

IJ MATTERS



Nashik India: Volume V Issue 7 – December 2025

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SHRINE HAPPENINGS IN DECEMBER 2025

The month of December is a month of anticipation. This year, the season of Advent began on November 30, which was the first Sunday in Advent. From this day till the night of December 24, 2025, we wait with anticipation for the birth of the Messiah who is born to save us from sin. The name Jesus, which is given to Joseph and Mary by the angel (and therefore by God) suggests that God reveals the function that Jesus will perform in his ministry. This function is to proclaim to the whole world and to all of creation that our God is a God of love who always forgives and who always loves.

We can experience these themes in our Advent Novena from December 16-24, 2025

December 16, 2025	The Saviour is waiting to enter your heart
December 17, 2025	Our God is Emmanuel – God with us and for us
December 18, 2025	God needs human response to be human
December 19, 2025	God encourages us to be hopeful and fearless
December 20, 2025	We have to let God’s love show through us
December 21, 2025	God is made present when we reach out to others
December 22, 2025	God shows favour at all times and every time
December 23, 2025	God works for us and in us
December 24, 2025	God saves and never condemns

The main focus of the Novena is that despite the fact that our world is ravaged and torn by war and strife, we still have the audacity to celebrate Christmas, because we are pilgrims of hope. Being pilgrims of hope means that we know that our lives here on earth are temporary and passing. We are aware that this world is a temporary dwelling place and that we are merely passing through. Yet, even as we are here for a short time, we will not allow death and destruction to take away the fullness of life that Jesus brings with his birth. We will enjoy every moment of this life and keep praying for those who consistently choose untruth over truth, darkness over light and death over life.

We are attaching the nine-day Novena in this issue. We hope it will be helpful as you prepare for Christmas

Christmas does not end on December 25, but continues. We remember that the coming of the Lord on this earth is only a preparation for his second coming in glory. This indeed is the mystery of our faith known as the “Parousia”. We remind ourselves about this at every Eucharist when we recite the mystery of faith and say, “When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death O Lord **until you come again**”. The Resurrection of Jesus is the sure sign of his second coming and it is for this that we wait with hope and anticipation.

This optimistic waiting is therefore done despite the reality of war, division, destruction and death that we see around us. It is done despite that selfishness and egocentricity that we

manifest repeatedly. It is done despite the fact that we do not spare a thought before we destroy innocent women, men and children. It is done despite the fact that we ravage and abuse our world. It is done BECAUSE Jesus conquered death and limitedness through his resurrection and will come again.

We show our optimism in many ways at the Shrine. We reach out to as many as possible, and in as many ways as possible. We do not concern ourselves with the limited resources at our disposal, but use as much as we have for the good of others. In this context, we reached out to the footpath dwellers with blankets and warm clothes that were donated by many generous patrons. We will organise a Christmas party for differently abled children from a nearby school. There will be around 100 children. We will welcome them with a cool drink and some snacks. They will entertain us with skits and dances that they have prepared. They will have lunch with us and leave after enriching us with their presence. If you are in Nashik on December 22, 2025, you are welcome to join us as we celebrate.

Jingle All The Way!
A Children's Christmas Celebration

*Get ready for a morning filled with
joy, laughter, and festive fun!*

Come celebrate the season with us at the Shrine.

Date: Monday, December 22, 2025.
Time: 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM.
***Venue: Shrine of the Infant Jesus,
Nashik Road***

*Celebration ends with a
delicious festive lunch!*

The theme for our Christmas crib is: **“Hope enters silently into our Hopeless World”**. Hope is one of the main themes of Christmas and the Christmas season. Hope is never deceptive (Rom 5:5).

We wish each of you and your families a very happy Christmas and a Blessed and grace filled New Year 2026. May the Infant Jesus bless you all and may Joseph and Mary always intercede.

Fr. Errol Fernandes SJ

December 2025

Advent Novena, Tuesday, December 16, 2025

THEME: The Saviour is waiting to enter your heart why don't you let him come in?

HYMN: All over the world the Spirit is moving
All over the world as the prophets said it would be
All over the world there's a mighty revelation
Of the glory of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea

Right here in our midst the Spirit is moving
Right here in our midst as the prophets said it would be
Right here in our midst there's a mighty revelation
Of the glory of the Lord
As the waters cover the sea

Send forth your Spirit O Lord and we shall be recreated
Response: And you will renew the face of the earth

INTRODUCTION: In the first reading of today, the prophet Zephaniah pronounces disaster to the rebellious. These are those who have turned their backs to God. They have made riches their God. They have turned a deaf ear to the cries of the poor and have concerned themselves only with accumulating things. They have trusted not in God but in their wealth and consequently have gone far away from God. However, the Lord is kind and full of compassion. He is slow to anger and steadfast in love. He will wait patiently and when the rebellious decide to return, he will accept and love them unconditionally.

The first son in the parable of today represents the sinner, the outcast, the rebellious and those who have gone astray. These are disobedient at first, but relent and repent. They come back to God and show it through their actions of love. The second son represents those who pay lip service. These are those who do not practice their faith, but merely recite creeds which they do not believe.

Is my worship of the Lord a verbal and theoretical worship alone or does it translate into action?

LET US PRAY - God most high, you revealed yourself completely in Jesus. You loved us so much that you wanted to feel as we feel, think as we think and save us for eternity. We pray that we be aware that if our faith and worship have to be meaningful, they must show themselves in selfless action. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ your son our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR GOD'S GRACE

- For paying lip service and for a theoretical faith – Lord have mercy
- For professing one thing, but doing another – Christ have mercy
- For not living out our faith in deeds – Lord have mercy

INVOCATIONS TO GOD

RESPONSE: Lord, hear our prayer

1. That we may realise that our faith cannot be theoretical but must show itself in deeds
2. That we may know that faith without deeds is a dead faith
3. That we may learn from the Lord how to live our faith in loving action
4. That we may know that when we reach out to the poor and marginalized, we are living out the values of the kingdom
5. That we may realise that God will always take us back no matter how far away we may go from him.
6. Make your personal intention

LET US PRAY

God redeemer in Jesus, give us the grace to understand even if in a small way the greatness of your love. Help us to be aware at all times that you will always be a God of unconditional love and that you want us all to be saved.

We make our prayer to you God who alone are God. Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord

Response. Who made heaven and earth

Lord, hear our prayer

Response. And let our cry come unto you.

The Lord be with you.

Response. And with you also.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we pray O God redeemer and saviour in Jesus, that we may keep opening our hearts, minds and every fibre of our beings to the outpouring of your love. May we then spread that love to everyone we meet. We make our prayer to you our loving God and saviour. Amen.

CONCLUDING HYMN

Right here in our midst the Spirit is moving

Right here in our midst as the prophets said it would be

Right here in our midst there's a mighty revelation

Of the glory of the Lord

As the waters cover the sea

Advent Novena, Wednesday, December 17, 2025

THEME: Our God is Emmanuel – God with us and for us

HYMN: Be born in us Incarnate love (2). Take our flesh and blood and give us your humanity.

Be born in us (2). Take our eyes and give us your vision, take our minds and give us your pure thoughts. Be born in us... (2)

Send forth your Spirit O Lord and we shall be recreated

Response: And you will renew the face of the earth

INTRODUCTION: The Gospel text of today is the genealogy of Jesus according to Matthew. There are three significant points besides others that Matthew makes through this genealogy. These are, first, that our God is not only a God in the heavens but also God who is Emmanuel (God with us and for us). Secondly, the mention of four women in the genealogy, three of whom were Gentiles indicates that God wants the whole of humanity – not just a part - to be saved through Jesus, whose name itself means, “God saves”. Thirdly, the genealogy shows that our God does not save us through extraordinary deeds, but in the challenges of everyday life.

LET US PRAY – Incarnate God, you willed that all of us be saved and come to the fullness of life. We pray that we may open our hearts to keep receiving your saving grace. We ask this through the same Christ our Lord. Amen

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR GOD’S GRACE

For not opening our hearts wide, to receive your grace and love– Lord have mercy

For not being able, to find you in the ordinary events of day-to-day life – Christ have mercy

For not being grateful for the gift of yourself that you keep giving us – Lord have mercy

INVOCATIONS TO GOD

RESPONSE: Incarnate God hear our prayer

1. That we may recognize you in the ordinary happenings of life
2. That we seek and find you in all persons, things and events.
3. That we may realise that you want all of us to be saved
4. That we may be grateful for the gift of yourself that you keep making to us
5. That we may not condemn others so that we might not be condemned ourselves
6. That we may be open to the revelation that you keep making to us even today.
7. Make your personal intention

LET US PRAY

God Incarnate we praise and thank you for your unconditional love revealed in Jesus. Open our minds and heart to this great love. Give us the desire and courage to share this love with others as generously as you do with us.

