

# St. Cronan Advent

Reflections from the  
St. Cronan Community



2025

# A D V E N T

Prepare the Way of the Lord

# Advent Theme

## Open the Door of Hope

As we conclude the Jubilee Year of Hope, which began on Epiphany, 2025, we can use this Advent season to reflect on what it means to open our own Holy Door of hope: to renew our faith and commit to live a new life in Christ. Can your Holy Door withstand the storms of our time?

We have weekly themes on which we can reflect:

Week 1: Stay a ware.

Week 2: Listen to the cries of the world.

Week 3: Rejoice in hope.

Week 4: Be a light in the storm.

We are invited to open our doors to each other and to have courage to leave our old path for a new path. Together, we must build our doors to withstand the storms that this world throws at us: literal storms like the tornado that devastated so many last spring, human storms like the wars in Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan, and emotional storms like those inflicted on migrants and refugees and on all those affected by racism and “otherness.”

Now, when there seems to be little to hope for, we can continue to put on Christ and recognize and encounter the Christ in all those we meet.

This Advent, consider how you will strengthen your door so that collectively we can stand together to shine the light in our world and be Christ for one another.



# First Sunday of Advent

## November 30, 2025

*Is 2:1-5*

*Ps 122:1-2,3-4,4-5,6-7,8-9*

*Rom 13:11-14*

*Mt 24:37-44*

The readings for the First Sunday of Advent implore us to stay awake, for we know not when God will come. Both Paul and Matthew admonish us that our awareness of God's presence reflects our awareness of those who are marginalized and those who are suffering in our world. We don't know when God will come, when we will encounter Christ in the marginalized among us, but we must stay awake and aware for when that happens. Paul tells us to put on Christ. Only when we have Christ within us will we recognize the Christ in others. If we find a way to open our doors of hope, perhaps we can convince those who regard people with disdain to treat people with loving kindness.



I've never understood how "woke" became such a bad thing. To me, wokeness is awareness, and we are urged to remain aware when we encounter the Christ in those we meet. Awareness sparks hope that things can get better, even when hopelessness seems to flourish. When we listen to the cries of the world, when we are aware of how people are suffering, then we embrace the light, put on Christ, walk in God's ways, and become more aware of Christ dwelling in our siblings throughout the world.

This Advent is calling us to action.

—Diane Gozdzialski

# Monday of the First Week of Advent

## December 1, 2025

*IS 4:2-6*

*PS 122:1-2, 3-4B, 4CD-5, 6-7, 8-9*

*Matthew 8:5-11*

Advent (from Latin *ad venire* “to come”- arrival, appearance, emergence, birth)  
Today’s readings focus on the future. Isaiah, Matthew and the responsorial psalm look to the time when Jesus is acknowledged as the son of God and those who believe in him are saved. It is that belief in God that will bring future rewards.

This passage from Isaiah strikes me as classic Old Testament writing. The images are almost over-the-top. Those who accept the Lord will have “honor and splendor” and be called “holy”. Those who reject the Lord, the “filth of the daughters of Zion”, will be purged “with a blast of searing judgment”. Such florid language was designed to comfort the Jewish people who were persecuted, driven from their homes and forced to wander in the desert. Some day they will have their peace under the Lord’s protection. Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord! The responsorial psalm also looks forward to a peaceful time when Jerusalem is a haven for those who believe. The current conflict in present-day Israel makes these passages almost painful to read.

Matthew’s gospel is the source of one of the prayers we say in mass: Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant (soul) will be healed. A centurion has approached Jesus asking him to cure the paralysis afflicting the centurion’s servant. Centurions were reviled by the Jewish people, because, as commanders of one hundred Roman soldiers, they were occupiers and oppressors of the Jews. This centurion, however, believes Jesus can heal the suffering servant simply by Jesus’s word. It is this faith that astounds Jesus. Many Jewish people have heard Jesus teach and preach but have not believed in him. Yet this Roman soldier believes. Jesus predicts that people from “east and west”, non-Jewish people, will be saved along with the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

These readings, taken together, emphasize that anyone who believes in Jesus as our savior will be welcomed in heaven, regardless of their origins. All are welcome!

