

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 eternal Word being great became little; being lord became servant; being strong became weak; being his own made himself ours; being rich made himself poor; being high made himself low."



Inspired by these words of our founder, St Alphonsus, about the birth of Jesus, the Redemptorists and RPP wish you and your families all the graces of the Incarnation. May the message of Christmas bless your homes with hope and peace!

THE WEEK AHEAD

Live the Word

Mon 25 Dec NATIVITY OF CHRIST

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

"Disguise is central to God's way of dealing with human beings. God is not playing games with us. The God who is beyond our knowing makes himself known in a disguise which we can know." – RJ Neuhaus

Tue 26 Dec ST STEPHEN, 1ST MARTYR

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

Fear, anger, divine intimidation, threat and punishment will never lead people to love. We cannot lead people to the highest level of motivation by teaching them the lowest.

Wed 27 Dec ST JOHN, AE

1 John 1:1-4; Psalm 97; John 20:2-8

"Lighthouses don't go running all over an island looking for boats to save, they just stand there shining." – Anne Lamott. Allow the light of Christ within you to shine constantly in the darkness of our world.

Thu 28 Dec HOLY INNOCENTS, Ms

1 John 1:5-2:2; Psalm 124; Matthew 2:13-18

Today we not only pray for an end to abortion, but to nurture a profound respect for all life. And recognize the greatest treasure God put on the earth – the human person made in God's image, destined for eternity.

Fri 29 Dec (St Thomas Becket, BM

1 John 2:3-11; Psalm 96; Luke 2:22-35

Slowly read through today's gospel. Sense the joy and fulfillment experienced by Simeon and Anna. Spend time reflecting on the minds and hearts of Mary and Joseph as they experienced that first Christmas?

Sat 30 Dec Liturgy of the Day

1 John 2:12-17; Psalm 96; Luke 2:36-40

Evaluate your life today in light of the prophetess Anna. How well you imitate her in your own life – with prayer, penance, devotion to God, and following your own unique and sacred calling?

Sun 31 Dec HOLY FAMILY

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

"It is easy to love the people far away. It is not always easy to love those close to us. Bring love into your home, for this is where our love for each other must start." – St Teresa of Calcutta

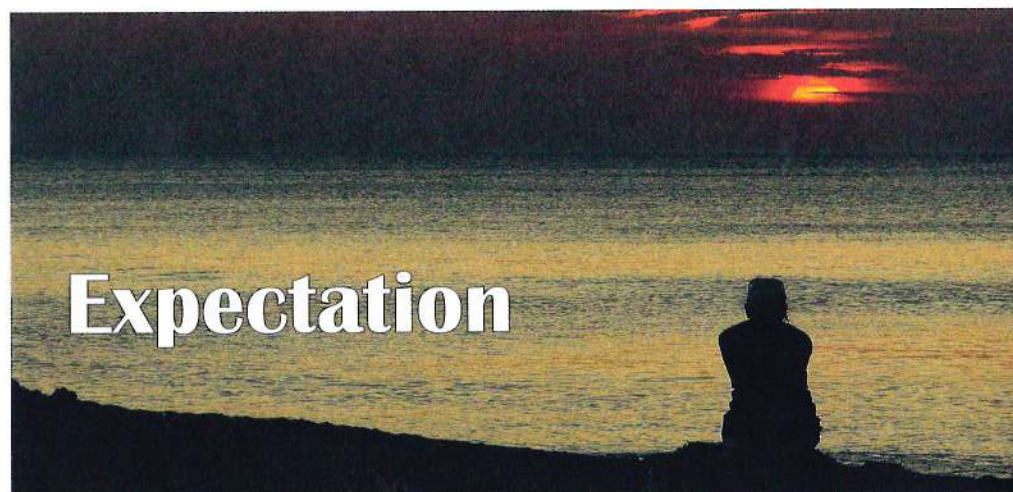
(KEY: SOLEMNITY; FEAST; Memorial; (Optional Memorial) A=Apostle; E=Evangelist; Ms=Martyrs; B=Bishop

Catholic Link

QUALITIES OF HOPE

Hearing Openness Prayer Expectation

4th Sunday in Advent • Year B
Divine Office: Week IV • 24 December 2023



Given that hope is a universal category, the language of hope defies neat description. It can refer to dreams, ambitions, aspirations, longings, yearnings and so on. In our Advent articles this year we have qualities of hope as Hearing, Openness and Prayer. Today we add to that list the final letter to the mnemonic H O P E: Expectation. One dictionary defines hope as "expectation and desire combined".

Our own experience tells us that expectations vary wildly depending on the individual and also on the stage of life. When we are young, we are more prone to be overwhelmed by the many expectations we have ... and others have of us. What religious expectations we may have at this stage may be limited to being good to be rewarded and avoiding evil lest we be punished.

Later we learn about relationships with others, and this will be reflected in our expectations. We hope for stability and fidelity in our dealings with others. Our conscience will mature beyond reward/punishment into choosing good because it is good and avoiding evil because it is evil.

At some stage, especially as we grow older, we desire not just to understand but also to appreciate the meaning of our existence. It is here that our expectations can help to define us.

What of our religious expectations? Some describe them as "opium" to numb us from harsh reality (Marx). Others dismiss religious expectations as "wish-fulfilment" (Freud).

But what about God's expectations? Reflecting on what Jesus has done for us, St Paul sums it up as the expectation of the Father who "wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Christian hope is the full confidence that God plans to bring humankind into the Kingdom in Christ.

There is no end to the challenges to such an exalted expectation. Is it utopian, is it coherent, is it real in the face of moral and physical evil? These challenges exist at the individual level. They also exist at the level of the community of faith. In the end, it comes down to who God is and how God is. Do we expect to meet a God for a fearsome confrontation, or do we expect to die into a God of infinite love and compassion?

The faith of the Church with regard to the "Last Things" is expressed in the pastoral constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes):

"The form of this world, distorted by sin, is passing away and we are taught that God is preparing a new dwelling and a new earth in which righteousness dwells, whose happiness will fill and surpass all the desires of peace arising in human hearts." (39)

Christian hope and expectation cannot be limited because God cannot be limited. St Paul knew this when he wrote "If our hope in Christ has been for this life only, we are the most unfortunate of all people" (1 Cor. 15:19). St Thérèse of Lisieux understood the same when she said, "My hopes touch on the infinite".