We make our prayer to you God who alone are God. Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord

Response. Who made heaven and earth

Lord, hear our prayer

Response. And let our cry come unto you.

The Lord be with you.

Response. And with you also.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we pray O Incarnate God, that on this second day of our Advent Novena we might realise that you cannot become Incarnate or present today unless we make you. Let our thoughts, words and deeds be such that through them, people will see you Incarnate in us. We make our prayer to you our loving God and saviour. Amen.

CONCLUDING HYMN

Be born in us Incarnate love (2). Take our flesh and blood and give us your humanity.

Be born in us (2). Take our eyes and give us your vision, take our minds and give us your pure thoughts. Be born in us... (2)

Advent Novena, Thursday, December 18, 2025

THEME: God needs human response to be human

HYMN: O Joseph will you be the guardian of the Saviour? Your God has chosen you to guard, protect his son. His power will be your shield, his Spirit come upon you. And Joseph woke obeyed, God's will was done. And Joseph obeyed (3) when he knew it was the will of God.

Send forth your Spirit O Lord and we shall be recreated

Response: And you will renew the face of the earth

INTRODUCTION: The Gospel text of today speaks of the openness of St. Joseph. Though he was righteous and wanted to act according to God's law, he was directed to God's will. In this case, the will of God went beyond the law of God. To all intents and purposes, Joseph ought to have divorced Mary who was with child that was not his. Yet, foregoing reasonableness and rationality, Joseph decided that even though it was contrary to his own will, God's will was better and he did it. We must note that the first fulfillment quotation in the Gospel of Matthew "***Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,***" appears BEFORE Joseph wakes from his sleep and obeys. This conveys the level of openness of Joseph. There would be no hesitation in his heart whatsoever that God's will must be done.

LET US PRAY

God Emmanuel, we know that you are with us and for us. At various times in the past you have shown your care and concern for us. You have sent messengers and prophets to show us the way. Now you are sending a son. Open our hearts and minds to realize that you will never abandon us. We make this prayer through the same Jesus Christ your son our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR GOD'S GRACE

- For thinking that rationality and logic are the only ways... Lord have mercy
- For not opening our hearts wide enough to receive your grace.... Christ have mercy
- For thinking that what we want for ourselves is better than what you want for us. Lord have mercy

INVOCATIONS TO GOD

RESPONSE: Help us God, Emmanuel

- That we may see you in the persons we encounter.
- That we may see you in the things that we use.
- That we may see you in all that happens in our lives
- That we may know that you will never abandon us

- That we may actively seek you in the poor, the marginalized and the downtrodden.
- That we may care for our creation because you are present in it and everywhere.
- Make your personal intention

LET US PRAY

God Emmanuel, give us the grace to be aware of your presence in our midst. You are present in persons, things and situations. Indeed, you are present everywhere and at all times. Open our hearts to see you in them and them in you We make our prayer to you God Emmanuel who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord

Response. Who made heaven and earth

Lord, hear our prayer

Response. And let our cry come unto you.

The Lord be with you.

Response. And with you also.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we pray O God Emmanuel, that we may open our hearts to receive your grace and so find you in all things and all things in you. May we then be models of this grace to everyone we meet. We make our prayer to you God Emmanuel. Amen.

CONCLUDING HYMN

O Joseph will you be the guardian of the Saviour? Your God has chosen you to guard, protect his son. His power will be your shield, his Spirit come upon you. And Joseph woke obeyed, God's will was done. And Joseph obeyed (3) when he knew it was the will of God.

THEME: God encourages us to be hopeful and fearless

HYMN:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.

Refrain:

This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long (2)

Send forth your Spirit O Lord and we shall be recreated

Response: And you will renew the face of the earth

INTRODUCTION: In the first verses of today's text, Zechariah and Elizabeth are introduced. Zechariah means "God has remembered," and Elizabeth means "My God's oath." By stating that they were childless (when barrenness was regarded as a tragedy, a disgrace, and even a sign of God's punishment), despite the fact they were righteous and blameless, Luke probably wants to indicate that there is no connection between sin and punishment. That they were advanced in age, and so may have lost all hope of having a child, is to show the wondrous nature of the angelic announcement.

Zechariah's immediate response to the angels' appearance was one of fear and terror. The first words spoken by a character in the Gospel of Luke are by the angel and are an exhortation not to be afraid. The angel then announces, not only the birth of a son to Zechariah and Elizabeth, but also the greatness of the child. The name of the child is to be John, a name which means "God has shown favour" or "God is gracious". Zechariah's response is "How will I know that this is so?" To Zechariah's emphatic "I am an old man.", the angel responds with an even more emphatic, "I am Gabriel." Gabriel was sent to speak for God, but because Zechariah did not receive the good news, he would not be able to speak until the annunciation was fulfilled and the child was born. The angel's announcement comes to pass and Elizabeth conceives. She praises God for his graciousness to her.

There are numerous occasions in our lives when things do not go the way we want them to go. We try everything and nothing seems to work. We begin to think that God does not care for us or that he is punishing us for some wrong that we or our forefathers did. We might even stop praying at these times and lose faith. **The text of today calls for exactly opposite attitudes to these and challenges us to cultivate them.**

First, if things are not going the way we want them to go, it does not mean that God is punishing us for some past sins. There is very clearly no connection between sin and God's

punishment. To be sure, any kind of negative feelings that we harbor, any resentment that we hold on to, any sediments of anger residing in our hearts, can lead to blocks in our minds and bodies and can affect our health. Giving in to despair and desperation and losing hope means that we do not trust God as we ought to do. Giving up must never be an option.

The call is a call to hope. It is a call to continue to petition God, and to keep asking him for what we need, with confidence and courage. It is a call to continue to believe that God can do what is impossible and that nothing and no one is outside the scope of God's power. He can, with a word, make all things whole. We do not ask "How will I know?" like Zechariah did, **BECAUSE WE MUST KNOW THAT GOD KNOWS.**

LET US PRAY

God of hope and fearlessness, you desire that we never lose hope and be fearless in any and all challenges that we face because you are hopeful and fearless. Open our hearts to the promptings of your Spirit which invites us to hope and be fearless. Give us the grace of this realization. We ask this through the same Jesus Christ your son our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR GOD'S GRACE

For our lack of faith Lord have mercy

For losing hope.... Christ have mercy

For giving into despair... Lord have mercy

INVOCATIONS TO GOD

RESPONSE: Hear us God of hope

- That we may keep hope alive in our hearts even when we cannot see signs.
- That we may be fearless in the face of any and all challenges.
- That we may understand that you will keep remembering us and our welfare.
- That we may know that you are a God who can make the impossible, possible.
- That we may not seek signs of your presence, but find you everywhere.
- That we may realize that you will never punish us, but will always invite us back to you.
- Make your personal intention

LET US PRAY

God of hope and fearlessness, give us the grace to be aware that because you are with us, we need never lose hope or give in to fear. We thank you for your graciousness to us. Give us the grace to open hearts to receive your gifts.

Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord

Response. Who made heaven and earth

Lord, hear our prayer
Response. And let our cry come unto you.
The Lord be with you.
Response. And with you also.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we pray O God of hope and fearlessness, that we may open our hearts to receive the hope that you want to pour in. Let us know in the deepest recesses of our beings that you want us to never give in to fear. We make our prayer to you God of hope and fearlessness. Amen.

CONCLUDING HYMN

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.
Refrain:
This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long (2).

Advent Novena, Saturday, December 20, 2025

THEME: We have to let God's love show through us

HYMN:

O, how I love Jesus (3)
Because, he first loved me

To me, God is love so pure (3)
Because, he first loved me

Send forth your Spirit O Lord and we shall be recreated

Response: And you will renew the face of the earth

INTRODUCTION: The Gospel text of today is the announcement of the Angel Gabriel to Mary. It is the first of the five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary and titled, "The Annunciation". The annunciation is about the birth of the Saviour to Mary who is a virgin. This mystery is the beginning of salvation history. It was Mary's response here that enabled God to put his plan for the salvation of the world into action.