—Gina Heagney

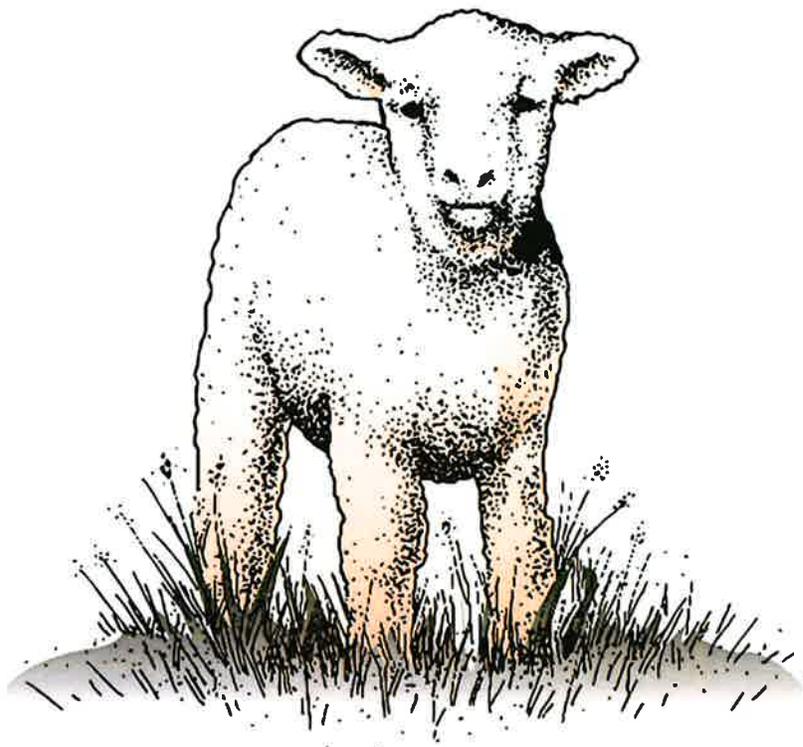
## Tuesday of the First Week of Advent December 2, 2025

*Isaiah 11:1-10*  
*Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17*  
*Luke 10:21-24*

Who doesn't love the image of the wolf and the lamb, the wolf gone vegetarian? The message I get is that I have nothing to fear from others on God's holy mountain. But am I thinking of myself as the lamb? What if I am actually the wolf?

To be on God's holy mountain I must disarm myself and come naked and vulnerable before others. As a "have" in this world, that means reform for me. In this season of waiting, I want to commit to becoming more gentle with everyone I meet, including those people I might prefer to devour.

—*Mary Beth Gallagher*



# Wednesday of the First Week of Advent

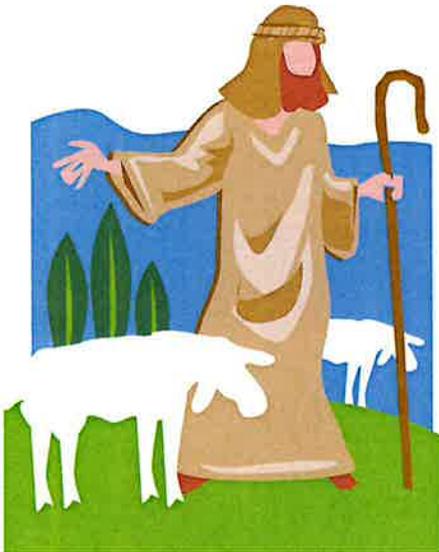
## Feast of St. Francis Xavier

### December 3, 2025

*Is 25:6-10a*  
*Ps 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6*  
*Mt 15:29-37*

Psalm 23 has been my salvation since my 20's. I have turned to it when I was in doubt, fear, confusion, joy, peace. It has been my consolation, my redemption, my comfort. It and the first reading speak to a God who is right beside us, no matter what. A God who acknowledges our shortcomings but does not condemn us for having them; who is willing to be our companion along the way, even when we lose our way. A companion who is concerned for our well-being. We are called to be companions to those we encounter along the journey of life. We are called to look for those opportunities where we can lift up a soul, give guidance to someone who is lost, feed the hungry, have compassion for those on the outer edges of society, make welcome those who do not feel accepted or wanted. We are called to fight for the rights of all people to live free of fear and oppression.

