership Team has discussed an action plan to implement the parish priorities, based on the feasibility (human, financial resources), short- and long-term goals, etc. This is an initial plan that will become more detailed as new info is added.

Worship

- Extend hospitality to visitors and accompany newcomers
- Engage the participation during & after Mass

Family

- Provide opportunities for gathering, connections
- Provide opportunities for learning

Youth & Young Adults

- Include them in consultations and connections
- Engage them in parish ministries and services

Our Parish Leadership Team

For the implementation of the Parish Pastoral Plan.
Dong-Young Chang, Gabriel Doria, Fr. Hao, Jeff Moe, Loy Moe, Atul Nair, Janice Sehr, John Sze, Keswick Tsang (chair).