Many of us think that Mary said "Yes". The truth of the matter is that Mary's response goes beyond Yes. What Mary does say is, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." In a word, the response of Mary is SUBMISSION. It is submission to God's will which is primary for Mary. She is passively active or actively passive. She does not presume to collaborate or cooperate with God. Rather, she let's God do in and through her. She lets God take the initiative. In this regard, she also left the issue of explaining to Joseph in God's hands.

We may presume at times that it is we who are helping God when we reach out to the poor or do other generous acts. Mary teaches us that instead of this way of thinking and acting, if we let God do in and through us, what we do will be both gracious and efficacious.

LET US PRAY

God of unconditional love and forgiveness, you desire that we only open our hearts to receive your love. Open our hearts to receive this love, so that we can share this great gift with everyone we meet. Give us this gift of openness. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR GOD'S GRACE

- For thinking that you need us to do your work ... Lord have mercy
- For not realizing that you allow us the privilege of working with you... Christ have mercy
- For expecting gratitude when we reach out to others... Lord have mercy

INVOCATIONS TO GOD

RESPONSE: God of mercy hear our prayer

That we may open our hearts to hear your invitation.

That we may respond with generosity and large heartedness.
That we may understand that we may not always understand your ways.
That we may never doubt your unconditional mercy and love.
That we may seek and find you in the poor, the downtrodden and marginalised.
That we may reach out to you by reaching to at least one person in need.
Make your personal intention

LET US PRAY

God of love and mercy, give us the grace to be aware that you come to us in the daily activities of life. Open our hearts and minds to hear your voice in those who have no voice. Help us to listen to them attentively as Mary did. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord
Response. Who made heaven and earth
Lord, hear our prayer
Response. And let our cry come unto you.
The Lord be with you.
Response. And with you also.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we pray O God of love and mercy that we may listen with attentive hearts and minds to those who cannot speak. Give us the openness to hear what they cannot say and the courage to reach out to them in their need. We make our prayer to you God of mercy and love. Amen.

CONCLUDING HYMN:

O, how I love Jesus (3)
Because, he first loved me

To me, God is love so pure (3)
Because, he first loved me

Advent Novena, Sunday, December 21, 2025

THEME: God is made present when we reach out to others

HYMN:

When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?

When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?

I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there? I was hungry and thirsty, were you there? And the creed and the colour And the name won't matter, were you there?	I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there? I was cold, I was naked, were you there? And the creed and the colour And the name won't matter, were you there?
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Send forth your Spirit O Lord and we shall be recreated

Response: And you will renew the face of the earth

INTRODUCTION: The second Joyful mystery titled “The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth” is the Gospel text for today. Mary believes the angel’s word perfectly. She does not need proof. This is what Elizabeth recognizes. Mary believes before she sees. So confident is Mary of the angel’s message that she rushes to share the joy of Elizabeth (whom she is told is in her sixth month) and to share her own joy at becoming the mother of the Lord.

Faith is to believe even when we cannot see. We say to God “Let me see and then I will believe.” God says to us, “First believe and then you will see.” In the letter to the Hebrews, we read a beautiful definition of faith “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for and the conviction of things not seen”.

Assurance is a promise now, that something will definitely happen. The assurance which may also be translated as guarantee is about something that will occur or be received in future. How do I know now that it will happen or that I will receive it? FAITH. Conviction is a feeling about being certain about something. Here, the certainty is about things not seen. It is possible to be certain about things which one cannot see because of FAITH.

LET US PRAY

God who becomes visible in us, you want us to reveal you to those who do not know you. Give us the grace and strength to make you know through one tangible loving action today. Help us to reveal you as unconditional mercy and love. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR GOD’S GRACE

- For being faithless and unbelieving... Lord have mercy
- For not trusting your word... Christ have mercy
- For wanting to see before we believe... Lord have mercy

INVOCATIONS TO GOD

RESPONSE: Help us to reach out to others

- That we may make you present in the enhancing words that we speak.
- That we may make you present in the loving actions we perform.
- That we may reach out to others in need in a tangible and real manner.
- That we may become bread for the hungry and water for the thirsty.
- That we may not be selfish and keep all our possessions to ourselves but be ready to share them with those in need
- Make your personal intention

LET US PRAY

God who wants to be made visible, give us the grace to be aware that you can only be made visible through the kind words that we speak and the loving actions we perform. We thank you for giving us the privilege to make you known. Help us to fulfill this task courageously. Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord

Response. Who made heaven and earth

Lord, hear our prayer

Response. And let our cry come unto you.

The Lord be with you.

Response. And with you also.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we pray O God that we may make you present in the words that we speak and, in the actions, we perform. Give us the grace to realise that you can be made visible only in the tangible love that we show to others. We make this prayer to you God who wants to be visible and who reign with the Father and the Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen

CONCLUDING HYMN

When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?

When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

And the creed and the colour And the name won't matter, were you there?

I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there? I was hungry and thirsty, were you there? And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?	I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there? I was cold, I was naked, were you there? And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?
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Advent Novena, Monday, December 22, 2025

THEME: God shows favour at all times and every time

HYMN:

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

Send forth your Spirit O Lord and we shall be recreated

Response: And you will renew the face of the earth

INTRODUCTION:

In the Magnificat, Mary acknowledges first that God looks on her though she is unworthy. Mary begins by admitting her nothingness.

God is the one who has done great things in Mary. God has taken the initiative and graced Mary beyond her wildest imagination.

The stress on God as a God primarily of the poor stands out in Mary's hymn of praise.

In a world where the rich seem to be getting richer and the poor, poorer, one wonders whether the Magnificat is a hymn that can make sense to the poor, to those of low degree. Yet, it is important to remember that God's ways are not our ways and so, the poor must, in confidence, sing this song as their song.

Mary uses verbs in the past tense to denote God's future actions, thus expressing that God will indeed accomplish his will, and the poor will be vindicated.

The favour of God is shown not only in the external gifts that we receive, but also in the inner strength that God gives.

When we trust that God will do what is best, then what is best does happen.

God continues to show favour. We have to experience it and then share it with those in need.

LET US PRAY

God of favour and grace, you are gracious and favourable to us at all times. Open our hearts to see the favours you keep bestowing on us and the grace you keep pouring into our hearts.

We make this prayer through the same Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR GOD'S GRACE

- For thinking that we are independent.... Lord have mercy
- For not acknowledging our need of your grace... Christ have mercy
- For our arrogance and pride... Lord have mercy

INVOCATIONS TO GOD

RESPONSE: Hear us O gracious God

- That we may know that you are always favourable to us.
- That we may open our hearts to the graces you keep pouring on us.
- That we may always want to do your will despite not seeing the result immediately.
- That we may never give in to negatives even when things do not go the way we want them to.
- That we may praise your name at all times and especially in our deeds.
- That we may show your graciousness and favour to the poor and forgotten.
- Make your personal intention

LET US PRAY

God of grace and favour, give us the openness to be aware that you are always favourable to us even when we cannot experience that favour.

Help us to share this favour and grace we have received from you with the poor and downtrodden.

Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord

Response. Who made heaven and earth

Lord, hear our prayer

Response. And let our cry come unto you.

The Lord be with you.

Response. And with you also.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we pray O favourable and gracious God that we may be aware of your constant favour and grace poured out on us. Let us be so filled with this favour that we will always want to share it with those we meet.

We make our prayer to you God of generosity. Amen.

CONCLUDING HYMN

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Advent Novena, Tuesday, December 23, 2025

THEME: God works for us and in us

HYMN:

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the God of creation!
O my soul, praise Him, for God is our health and salvation!
All you who hear, now to His presence draw near
Sing now in glad adoration!

Send forth your Spirit O Lord and we shall be recreated

Response: And you will renew the face of the earth

INTRODUCTION:

Two days before the birth of the Messiah, the Church invites us to reflect on the birth, naming, and circumcision of his precursor or forerunner, John the Baptist.

Luke focuses more on the events that follow the birth and shows that God's word spoken through the angel, Gabriel, is being fulfilled. Elizabeth does bear a son and the people rejoice at the birth because of the great mercy shown by God.

At the circumcision it was the father who normally named the child and, in doing so, recognized the child as his own. Sometimes, the child was named after the father, especially if the father was a person who was highly esteemed. Objections were raised to the name "John" ("God had been gracious"), chosen by Elizabeth. That the people made signs to Zechariah to ask him what he wanted to name the child indicates that, besides being dumb, he was also deaf. The moment Zechariah writes the name "John" on a writing tablet, Zechariah regains his speech. Once again, God's word comes to pass. The fear and amazement with which the people respond to these happenings is an indication that they experienced God's awesome power. The question that the people ask, about what the child would turn out to be, is answered in summary form by Luke when he ends this narrative by stating that "the hand of the Lord was with him."