In Matthew 15, 29-37, we encounter Jesus being truly concerned for the well-being of all those who have followed him for three days with no regard for their own sustenance.



Jesus makes sure they are fed until they are full and there is much left over. We have that same promise in our lives; we have access to that same sustenance, if we trust in God and trust that our needs will be met.

In my life, I've had times when I was lost and couldn't see God working in my life. But when I stopped worrying about myself and focused on others' needs, I realized that God had been there all along. When I let go of telling God how I wanted things to turn out and trusted that the answer might not be what I wanted but what I needed, and perhaps better, I was able to see God *working in my life*.

—Kathy Hunn

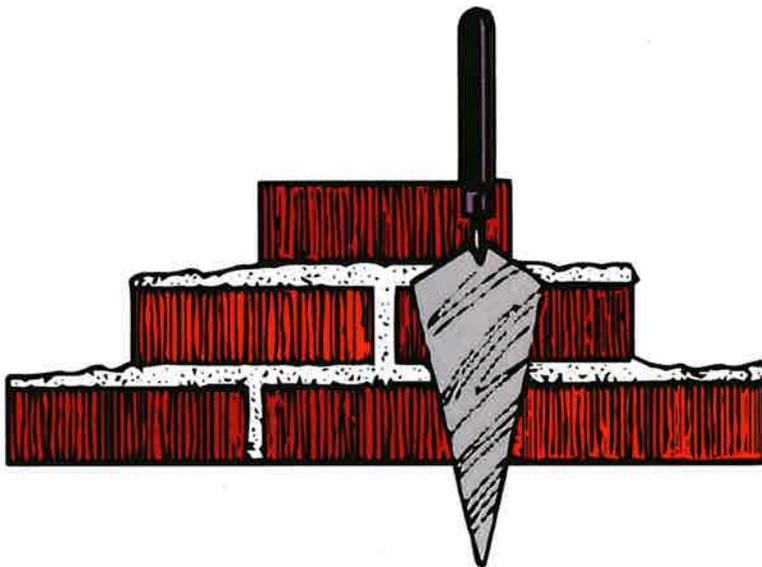
# Thursday of the First Week of Advent

## December 4, 2025

*Is 26:1-6*  
*Ps 118:1 and 8-9, 19-21, 25-27A*  
*Mt 7:21, 24-27*

In today's readings we hear about rocks in two ways. First, in Isaiah, we are reminded that the Lord is an eternal rock and we can rely on Him to humble the high and mighty. Second, we are cautioned by Jesus to act on His words. If we do, we'll build our spiritual home on rock, rather than sand.

We at St. Cronan's are very good at saying, "Lord, Lord" on Sundays. It's a great strength. But our enthusiasm should not end when we leave church. Instead, we must



act on that fervor. During Advent let's pick a virtue that requires us to change. Say, patience. Let's stay calm when someone interrupts us. Stay calm when another driver cuts us off. Stay calm when someone repeats a story we've heard before.

Or generosity. Be generous with our time. Visit someone in the hospital or nursing home. Call someone you've not talked to in a year. Listen to a four-year-old.

If we make regular, conscious decisions to be patient and generous, it will become a habit.

Brick by brick we'll be building our spiritual home on rock. And lower our blood pressure.

