

Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must call him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God is with us'." When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.



### Reflection

"Emmanuel God is with us".

On this the last week of Advent do we truly open the door to Jesus, accepting his gift of fullness of life; or does the social and commercial Christmas get in the way of the true welcome we need to give to the birth of Christ?

What ways can I welcome Jesus? What can be my Christmas present to him?

### Final Prayer

Lord God, we pray with gratitude for your sending your son to be our guide and mentor. As we welcome him as a child born into this world may we always truly live as your children, loving and caring for each other.

Amen.

### Weekly Challenge

**There are many for who Christmas will not be a season of joy.**  
**There will be many who will be lonely and sad.**  
**Is there some way you can help?**

## FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT YEAR A **Welcome the Christ, the hope of eternal life.**

Bees work without rest and give their lives without question to the protection of the hive. This can be seen as what has happened through time in the Catholic Church when her martyrs have given their lives for their faith. The shape of the natural hive can also be seen in the shape of a traditional Tabernacle.

**A cup of tea is the way we offer hospitality to others; it says "welcome, come in, join us, have a cuppa".**

**When we welcome others, as Christ does, we become part of their Faith journey.**

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### Prayer Focus

- \* Use purple or white cloth.
- \* Bible.
- \* Teapot and cup.
- \* Lavender fresh or dried.
- \* A bee's wax candle if you have one.
- \* 3 candles in purple or lavender, one in rose or pink.



### Prayer for lighting candle

As Advent comes to a close, let us ask God to lead us to be people of hope in the future. (Light the candles.)

Lord God, you sent us Jesus to direct us to eternal life through his words and actions.

Help us to work towards the church of the future, by lovingly reaching out to those in need of you.

Amen.

### **First Reading Isaiah 7: 10– 17**

Ahaz is king of Judah, from the house of David, and he is surrounded by his enemies. Isaiah suggests the King asks God for a sign, reminding him that God will keep his promise to Judah and protect the line of kings, but Ahaz with false modesty will not go to God.

So Isaiah promises him another sign, a child who is “Emmanuel”. In Hebrew this means “God with us” and this sign has both a present significance: ‘judgment’, and a future significance: ‘blessings’. Unfortunately King Ahaz goes on to make a poor decision that is disastrous for Judah’s future and judgment comes upon the land.

### **GOD IS WITH US**



### **Reflection on the Reading**

Sometimes we do not see the “signs” God has given to us and we make poor decisions. Can you name some signs from God you only saw after an event, and what difference would it have made to your decision if you had been aware of God’s directions?

### **Psalm 23**

A processional hymn written by David possibly for when the Ark was carried into Jerusalem. The world and all that is in it belongs to God, those who are worthy, come and stand before him.

### **LET THE LORD ENTER; HE IS KING OF GLORY.**

### **Second Reading St Paul to the Romans 1: 1-7**

The whole of Paul’s life’s mission is summed up in the opening sentences of the Letter to the Romans. He sees himself as an Emissary, a simple servant, who carries God’s Good News to the nations.

The message is that Jesus is the Son of God and has been raised from the dead for us.

When Paul states that all those who believe are “saints”, he means all those who belong to Christ, all of God’s people.

### **Reflection on the Reading**

We are not always comfortable when we are considered to be Saints in the way Paul sees it. When you think of what a saint is seen to be by the Church and the wider world, what are the attributes you think of? Are there people you know who you believe to be saints?

### **Introduction to the Gospel**

*Matthew focuses on Joseph, a descendant of King David, and on the prophecies: in the first two chapters of Matthew we find five Old Testament quotes that are used to show that Jesus was the one who fulfilled the prophecy. The words of Isaiah’s are also repeated ‘The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son; they will call him Emmanuel “God is with us”.’*

*Jesus becomes a member of the line of David through Joseph and this is what scripture required. Jesus’ name in Hebrew is Joshua meaning “God saves”. The choice of name reflects that Jesus through his incarnation will bring his followers fullness of life.*

### **Gospel Acclamation**

A virgin will give birth to a son;  
his name will be Emmanuel: God is with us.

### **Gospel Reading Matthew 1:18-24**

This is how Jesus came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.