God's word is a word of power and will come to pass, no matter how many obstacles we may put in its way. It is a word that enhances and builds up, a word that gives life. To be sure, we may not always be able to understand and accept it for what it is, but in the final analysis, it is always a word that is for our good and for his glory.

Faith in God's word is reasonable. What seems impossible for us is possible for God. God's mercy is constant if only we open our hearts to receive it.

The proud and independent will not be able to see God's hand in their lives.

God is working even now

LET US PRAY

God of the Universe and beyond, you are to be magnified, you are to be praised and you are to be honoured. Open our hearts to the working of your Spirit in our Universe. Give us the grace to keep praising you at all times and in every place. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR GOD'S GRACE

- For our unbelief... Lord have mercy
- For doubting the truth of your word... Christ have mercy
- For erecting barriers rather than being open.... Lord have mercy

INVOCATIONS TO GOD

RESPONSE: Hear us O God of the Universe

- That we may see your hand working in our world and our lives.
- That we may be humble and acknowledge our need of you.
- That we may understand that you will always want what is best for us.
- That we may know that you will keep revealing your presence in our lives.
- That we may sing your praise not only in words but through our lives.
- That we may realize that your presence in the poor can only be seen if we show it to them.
- Make your personal intention

LET US PRAY

God of the Universe, give us the grace to be aware that you are a gracious and generous God. Help us to share this graciousness we have received from you with the poor and downtrodden. We make this prayer through the same Jesus Christ your son our Lord who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord

Response. Who made heaven and earth

Lord, hear our prayer

Response. And let our cry come unto you.

The Lord be with you.

Response. And with you also.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we pray O God of the Universe, that we may be aware of your constant graciousness to us. Let us be so filled with this experience that we will want to share it with those we meet. We make our prayer to you God of generosity. Amen.

CONCLUDING HYMN

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the God of creation!

O my soul, praise Him, for God is our health and salvation!

All you who hear, now to His presence draw near

Sing now in glad adoration!

Advent Novena, Wednesday, December 24, 2025

THEME: God saves and never condemns

HYMN:

Jesus, you are my salvation
Jesus, you're my inspiration
Jesus, you're the treasure of my life

Jesus you offer, new sight to the blind
Healing the crippled, the deaf and the mute
Cleansing the leper and banishing ills
Raising the dead to life.

Jesus, you are my salvation
Jesus, you're my inspiration
Jesus, you're the treasure of my life

Send forth your Spirit O Lord and we shall be recreated
Response: And you will renew the face of the earth

INTRODUCTION: As we stand on the threshold of Christmas, we are invited to prepare for the coming of life and light into our world. God loved the world so much that now he sends not merely a messenger, a king, a prophet or even an angel, but a part of himself when he sends his son.

The song of Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist is known as the Benedictus. It may be seen as the last prophesy of the Old Testament and the first of the New. The prophesy begins by stating emphatically that God is constantly aware of his people. He is involved in their joys and sorrows. John the Baptist is sent to prepare the way. He does this by proclaiming Jesus who will forgive his people from their sins as his name suggests.

In a short while from now, we will celebrate the Christmas Mass. Let us ask God for the grace to open our hearts like Joseph and Mary did, so that we will be ready to welcome Jesus into our world and into our hearts.

LET US PRAY

God, Saviour of the human race, you desire that all people be saved and come to the fullness of life that you have prepared. Open our hearts to see and recognize that you want us to be saved and redeemed. Help us to know that you will NEVER condemn us. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR NEED FOR GOD'S GRACE

- For having turned a deaf ear to the promptings of God's Spirit.... Lord have mercy.
- For hearing the call to newness, but ignoring it...Christ have mercy
- For missing out on meeting the Messiah...Lord have mercy

INVOCATIONS TO GOD

RESPONSE: Hear us O gracious God

- That we may know that you want to save us even when we sin.
- That we may open our hearts to see and experience your saving help.
- That we may always be fearless because you are constantly in our midst.
- That we may realise that you touch every aspect of our lives.
- That we may see the light that you are which shines even in our darkness.
- That we may become aware that your will, will always be accomplished.
- Make your personal intention

LET US PRAY

God who saves and does not condemn, give us the openness to be aware that you are a God who wants the salvation of all.

Help us to take this salvation which we receive freely and generously from you with the same freedom and generosity to others and especially the poor. Amen.

Our help is in the Name of the Lord

Response. Who made heaven and earth

Lord, hear our prayer

Response. And let our cry come unto you.

The Lord be with you.

Response. And with you also.

LET US PRAY

Grant, we pray O God who are our Saviour, that we may be aware of your constant forgiveness, mercy and love. Let us be so filled with these that we will always want to share it with those we meet. We make our prayer to you God of our salvation who live and reign with the Son and the Holy Spirit one God forever and ever. Amen.

CONCLUDING HYMN

Jesus, you are my salvation

Jesus, you're my inspiration

Jesus, you're the treasure of my life

Jesus, you nurture the hungry with bread

Stilling the tempest and calming the sea

Turn life's water to glittering wine

Giving your love to me

Jesus, you are my salvation

Jesus, you're my inspiration

Jesus, you're the treasure of my life

WAITING IN HOPE: AN ADVENT REFLECTION

Do you like to wait?

I remember an experience that often comes back to me during the season of Advent. I was once scheduled to travel to Pune for an important meeting. My train was to leave from Dadar at 7:00 a.m. However, at 7 o'clock, an announcement was made that the train had not yet departed from CST. Every fifteen minutes, the same announcement was repeated. As time passed, I grew increasingly unsure—Will the train come at all? Should I look for another way to travel? After almost two hours of waiting, the train finally arrived. What was happening within me during those two hours? I experienced impatience, restlessness, anxiety, and worry. This is often how we experience waiting in daily life—filled with uncertainty and tension.

But the waiting we are invited into during Advent is very different. Advent is a waiting in hope.

Waiting: A Biblical Experience

The Bible is filled with stories of waiting. Abraham waited many long years before God's promise of a son was fulfilled. Noah waited patiently until the floodwaters receded. The Israelites wandered and waited for years before entering the Promised Land. All of them waited—not passively, but with hope in God's faithfulness.

In the New Testament, we meet Simeon and Anna, waiting in the Temple for the consolation of Israel. Zechariah and Elizabeth waited for a child. Above all, the people of Israel waited for the Messiah. Waiting, therefore, is a deeply biblical phenomenon—a sacred space where God acts.

St. Paul gives us a beautiful image of waiting through the example of a farmer. A farmer plants a seed or a sapling and waits. The seed does not grow overnight. Slowly, quietly, it takes root, sprouts, and eventually blossoms. The farmer waits with patience, trusting that, in time, God will bring growth. So too, God's plan unfolds gradually, often silently, but always faithfully.

Preparing While We Wait

Advent reminds us that waiting is not wasted time. While we wait, we are invited to prepare.

Very often, our preparation for Christmas remains external—decorations, celebrations, sweets, and parties. These are beautiful and joyful, but Advent invites us to something deeper: the preparation of our hearts.

We are called to enter into the great mystery of the Word becoming flesh—the immense love of God who chose to become one of us. How do we prepare for this mystery?

1. Prayer

Advent is a time to slow down and spend time with the Word of God. Reading and meditating on the infancy narratives helps us enter more deeply into the mystery of God becoming human. Prayer opens our hearts to hope and renews our trust in God's promises.

2. Reconciliation

Preparation also means restoring what is broken within us and around us. Advent calls us to forgive, to seek forgiveness, to heal relationships, and to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation. A reconciled heart is a ready heart.

3. Service

Finally, Advent invites us to look beyond ourselves. True preparation includes reaching out to those in need, so that they too may experience the joy and hope of Christmas. When we serve the poor, the lonely, and the forgotten, we make room for Christ to be born among us.

Conclusion

This Advent, let us learn to wait—not with impatience or anxiety, but with hope. Let us prepare not only our homes, but our hearts. Through prayer, reconciliation, and service, may we become a people ready to welcome Emmanuel—God-with-us.