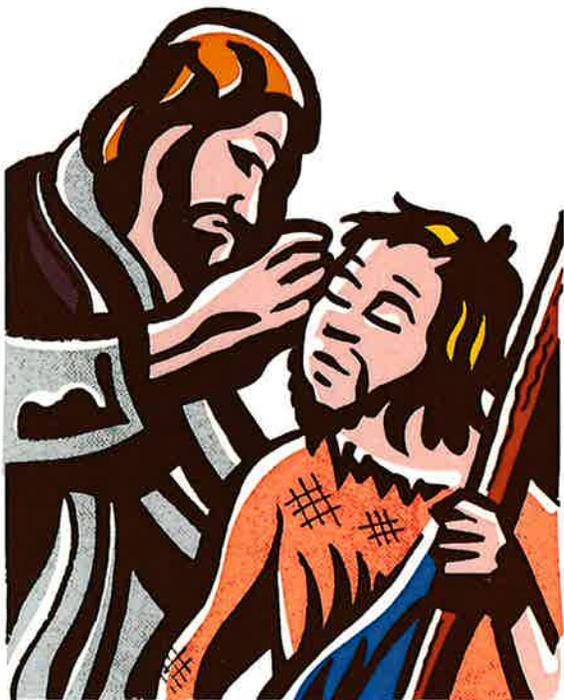
—Mike Forst

# Friday of the First Week of Advent

## December 5, 2025

*Is 29:17-24*  
*Ps 27: 1,4,13-14*  
*Mt 9:27-31*

Throughout these readings today, there is a constant theme of God being a source of guidance and sight. God helps us to see - especially those who are blind. Isaiah states that “out of the gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see.” Jesus opened the eyes of two blind men in Matthew’s gospel. With the current state of the world, it feels like the world has gone blind to the needs of the poor, the immigrant, the mother, and our earth.



But I think these readings are a reminder that love, compassion, empathy, and faith are a cure for this blindness. During this Advent season, I think it is especially important to seek out God’s guidance and grace to give us the strength to remove this blindness from ourselves and from others. These readings remind us to turn to God in times of trouble and to always be reminded of the way that God has taught us to love: unconditionally.

Even if the world seems blind, this Advent season, and beyond, calls us to turn toward God and be strengthened by our faith to be sources of light and love in our unseeing world.

May Christ open our eyes and hearts this Advent, and Saint Lucy, patron saint of the blind, pray for us!

—Grace Quinn

## Saturday of the First Week of Advent December 6, 2025

*Is 30:19-21, 23-26*  
*Ps 27:1, 4, 13-14*  
*Mt 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8*



In the first reading from Isaiah for today, God tells the people of Zion to weep no more. They have “eaten the bread of suffering and drunk the water of distress” for their idolatry; now they will hear the words behind them, “This is the way, follow it.” God will “dress their wounds and heal their bruises.”

In the Gospel of Matthew we see a similar scene as Jesus makes a tour through all the villages teaching and taking pity on the people who are harassed and dejected, “like sheep without a shepherd.” He does not heal them alone, because his days among them are numbered, but in the very next chapter he calls twelve very fragile and ordinary men, one who will betray him, another who will deny him, and most who will eventually flee in fear. Amazingly, he begins to form them for building with him the Church that will continue serving the people when he is no longer with them. The shepherd begins gathering the lost and confused sheep, bringing them home. And that Church would continue to be among the people in various forms for better or worse until the present day.

Given what is happening in our time, with seemingly endless wars in Gaza, the Ukraine, and the Sudan, to name just a few places; and a Federal Government in our own country that appears to be striking down one humane and protective guard rail after another, how long will WE wait before WE experience what it is to be “found and carried home by God?” What must WE do to help God find and strengthen us for the way home?

—*Sister Chabanel Mathison, O.S.U.*

## Second Sunday of Advent December 7, 2025

*Isaiah 11:1-10*  
*Romans 15:4-9*  
*Matthew 3:1-12*



### SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Today's readings reflect the times of Isaiah and Jesus as times of empire, namely the Assyrian and the Roman empires. There was, for the faithful, a sense of suffocation among peoples colonized by these two "pagan" worlds of unbelievers. The Israelites were, in fact, deported in 733 BCE to Assyria, far removed from the land of their forebears. And the time of Jesus was that of a military occupation by Rome, with soldiers everywhere marking Caesar's rule. The time was filled with tension caused by a foreign legal system, imposed taxes, and the harsh puppet governor, Herod Antipas.

