

Joy

The Fourth Sunday

THE COMING OF

Saying Yes Together

Matthew 1:18-24

Joseph is trapped in an unthinkable scenario: Mary, to whom he is betrothed, is pregnant. Joseph is faced with a decision. Then he receives a sign from God. In a dream an angel reassures him that the child to be born is part of God's plan and that Joseph is called to care for him and his mother.

When we think of the Annunciation, usually Mary and her response to God come to our minds. In Matthew's story,

Joseph is brought to the forefront. God's plan depends upon both Mary and Joseph.

Isn't the same true for us? God's presence in our world is dependent upon our "yes"; God's presence is often revealed in our lives through people who are close to us. Often, it is difficult to say "yes," to be the persons we're created to be, without the partnership, support, and encouragement of others.



"If God, in the Christmas mystery, reveals himself not as One who remains on high and dominates the universe, but as the One who bends down, descends to the little and poor earth, it means that, to be like him, we should not put ourselves above others, but indeed lower ourselves, place ourselves at the service of others, become small with the small and poor with the poor."

— Pope Francis, December 18, 2013

POINTS TO PONDER

Have I ever felt guided by angels or by God in making decisions?

When have I said "yes," enabling God to become present in a very real way in my life or the life of another?

Who are the persons who are/have been intertwined with my holiness, my response to live as a follower of Jesus?

ADVENT FEAST DAYS



The feast of **St. John Kanty** (d. 1473), a lesser-known saint, is tucked in just before Christmas, on December 23. As a professor of theology in Kraków, Poland, he was a serious, humble person, totally at the service of the poor. One day, John Kanty was robbed. He replied “no” when the thieves asked if he had more money hidden that they were not finding. Later that day, he discovered a few coins buried deep within his pocket. He quickly set out to find the robbers, giving them these remaining coins. Experiencing this mind-boggling generosity, the robbers’ response was to return all that they had originally taken.

Be excessive this week, not in purchasing more gifts, additional decorations, or more food, but in the giving of your time, presence, and response to the needs of others.

3 Ways to Practice Advent Joy

Place the word “yes” on your nightstand, your refrigerator, etc., to remind yourself how you say yes to God.

Write a letter of thanks to someone who has walked with you in your journey of the Catholic faith.

Do you know someone who is grieving the loss of a loved one, chronically ill, worried, unemployed, or discouraged? Think of some way to include them in your twelve-days-of-Christmas plans.

FAMILYTIME

Christmas doesn’t end on December 25. The Twelve Days of Christmas are the days from Christmas until the Epiphany (traditionally January 6th). These twelve days are an opportunity to continue reflecting on Christ’s incarnation among us, celebrate several important feast days, and celebrate family rituals. Take time this week to decide on something you will do on each of the days. For example, read a book about the Christmas story; visit a living Nativity; picnic next to the Christmas tree; go through your Christmas cards, praying for each person by name; visit an elderly person; or take Christmas bread to a shut-in.

Advent Prayer

God of Love, thank you for the people in my life who support my relationship with you. Together may we continue to answer “yes,” bringing your love to our world at Christmastime and each and every day.



Catechism CONNECTION

“Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this ‘marvelous exchange’: ‘O marvelous exchange! Man’s Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity’ (*Liturgy of the Hours*).”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 526