Fr Wesley D'Costa SJ

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

He sailed the seas to witness faith
No storm nor hardship mattered
He held himself with strength and grace
At times in garments tattered



But though the East didn't all convert
To what his faith would say
His zeal to reach a wider world
Inspires our human way

We cannot live imprisoned lives
That have no wider care
Francis showed that God's great love
Is meant to know and share

Godfrey D'lima

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The Church asserts this Marian Feast
Assuring all the human race
from birth to death and evermore
Love for Jesus brings us grace

Mary's love for Jesus filled her
That no clutch of sin could taint
So as we love Christ intensely
Grace engulfs and sin grows faint

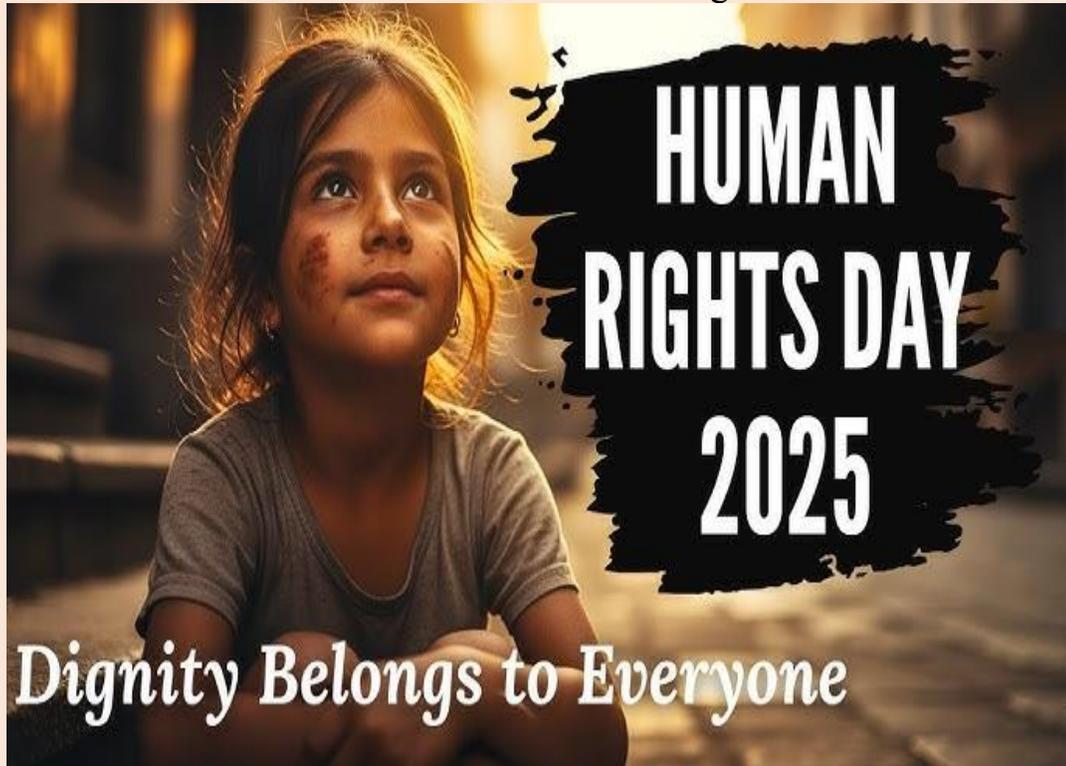


Human life is always wrestling
Powers vie to claim our souls
Love for Jesus just like Mary's
Keeps us firm on Heaven's goals

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

What God has made for each and all
Is now denied to many
Our right to be to speak our mind
In freedom - just as any

We mark the race, the caste and creed
Or ideas disagreeing
And so deny them equal claims
To share in our wellbeing



This travesty of Human Rights
Must change for everyone
That we may know God's reign of peace
Made present by his Son

These holy, precious Human Rights
Hold firm God's tent on earth
Where sharing equally God's gifts
A new world finds rebirth

MISSED CHRISTMAS MOMENTS

The Diwali holidays had ended and with winter around the corner, the Commerce section of St. Xavier's geared up for its departmental seminar, to be held amidst the serene and tranquil hillsides of Khandala. The idea was to engage in academic learning in a setting that fostered reflection, away from the noise of city life. And so, on a chilly Saturday morning, a group of around 100 students and staff gathered at CSMT station at 6 a.m., ready to board the Deccan Express.

It was a conscious decision to travel in the general compartment. Not only would this help us reach Khandala in under three hours, but it would also serve as a reminder of the everyday reality of many Indians who travel in these very coaches, often in crowded and challenging conditions. The experience was meant to be a small yet meaningful attempt to cultivate awareness and empathy.

The usual excitement began breakfast shared, jokes cracked, songs sung, and the joyous chatter of a college crowd on a rare outing. But amidst all this cheer, something else stayed with me, something quieter, more profound. It was at Kalyan station that I noticed a famished family of three a father, a mother, and a small child. Their clothes were worn, their eyes tired, and their presence humble. Initially, I admit, I tried to avoid eye contact. The train was crowded, and my attention was scattered. But as the journey progressed, I found myself standing near them. I watched them and felt the urge to give them something, perhaps a bit of money, something to ease their obvious hardship, even if only for a day.

But the train was packed, and I told myself I'd wait. "I'll give it to them when we get off at Khandala," I thought. It felt safer, easier, more manageable. The train finally reached Khandala, and as we stepped off I scanned the crowd eagerly. In the confusion of moving bags, calling out to students, and reassembling as a group, I lost the family. I looked, I waited but they were gone.



And with them, so was a moment. A moment to bring a little unexpected joy, to offer warmth without words, to make a human connection that could have meant something even if only for a short while. It wasn't just the money; it was the chance to show care, to act.

In that instant, I realised I had missed a Christmas moment not in terms of the date, but in spirit. Christmas, after all, is about giving without expecting anything in return, about sharing what we have, especially with those who have so little. It's about seeing Christ once more in the poor, the stranger, the marginalised.

That family may not remember me, but I will remember them. In a train full of laughter, learning, and movement, they reminded me that sometimes the greatest lessons are unspoken. And sometimes, the deepest regrets are not about what we said or did but about the acts of kindness we hesitated to complete.

At this point I would like to share with you an incident in the life of a contemporary mystic Carlo Carretto. In his spiritual masterpiece "Letters from the Desert" which incidentally sold millions of copies in a myriad number of languages, Carretto narrates in the first chapter of that book, an experience which lingered with him right through his life as a Little Brother of Jesus. Carlo Carretto passed away on 4th Oct 1988 and is buried in Spello, Italy.

I have summarised it as under: One cold night in the Sahara Desert, Carretto noticed that Kada, a poor man, was shivering from the cold and clearly in need of a blanket. Carretto himself had two blankets, He hesitated, reasoning that he might need the extra blanket himself. In that moment, he let fear and selfishness override compassion. Later in a typical reflective mood as was wont to be with Carretto, he realized the deep spiritual significance of what had happened. He had missed an opportunity to cry the Gospel with his life as his founder Charles de Foucauld would have wanted it to be, to love his neighbour as himself. Only later did he grasp the weight of that moment: a missed opportunity to embody the Gospel he had come to the desert to live. The regret lingered, not just for what he failed to give, but for how easily comfort got the better of compassion

I carry that moment with me and as Christmas draws near, I will be more alert. I know the opportunity to give, to care, to show love can come when we least expect it. And when we miss it, we miss something far greater than just a good deed.

We miss a Christmas moment.

Dr. Fr Conrad Pessa SJ

Director XIC, Chairman XIMR, Treasurer St. Xavier's College

CHRISTMAS

One can't escape the thrill of Christmas
Bringing cheer to every heart
Joy within and spreading wider
Giving hope a fresher start

From the youngest to the aged
Christmas rings a thrill within
Even when the times are worrying
Even through the dread of sin



What a gift this Heaven's message
In a child so fragile born
Who will stand up to oppression
Give his life new life to dawn

CHRISTMAS REVEALS THE DISPONIBILITY AND VULNERABILITY OF GOD

God did not create the world and leave it to its own design. God constantly intervened when the world was out of orbit. In the past, God's intervention had been through prophets, messengers, kings and queens. (Heb 1:1). The fact was that none of these could bring the world back to what it was meant to be. God, then, had to choose a radical way, a way that had never been tried before. When God chose to be incarnate in the world, it was a master stroke. The Incarnation could not have been the brainchild of anyone but God. However, even as God chose this way of insertion into the world, God was choosing disponibility, vulnerability and dependence.