In those dark times Isaiah and John the Baptist foresaw the silver lining for God's people. Isaiah proclaims, "a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse," and later John the Baptist cries out, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his

paths: all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

Both prophets saw the big picture of our God. In spite of all things "Gloom and Doom" around them they trusted that God was and is the eternal Victor.

For us, we can look back upon the Advent of God, as Jesus Christ, became the Victor over darkness. This Advent of God takes the long view: The battle for us has already been won. The captives are all free!

Can we too claim these simple messages of absolute HOPE in our own dark times of ICE agents, genocide, executions, sex trafficking and personal setbacks in health or employment. Isaiah and John are screaming at us from their graves, "Chin up!" Don't get so overwhelmed by the darkness that surrounds you now. Although it seems insurmountable and is everywhere, the light is breaking through. The Savior, who has conquered Death the greatest darkness, is about to be BORN AGAIN!

– Cathy Hartrich

# Monday of the Second Week of Advent

## Feast of the Immaculate Conception

### December 8, 2025

*Gn 3:9-15,20*  
*Ps 98:1, 2-3AB, 3CD-4*  
*Eph 1:3-6, 11-12*  
*Lk 1:26-38*

I'll admit I'm a bit jealous of Mary. God sends her an angel who assures her that she has found favor with God, and lays out, at least in broad strokes, what her future will hold: she will conceive and bear a son, Jesus, and his Kingdom will never end. Of course, Gabriel left out some unsavory details about Mary's and Jesus's lives, but I still find myself drawn to the concrete details that Mary had to cling to and wishing that I, too, had something to cling to.



Advent's emphasis on anticipation and waiting echoes the uncertainty of our world's future. I'm grateful that Advent, at least, culminates in the known joy that is Christmas. Within our daily lives, we may often feel that same sense of anticipation, waiting, or even anxiety, and it's unclear what the culmination of these feelings—and the events that cause them—will be.

The salve for feelings of despair and restlessness, I believe, are these Advent themes of hope, peace, joy, and love. And while we can find them outside of ourselves, we can also recognize the ways in which these Advent themes are already present, oftentimes in small ways, within our own daily actions.

Something as small as brushing my teeth, for example, is an act of hope. It implies a belief in a future in which I'll need my teeth, a future in which I'll still be alive.

Hope, like peace, joy, and love, is already inherent within us, and if we look closely, we can find it woven within our small, daily actions. Maybe an angel hasn't appeared to me bearing news of God's favor and my future, but I can cling to the hope that exists twice a day when I'm standing barefoot under the bathroom lights brushing my teeth.

—Sarah Reilly

## Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent Feast of St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin December 9, 2025

*1 Cor 1:26-31*  
*Ps 131:1bcde, 2, 3*  
*Mt 11:25-30*

All of the readings on the feast day of Juan Diego point towards humility. The word humility means lowly; of or relating to the earth (humus). The word human has the same roots! In 1st Corinthians, Paul reminds the disciples to remember from whence they came. They were men who “counted for nothing” when Jesus called them. Paul says that God “chose the foolish things of this world” to shame the wise. He warns the disciples that if they are to boast, they are to must boast about the One who sent Christ to them. How often do we take credit for something we have done without recognizing God’s hand in it? An image that has stuck with me from many Cardinals games is how Albert Pujols, after scoring a hit, would always smile joyfully and, then point to Heaven, as if to say, “Thanks, God.”

The first lines of Psalm 131—

My heart is not proud, O Lord,  
My eyes are not haughty.

could be a mantra for us in these challenging times. Yet the speaker does not concern themself with matters that are “sublime” or, in another translation, “full of wonder.” Hmmmm...today when the news cycle 24 hours a day draws us into the world full of genocide, wars, displacement, it is difficult for many of us to look away, to not engage. Yet, can we, as the psalmist, find ways to “still and quiet” our souls? The 3-line psalm ends with the affirming, “O Israel, put your hope in the Lord, now and forevermore.”



