



December 22, 2024

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Mi 5:1-4a | Heb 10:5-10 | Lk 1:39-45

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

Ask a child, “Where is God?” and you’ll likely receive a variety of responses: “in heaven,” “in church,” “everywhere” and “in my heart” are all conceivable answers from a child’s lips. But the one we most easily write off as silly or sentimental is one that the saints would urge us to revisit more seriously: God is indeed “in my heart” – that is, he is present in our souls! This is true not only when we receive him in Holy Communion, and not only because he is “everywhere,” but because we possess *sanctifying grace*. Grace is *divine life* – God’s life – and if we are “in a state of grace” (that is, we have brought any mortal sins to confession), we have this life within us! Our model for becoming aware of this wonderful gift is our Blessed Mother, whose example in today’s Gospel teaches us to love, reverence, and obey God within us. Setting out “in haste” to serve her aged cousin, Mary carried God in her womb. We can imagine the love and joy with which she carried him. At every moment, God is present in us, too (not physically, but by grace) and we should strive to recognize and love him who has made our hearts his dwelling place.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

The events of today’s Gospel suggest that Jesus’ presence in Mary is not *for* Mary alone. Prompted by love, she made the arduous journey to visit Elizabeth – itself an act of charity. But Mary brought more than her services and support to Elizabeth during a potentially difficult pregnancy; she brought God himself! Mary was so conscious of God within her that even her words, flowing from a heart burning with his love, carried a special power; at Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth was “filled with the Holy Spirit” and John the Baptist “leaped for joy.” As we become increasingly aware of God dwelling in our souls, we, too, become “Christ-bearers” to others. By being lovingly attentive to our Divine Guest, our words and actions become means by which he can act on the hearts of those we encounter each day.

SING

*O come, divine Messiah!
The world in silence waits the day
When hope shall sing its triumph
And sadness flee away*

Church of the Ascension

ascensionsaratoga.org

Masses: (Sat) 5p; (Sun) 7a, 9a, 11a, 5p

(Mon-Fri) 8a; (Sat) 9a

Confessions: (Sat) 4p - 4:45p

via Wikimedia Commons
Gerónimo Antonio de Esquivel, Publi

Your Place on the Tree

Family trees are an endless source of fascination. Whether you've explored yours through DNA tests or old photo albums and family stories, you know that a ragtag line of other people's chances and choices contribute to who you are. The Advent Jesse Tree teaches children about many risk-takers and seekers throughout biblical history who contributed to the arrival of Jesus. Folks like Jesse himself, the father of David who contributed to the lineage of the kings of Israel and, without suspecting it, the future King of the Universe. What might your legacy be, and how do you claim your place in the great story?

-Preparetheword.com

Jubilee 2025 Inauguration

On Christmas Eve, Pope Francis is set to **open the Holy Doors at St. Peter's Basilica to inaugurate the Jubilee 2025.**

As Pope Francis observes in his decree for the Jubilee, we are easily tempted to be "discouraged, pessimistic, and cynical about the future." He writes: "Thus, we will be able to say even now: I am loved, therefore I exist; and I will live forever in the love that does not disappoint, the love from which nothing can ever separate me."



Jesus the Path & Destination for Hope

At his general audience Dec. 18, Pope Francis began a series of talks on "Jesus Christ our hope." He called on Catholics to focus in the Holy Year 2025 on Jesus Christ, who is both the path and destination for Christian hope. Based on the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel, the pope said, "let us awaken in ourselves the grateful memory toward our ancestors, and above all let us give thanks to God who, through mother church, has begotten us to eternal life, the life of Jesus, our hope."

Let Us Pray...

- For victims of the school shooting in Madison on Dec. 16.
- For 80,000 people, including 40,000 children, affected by the 7.3 earthquake in Vanuatu on Dec. 17.
- For 20,000 Haitian children fleeing their homes due to gang violence.
- For all who suffer in war-torn countries: Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan, elsewhere.
- For reconciliation, justice, and lasting peace in Syria.

WEEKLY OFFERING - DEC. 15

-Total **\$7,726** (basket: \$6,573 - including a \$2,000 annual donation; online: \$1,153). Goal: \$6,500.
-YTD: \$152,394. Budget: \$156,000.
Thank you for your generosity.

MASS INTENTIONS

Dec 21	Sat	05 pm	Maxine Stice +
Dec 22	Sun	07 am	Gary S. H. Chang +
		09 am	Sophia Scheid (L)
		11 am	Diane Borromeo (L)
		05 pm	Joan Block (L)
Dec 23	Mon	08 am	Joan Braddi (L)
Dec 26	Thu	08 am	Clara Smith (L)
Dec 27	Fri	08 am	The Gerrard Family
Dec 28	Sat	08 am	Natalie McKeever (L)



*May the light of the divine love
warm your heart
this Christmas season.
May the light of hope guide you
in the upcoming Jubilee year 2025!*

Fr. Hao & Ascension Parish Staff

Message for the 58th World Day of Peace

January 1, 2025

In the midst of several challenges facing the world, the 2025 World Day of Peace's message is "Forgive us our Trespasses: Grant us your Peace," underscoring the deep meaning of the Jubilee tradition that reminds us that we are all "in debt" to God, who in His infinite mercy and love forgives our sins and calls upon us to forgive those who trespass against us.

In the Jewish tradition, the Jubilee was a time of universal remission of sins and debts liberating the oppressed. The Pope notes that in our day too, this year of grace "is an event that inspires us to seek to establish the liberating justice of God in our world," marred by injustices and "systemic" challenges that Saint John Paul II termed "structures of sin."

Christmas Season Mass Schedule

CHRISTMAS EVE

-Dec. 24: 5:00 pm (with Nativity Play), 8:00 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY

-Dec. 25: 7:00 am, 9:00 am, 11:00 am (**no 5:00 pm Mass**)

NEW YEAR'S DAY - MARY MOTHER OF GOD

-Jan. 1: 10:00 am (with Rosary for Peace)

Parish Office Holiday Schedule

Ascension Office will be **closed** on:

- Dec. 25, 26 (Wednesday, Thursday)
- Jan. 1 (Wednesday)

Year-End Is Time for Giving

Cash

Make sure your check is dated 2024 and received or postmarked no later than December 31, 2024.

Appreciated Securities

If you own investments that have increased in value (stocks, bonds, mutual funds, real estate), you can donate them to your parish and take an income tax deduction for the full fair market value and avoid declaring the capital gain of the assets as income. This is a "double deduction."

Retirement Plan Assets

When a distribution is made from your plan to the church, we will receive the full amount of what you gives.

Life Insurance

When the original purpose for a life insurance no longer applies (educating children now grown, providing financial security for a spouse now deceased), consider naming your parish a beneficiary of the policy.



For more info, scan the QR code or visit dsj.org/ways-to-give/estate-planning/.