Disponibility: The adjective "disponible" is often translated as "available" and sometimes as "capable of being placed, arranged or disposed of as one wishes". It is the latter meaning which applies to the incarnation of Jesus. As a matter of fact, disponible is explained by Paul in the self-emptying Christological hymn in his letter to the Philippians (Phil 2:5-11). Here, disponibility is seen as "kenosis" which means holding nothing back. It means giving one's all and even after one has given all, to want to give more. In this hymn, the point that Paul makes is that not only did God in Jesus become human, but even as a human-being, he became a slave. He went even further and accepted death to save the whole of humanity. His death on a cross and his resurrection brought salvation, union and hope to a broken and hopeless world. At the end of the hymn, it appears that BECAUSE he was obedient and did God's will, he was given the name above names. The truth, however, is that he had this name and power and glory EVEN BEFORE the incarnation. This means that NOTHING was added to him or his name. He did what he did merely from love. His disponibility was just that, a self-emptying expecting nothing in return.

Vulnerability: Traditionally, the date for the crucifixion of Jesus was March 25, which is why this date was chosen as the date of the Annunciation. There was a belief that great persons were conceived and died on the same date. The gestation period for a human being in the womb of its mother is approximately 9 months, and therefore, Christmas is celebrated on December 25 every year. Because Jesus wanted to be human in every sense of the word, he had to remain in womb of Mary as a zygote, embryo, foetus and then delivered by her as a human being. During this gestation period, Jesus was vulnerable. Literally, anything could have happened. Today, two thousand years after the birth of Jesus - and with many advances in the field of medicine, - a great deal of uncertainty still exists before and during the birth of a child. In many cases, children are born especially abled or with other challenges. This could have happened with Jesus. His birth therefore was like the birth of all human beings with all the related challenges.



Dependence: God made his very existence dependent on a positive human response. If either Mary or Joseph had expressed any kind of reservation, the incarnation would not have been possible. In other words, while nothing is impossible for God, the incarnation without a positive human response (typified by Mary and Joseph) would have been impossible.

Human response: Mary's response to God's invitation to be the receptacle that would bring his son into the world was unique. The angel Gabriel addresses Mary with the greeting "Hail full of grace". The address is an indication of Mary's openness and receptivity. Mary knows that all she is and has is a gift from God. This awareness is seen in her response to the angel in words (Lk 1:38) and later in deed (Lk 2:7,20). Many mistakenly think, that Mary said "Yes". What Mary did in fact say was, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." This response goes beyond Yes and to the very heart of Mary's personality. It may be termed as "Passive activity" or "Active passivity". Mary will not presume she will collaborate or cooperate with God. Rather Mary cedes the initiative to God. She allows God to take charge and direct the flow of events. She will be malleable and let God do in and through her. Her grace and openness allowed her to realise that if she let God do in and through her, it would be infinitely better than if she did as a collaborator with God.

Joseph's response too was unique (Mt 1:24). Reason and rationality prompted him to conclude that because the child in the womb of his betrothed Mary was not his, he would have to divorce her. He had no choice. His righteousness – which was not self-righteousness – dictated that he does so, not in public, but in private and quietly. He would be faithful to the law, but would not shame Mary or bring public disgrace on her. His mind was made up before he went to sleep. However, the dream in his sleep turned his world upside down. It is interesting that the first (of ten) formula or fulfillment quotations in the Gospel of Matthew (Mt 1:22-23) is BEFORE the action of Joseph. This means that Joseph the ever-obedient servant of God fulfills/completes the scripture (God's word) in and through his action of taking Mary as his wife (Mt 1:24). This response of Joseph is the fruit of the gift of openness which he opened his heart to receive.

Hope: The intervention of God in our world through the incarnation of Jesus, is a hope filled event. It informs us that our God wants to be involved as much as he can with us. The name Emman'u-el" (which means, God with us) (Mt 1:23) reiterates this fact. The incarnation reveals God as a God who is disponible, at our service without expecting anything from us

If we respond like Joseph and Mary, the incarnation becomes a reality every time we do so and Christmas is then not only on December 25 each year. The birth of the Messiah can happen on every day of the year.

Fr. Errol Fernandes SJ
December 2025

CHRISTMAS PEACE: BEING DISTURBED BY WHAT TRULY MATTERS

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Christmas celebrates the astonishing mystery of God entering human history. In Jesus, God chooses closeness over distance, vulnerability over power, and love over privilege. St. Paul reminds us that Christ emptied himself of glory to save humanity. He is Emmanuel—God with us—the Messiah and the Prince of Peace.

Peace lies at the heart of the Christmas story. The image of the child in the manger is one of serenity, yet the circumstances of his birth are anything but peaceful. There is no palace or royal welcome. Herod seeks to destroy him. His parents struggle to find shelter. He is born into uncertainty, insecurity, and danger—and yet, the child rests in peace. This tells us something vital about the peace Jesus brings: **it is not the absence of disturbance, but a deeper calm that remains even amid turmoil.**

Jesus promises this peace to all who follow him. Yet, if we reflect honestly, much of our daily life is marked not by peace but by agitation. We are easily disturbed by small and ordinary things—by words spoken carelessly, by noise, by differences in behaviour, by how others dress or think. Such disturbances often rob us of joy, freedom, and inner harmony.

St. Teresa of Avila captures this wisdom beautifully in her prayer:

“Let nothing disturb you, let nothing frighten you; God alone suffices.”

This is not a call to indifference or emotional numbness. Rather, it is an invitation to inner freedom—a freedom that comes from being rooted in God, so that petty matters no longer control our hearts.

The Purpose of Our Disturbances

God has created us with emotions, and these emotions are not mistakes. They serve a purpose. Feelings such as anger, restlessness, or discomfort function like warning signals, alerting us that something important is happening within or around us. The problem arises not because we have emotions, but because we allow them to become misdirected. Our emotions are meant to move us toward growth, compassion, and action—not toward bitterness or agitation over insignificant things.

Christmas: God Disturbed by the Right Things

The Christmas story reveals a God who is deeply disturbed—but not by human weakness or inconvenience. God is disturbed by suffering, injustice, sin, and alienation. God is disturbed by a broken world in need of healing. This divine disturbance does not lead to withdrawal or condemnation; it leads to incarnation.

God steps into history, takes flesh, and shares our human condition. The child in the manger is God’s response to human pain. Jesus is not concerned with status, power, or comfort. He is concerned with those who are weary, burdened, excluded, and lost. Throughout his life,

Jesus remains consistent: he is unmoved by criticism or social expectations, but deeply moved by suffering, hypocrisy, and injustice.

Being Disturbed by What Truly Matters

The Gospel challenges us to ask: What disturbs us today?

Are we disturbed by inconvenience and difference—or by hunger, violence, exclusion, and loss of dignity?

When we are disturbed by the right things, such disturbance does not steal our peace; rather, it gives birth to courage, freedom, and love. We see this in the lives of many who have followed Christ faithfully. Pope Francis was disturbed by war, poverty, and environmental destruction, and this disturbance moved him to prophetic gestures for peace. Fr. Stan Swamy was disturbed by the suffering of Adivasi communities and spent his life standing with them. Blessed Carlo Acutis, despite his illness, was disturbed by indifference toward the Eucharist and used his talents to draw people back to faith. Mother Teresa allowed herself to be disturbed by the suffering of the poorest of the poor, and her life became a channel of God's compassion.

These individuals were not free from struggle, but they were free from being consumed by petty concerns. Their peace came from clarity of purpose and fidelity to what truly mattered.

The Peace the World Cannot Give

Christmas invites each of us to examine our own hearts. What robs us of peace? What occupies our emotional energy? Are we allowing minor irritations to dominate our inner world, or are we open to the holy disturbance that leads to love and service?

The child in the manger shows us a different way of living. His peace is not fragile or dependent on perfect conditions. It flows from trust in the Father and a total gift of self. This is the peace Jesus offers—a peace that empowers us to act, to love, and to transform the world. May this Christmas help us let go of unnecessary disturbances and awaken us to the deeper disturbance of compassion. May we learn to be unsettled by injustice and suffering, and unmoved by what is trivial. And may the Prince of Peace grant us hearts that are calm, courageous, and committed to what truly matters.

Wesley D'costa

पवित्र मरीयेचा निष्कलंक गर्भसंभव !! वेन्सी डिमेलो.