In the gospel, we find Jesus teaching and preaching in the towns of Galilee. At the beginning of this passage, he thanks his Father for revealing Himself to little children. Our God draws to Himself not the powerful in society, but the defenseless, the weary, all who are burdened.

Take my yoke upon you... and you will find rest for your souls.

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

At first glance, it doesn't make sense, yokes on the backs of oxen aren't typically light. But Christ, living in God, is able to lift humanity's burdens, and ours — should we hope and trust in Him. Let us “lowly listen” to God this Advent, for our Hope is in Him.

—Martha Stegmaier

# *Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent*

## *December 10, 2025*

*Isaiah 40:25-31*  
*Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10*  
*Mt 11:28-30*

Isiah refers to God as the “...eternal God, creator of the ends of the earth, who does not grow weary”, and moreover gives “strength to the fainting” and “vigor to the weak”, In the gospel we find the often quoted “Come to me all you who labor and are burdened” The old and new testament messages combine to send a strong message to all suffering at the margins, “Your God is ever present, loving you at your weakest moments.” The image is one of everlasting loving presence and spiritual resilience. A place Greg Boyle might call “cherished belonging”.

Spiritual  
Resilience

Listening  
In  
Silence

Seeing  
In  
Darkness

Searching  
In  
Emptiness

Feeling  
In  
Grief

A divine tower of strength  
Constant and unwavering  
Capturing all our woes

Lovingly carrying all to that place  
Of cherished belonging



—Thomas F. Hastings

## Thursday of the Second Week of Advent December 11, 2025

*Is 41:13-20*

*Ps 145 1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13ab*

*Mt 11:11-15*

In today's readings, we meet a God who is tender, compassionate, and deeply involved in our daily struggles. He tells us, "Do not be afraid, I will help you". These are not empty words – they are the voice of a Father reminding us that we are never alone, even when life feels uncertain or disappointing. It is a promise from a faithful God.

In Isaiah, God assures His people that even in desolate places – moments that feel barren, confusing, or painful – He is still God, and He is still at work. He promises to transform the desert into a place of beauty and abundance, planting strong, valuable trees.



These trees symbolize resilience and purpose. In the same way, the challenges we face can become opportunities for God to shape us, strengthen us, and root us more deeply in Him. Nothing is wasted when He is involved.

If there is anyone who understands what it means to belong to God, to be rescued by Him, and to be sustained by His mercy, it is David. In the Psalm, we hear David praising God because he has personally experienced God's faithfulness. His praise flows from memory of God's goodness. We are invited to do the same: to pause and recall the many moments God has shown up for us. And when we remember this, we can be confident that the God who helped us before will surely take care of whatever is troubling us now. By praising God, we keep alive in our hearts the truth of who we are in God and how precious we are to Him.

You may ask, who exactly am I? Jesus answers this in a striking way in today's Gospel when he speaks about the Kingdom of God. He tells us that even the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John the Baptist, the greatest of the prophets. We know that through the salvation Christ brought us, we belong to the Kingdom of God. That means you and I, through Jesus Christ, have been given profound dignity, identity, and spiritual authority. We are God's own, and being "least" does not mean insignificant – it means humble, open, and willing. These are the hearts God can fill and use. The question is: Are we living like we belong to the Kingdom?

Advent invites us to wake up spiritually – to listen more carefully to the Holy Spirit, to embrace our salvation with renewed devotion, and to stand confidently in who we are in Christ. So today, as we move through our busy and quiet moments, let us remember:

*God is the master planner and the impossibility specialist  
We belong to Him, and because of Jesus, we carry a greatness rooted not in our  
strength but in His presence within us  
His timing is perfect, He is never late, and He will help – just as He said.  
So let us rest in this Advent promise:  
Fear not.  
I (God) will help you.  
And you shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel*

—Judith Sokei

## Friday of the Second Week of Advent December 12, 2025

*Zec 2:14-17*  
*Rv 11:19A, 12:1-6A, 10AB*  
*Lk 1:26-38 or Lk 1:39-47*

Much of Advent is spent waiting for the birth of Jesus, so it makes sense that at the halfway point, all of the readings for a feast day about Mary center around women. The gospels specifically discuss two visits: Gabriel's visit to Mary to announce the conception of Jesus, and Mary's visit to Elizabeth. In both cases, Mary shows true humility to the people she is conversing with through her responses to their accolades. On this, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, she passes that gift to Juan Diego, who was as humble and obedient in his responses to Mary as he went up the hill twice to prove that he truly met Mary, the Mother of God.