कॅथोलिक ख्रिस्ती धर्मात पवित्र मरीया माता हिला अत्यंत पूजनीय नि वंदनीय असे स्थान आहे. तिच्या जीवनातील अनेक घटनांपैकी ८ डिसेंबर हा पवित्र दिवस. “निष्कलंक गर्भसंभव” म्हणून साजरा केला जातो.

हा अत्यंत महत्त्वाचा असा धार्मिक आणि आध्यात्मिक उत्सव आहे. या दिवशी कॅथोलिक भक्त मरीया मातेला देवाने दिलेल्या विशेष कृपेची आठवण ठेवतात. आणि तिच्या निष्पाप पवित्रतेचा गौरव करतात.

निष्कलंक गर्भसंभव म्हणजे मरीया हीचा आपली आई संत अॅना हिच्या गर्भात मूळ पापापासून पूर्णपणे मुक्त अशा अवस्थेत गर्भधारणा झाली. ख्रिस्ती धर्मशास्त्रात सर्व मानव आदाम आणि एवेच्या पापामुळे “मूळ पाप” घेऊन जन्माला येतात, परंतु मरीया माता देवाच्या विशेष योजनेमुळे या पापापासून संरक्षित राहिली.

येशू ख्रिस्ताचा जन्म पवित्र, निष्पाप आणि दिव्य स्वरूपाचा असावा यासाठी त्यांची माता सुद्धा संपूर्ण पवित्र असणे आवश्यक होते. म्हणून देवाने मरीयेला सुरुवातीपासूनच कृपेने भरलेले जीवन दिल्याचा मोठा विश्वास हा सिद्धांत कॅथोलिक चर्च अधोरेखित करते.

१८५४ मध्ये पोप पायस नववे यांनी “Ineffabilis Deus” या जाहीरनाम्यातून या सिद्धांताला अधिकृत मान्यता दिली. परंतु त्यापूर्वी शतकानुशतके संपूर्ण जगातील ख्रिस्ती समुदाय मरीयेला निष्कलंक गर्भसंभवाच्या स्वरूपात पूजत होता.

हा विश्वास केवळ धार्मिक नाही तर अत्यंत आध्यात्मिक आहे. तो मानवाला पवित्रता, विनयशीलता आणि देवाच्या इच्छेवर संपूर्ण विश्वास ठेवण्याची प्रेरणा देतो.

या दिवशी चर्चमध्ये विशेष मिस्सा, भक्तिगीते, मेणबत्ती प्रज्वलन आणि मिरवणुका आयोजित केल्या जातात. “Immaculate Mary”, “Hail Mary” यांसारख्या प्रार्थनांनी भक्त आपली कृतज्ञता व्यक्त करतात.

नाशिक वसई, गोवा, महाराष्ट्र, कर्नाटक, केरळ आदी ठिकाणी अनेक चर्चमध्ये हा दिवस मोठ्या दिमाखात साजरा केला जातो. मरीया माता शुद्धता, पवित्रता आणि मातृ प्रेमाचे प्रतीक असल्याने सर्व समाजातून चांगला प्रतिसाद मिळतो.

एकूणच पवित्र मरियेच्या निष्कलंक गर्भसंभव हा केवळ धार्मिक सण नसून विश्वास कृपा आणि पवित्र जीवनाची प्रेरणा दणारा दैवी स्मरण दिन आहे. मारिया माते सारखे पवित्र नम्र आणि सेवाभावी जीवन जगण्याची शिकवण हा सण देतो.

त्यामुळे हा दिवस सर्व ख्रिस्ती समुदायासाठी श्रद्धा कृतज्ञता आणि आनंदाचा दिवस मानला जातो. विशेषतः नवविवाहीत आणि गर्भवती महिला निरामय निरोगी सुदृढ बाळाच्या देणगीसाठी पवित्र मरियेकडे विशेष प्रार्थना करतात. !! वंदे मारीया !

नाताळ: २०२५ माणसाच्या शोधात देव!! वेन्सी डिमेलो.

आप, वायू, तेज, जमीन, आणि आकाश अशा पंचमहाभूतांचे मिश्रण घेऊन नि ते कालवून विधात्याने आपल्या सिद्धहस्त कौशल्याने सात्विक, सुंदर, सोज्ज्वळ, सुगंधी अशी अलौकिक सृष्टी घडवली.

तीचा उपभोग घेण्यास स्वताच्याच प्रतिमेचा त्याने अद्वितीय माणूस घडविला.तो एकटा असून नये म्हणून त्याच्यासाठी त्यांच्यापासूनचस्त्री निर्माण केली.आदाम एवेचा सुरूझाला संसार....

देव होता आनंदात माणूस होता त्या नंदनवनात.अचानक माणसाला अवदसा आठवली.त्या धुंदीत आपल्या जन्मदात्यालाच त्या उभयतांनी लाथाडले नि सैतानाला वेंगेत घेतले.

आदामाच्या फासळीतील एवा मोहात फसली. सैतानी बाहुपाशात अडकली. किती छोटी असतात माणसाची स्वप्ने!! थोड्या मोहमयी स्वप्नात हुरळून जाणारी. हे पाहून देवाला खूप वाईट वाटले. त्यानंतर देवाने माणूस सुधारावा म्हणून अनेक प्रवक्ते, संदेष्टे, महात्मे धाडले. त्यांनाही माणसांनीच तडिपार केले. कुणाला ठोक दिला. कुणाला जिवे मारले.

एवढे सारे घडूनही स्वर्गाचा देव माणसाचा निर्मिकतो आशेचा यात्रेकरू निराश मात्र झाला नाही. त्याने दुसरे स्वप्न पाहिले. स्वप्नाचे नाव होते.... माणसाचा तारणहार स्वताचा पूत्र* स्वरांची पोर्णिमा. त्याला त्याने नाव दिले.... मानवाचा पूत्र येशू ख्रिस्त

त्या बाळाच्या जन्मासाठी हवी होती त्याला जागा. तो निष्कलंक गर्भसंभव. देवाला ती निष्कलंकस्त्री सापडली. जिचे नाव होते मारीया...

विधात्याच्या योजनेप्रमाणे मारीया जोसेफ येशूह्यांचा सुरू झाला संसार. जगातील एक आदर्श कुटुंब. माणसाचे कुटुंब कसे असावे? ह्यांचे उत्तम, उत्तुंग, उदात्त उज्ज्वळ उदाहरण...

या ब्रह्मांडातील एका ग्रहगोलावर पृथ्वीवर उतरलेला देव पूत्र ज्याला ह्या वसुंधरेने बहाल केले सहा ऋतुंचे सहा सोहळे...

हेमंताने त्यास केला गारवा बहाल. शिशिर ऋतूने पानगळ. ग्रीष्मात उब नि वसंतात पंचम सुरांचे कोकीळ गुंजन वर्षा ऋतूत जलधारा. आणि शरदात पिटूर चांदणे. अशा धरतीवर तो आला. माणसात रहायला... तो माणसात मिसळला. त्या पहिल्या हिरव्या तृणपात्याचा आज असे सत्कार... पृथ्वीतळी... ज्यांची प्रतिकृती नाताळात आपणास ठीक ठिकाणी गाईच्या गोठ्यात सजवलेली पहावयास मिळते. त्या गोशाळेत गवत तृणावर देवाचे बाळ पडलेले आपणास पहायला मिळते.... तोच नाताळ तिच ख्रिस्तजयंती तोच ख्रिसमस माणसाच्या शोधात खुद्द जन्मलेला देव.

THANKSGIVING SERVICE - DECEMBER 31, 2025

- I. **INTRODUCTION**: As we come to the end of 2025 and stand at the threshold of 2026, let us thank God for all the graces received during this year. Let us also pray for openness to God's generous Spirit all through the New Year 2026.

KINDLY STAND AS WE SING A HYMN OF THANKS

II. **HYMN**

I will give thanks to Thee O Lord, among the people I will sing praises to Thee
Among the nations For Thy steadfast love is great Is great to the heavens
And Thy faithfulness Thy faithfulness to the clouds
Be exalted, O God Above the heavens Let Thy glory be over all the earth
Be exalted, O God Above the heavens Let Thy glory be over all the earth.

- III. During the past year, God has walked with us. We were not left alone. We have experienced the comfort, strength and love of God.
Yet there have also been times when we could not see God's hand as clearly as we wanted to. We have not felt God's presence as tangibly as we wanted to.
We have sometimes prayed like Jesus in Gethsemane, but we have not heard God's voice.
Yet, we say Goodbye to 2025 with Gratitude, and enter 2026 with Hope.



- IV. We are able to rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.
Christmas has given us hope for a better world. It has revealed what can happen in our world, if we open our hearts like Joseph and Mary and say, "Let it be done to me according to your word"
- V. Our prayer service is divided into three parts.

- A. GRATITUDE
- B. LEARNING FROM THE PAST and
- C. MOVING INTO TOMORROW WITH HOPE

A. GRATITUDE is a feeling of appreciation and thankfulness

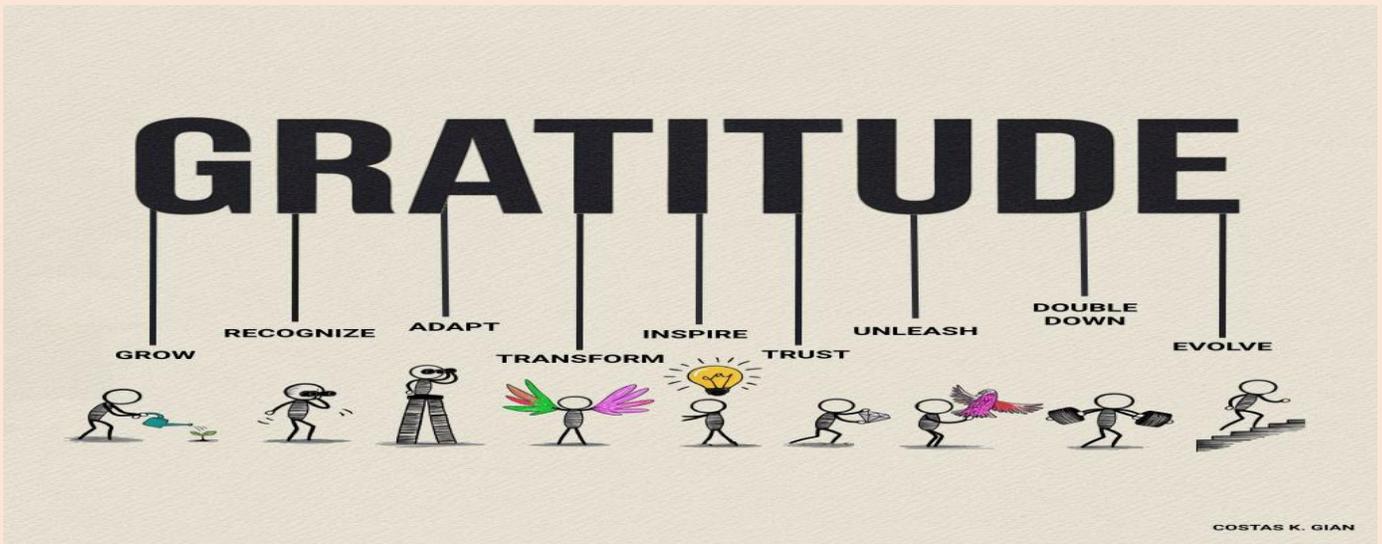
1. A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Colossians

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

2. I AM GRATEFUL FOR

- Every breath that I take because it reminds me that God wants me to keep living in the world and fulfil the purpose for which he created me.
- My eyes because they enable me to see, my ears because they enable me to hear, my feet because they enable me to walk, my mind because it enables me to think.
- My heart because it enables me to see, to hear, and to feel and so TO LOVE. Sometimes, I realise that I need to look and hear with the eyes and ears of my heart.
- ❖ We thank God for the gift of Life, for the gift to see the wonder of God’s creation and hear the sound of laughter and the cry of a baby...
- ❖ for food, clothes and shelter.....
- ❖ for good health, family and belonging
- ❖ for a job and the facility to go to School and College and for so many things we take for granted.
- ✓ Think of all that you are grateful for.
- ✓ Think of all the blessings and good things that have happened during this year.....



3. Let us stand and praise God through a hymn of thanks

In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God. In Christ Jesus concerning you

B. LEARNING FROM THE PAST means retrospection, which is looking back on or reviewing past events or situations. It does not mean regret. We look back at the past to learn from it and not repeat the mistakes we may have made.

1. A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans

I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do.

The Word of God.

2. We have often fallen short during this year. We have not done what we ought to have done. We have done precisely those things that we ought not to have done. Some reasons for this are:

i. We have depended too much on our ability and not enough on God....

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark

And Jesus said to his disciples, "Have faith in God. Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD

- How often did we think that we can manage without God?
- When we recite the Lord's prayer are we aware of our dependence?
- When you say "Give us each day our daily bread" what do you mean?
- Are we contented within ourselves or are we constantly seeking contentment elsewhere? In gadgets? Food? Other things?

ii. Some of us have been so selfish that we want more and more..... We have deprived others of what is rightfully theirs because of our selfishness.

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke

Jesus said to the rich man, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." But when he heard this he became sad, for he was very rich. Jesus looking at him said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! **THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD**

- Let us stand for a few moments in silence and remember the millions of people who have suffered and are still suffering because of the senseless wars.
- Let us ask God to bless the leaders of these countries with wisdom to know that the result of war is not victory or defeat, but DEATH.

iii. **We have stopped expecting miracles.....**

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark

And Jesus asked the father of the epileptic boy, “How long has he had this?” And he said, “From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.” And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible to him who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD

- “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy”.
- Do we think that there are rational explanations for everything?
- Do we not remember that all our scientific knowledge and advancement came to naught during Covid-19?

iv. **We have not loved unconditionally. Our love has been barter exchange....**

A reading from the Gospel according to Matthew

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the unbelievers do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the unbelievers do the same?

The Word of God

C. MOVING INTO TOMORROW WITH HOPE

1. Let us stand and sing together – In the Lord is my hope

In the Lord is my hope; in the Lord is my strength. He’s my shield and my strength.
He’s my fortress I stand firm.

I’ve no fear if alone I’ll be walking, I’ve no fear if the journey is so long, for it’s You,
Lord, the way to the Father, On Your path, I am safe.

KINDLY SIT DOWN

- Despite the sinfulness of the world, God sent his only Son into our world to save us from ourselves.
- This is a sure sign that God continues to believe in us and love us.
- It is also a sign that through the birth of Jesus, God has made us limitless.
- We will resolve never to give in to the negatives of life, never to give in to despair and never to lose hope.
- As we stand at the end of the year 2025 and at the entrance of 2026, let us resolve to keep the flame of Faith and Hope burning in our hearts all through this year.



KINDLY STAND

2. A reading from the Book of Revelation

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is in the world. He will dwell with people, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.” And the one who sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.”

The Word of God.

In these verses, John offers us a new hope. The world that God created, is a world that we have destroyed because of our selfish and self-centredness. However, God keeps giving us yet another chance. This is what John describes in the verses that we have heard. The Incarnation of God in Jesus shows us the way we must go if we want to make the new heaven and new earth a reality. As we draw closer to the New Year, let us ask for the grace to enter it with confidence and hope.

3. Let us stand as we offer our petitions to God

- Let our response after every petition be: Lord fill us with hope

- When things do not go the way, we plan.... Lord fill us with hope
- When the road is steep and the going is difficult... Lord fill us with hope
- When we are tempted to give in to despair... Lord fill us with hope
- When we are tempted to throw in the towel.... Lord fill us with hope
- When we cannot feel your touch as tangibly as we would want...Lord fill us with hope
- When the cross we carry becomes too difficult to bear... Lord fill us with hope.

D. CONCLUDING PRAYER:

Jesus our Lord who saves us from sin, accompany us each step of the New Year. Give us the grace to say like you did, “My food and my drink is to do the will of the one who sent me”. We make this prayer in your name who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Concluding Hymn: Lord make me like you, please make me like you
 Lord make me like you, please make me like you.
 You are a servant, make me one, too.
 O Lord, won't you give me your strength everyday
 To build a community, to follow your way?

Whoever amongst you desires to be great
 Must be the servant of all
 For even the Son of Man came to serve
 And give his life for the world.

You call me your Master and Lord, so I am!
 Behold, your feet I have washed.
 To set an example for all of you,
 Of service and of love.

The Spirit anoints me and calls me by name
 To bring good news to the poor
 Release to the captives and sight to the blind, to set the prisoner free.

Let the words of the Lord, “Behold, I make all things new” resonate in our hearts as we enter the NEW YEAR 2026 with hope, faith and love.