How do we show humility and obedience this Advent? In a world where it is increasingly complicated to follow God's call, how are we called to simply be humble and do what God and others ask of us? As we continue through Advent, follow the example of Mary and Juan Diego and find ways to show your humility to others through a random act of kindness or a volunteer opportunity. We are all called to be Mary: "May it be done to me according to your word."

—Patrick J. Mooney



## Saturday of the Second Week of Advent December 13, 2025

*Sir 48:1-4, 9-11*

*Ps 80:2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19*

*Mt 17:9a, 10-13*

I didn't get a single tomato this year.  
None of my spinach survived.  
The squirrels ate my squash.  
I don't even remember what vegetable I planted in one of my beds, but it didn't flower or fruit.  
That's how it goes sometimes when you're a novice gardener.

The readings for today reminded me of just how much constant care a vegetable garden needs. There are the things I can control: good soil, regular watering, correct placement in the yard, where the seeds are planted. There are the things I cannot control: the rain, the sunshine, the temperature, the pests. The forces I cannot control can be mitigated. I can put up chicken wire to keep out (some) animals. I can water twice when its dry. I can organize my beds to allow for better drainage. But without the constant care, the plants will suffer. They may not wilt and die, but they will certainly not fruit.



Our faith lives are much the same way. We don't get to simply plant the seed then check out. Our baptism does not guarantee us a blissful life and a seat in Heaven. We must constantly nurture our relationship with our God. The psalm tells us to "take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted." Jesus tells the disciples what happens when people do not recognize the truth-tellers and change-makers. The Son of Man "suffers at their hands."

Advent comes at a time when our relationship with Jesus (and our gardens!) need extra care. We need to prepare our minds and souls for the coming of the infant Jesus. We need to sow our fall grass seeds, deadhead our roses, and mulch over our favorite perennials. If we don't take care now to prepare for the spring, we will miss out on the "wonderous deeds" that await us.

The spring will come, the vine will fruit, the Lord will become incarnate. We simply need to prepare the way, aerate the soil, make straight the path. Amen.

—James Fister

# The Third Sunday of Advent – Gaudete Sunday December 14, 2024

*Is 35:1-6a, 10*  
*Ps 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10*  
*Jas 5:7-10*  
*Mt 11:2-11*

As a cantor for over 40 years, I typically turn toward the psalms in good times and in bad, so it was today's psalm that I turned to for my Advent Reflection. The words of Psalm 146 are so relatable in today's world, especially here at St. Cronan.

*"The LORD God keeps faith forever,  
secures justice for the oppressed,  
gives food to the hungry. ....*

*[the] LORD raises up those who were bowed down.  
The LORD loves the just;  
the LORD protects strangers."*



I have watched, in awe, everyday the length that Cronanites go to securing food, clothing, household needs and dignity to those around us who are less fortunate, marginalized, mistreated and persecuted.

I have watched, in awe, the length that Cronanites go to assisting those who are affected by today's immigration policies. From supplying food to those who afraid to leave the security of their homes and helping with legal matters to assisting with the red tape and endless paperwork needed for documentation.

I have watched, in awe, the length that Cronanites go to standing up for the lives of those on death row. Living truly Pro-life lives, speaking for those who have no voice and no hope.

I have watched, in awe, the length that Cronanites go to supporting inclusivity and striving to be welcoming to everyone. The true example of Christ emphasizes and teaches unconditional love, compassion, and justice for ALL.

This Advent, I pray more folks will follow the example of the St. Cronan Community and live their lives promoting justice, love, tolerance, acceptance and have truly open hearts.

—Mary Ward

## Monday of the Third Week of Advent December 15, 2025

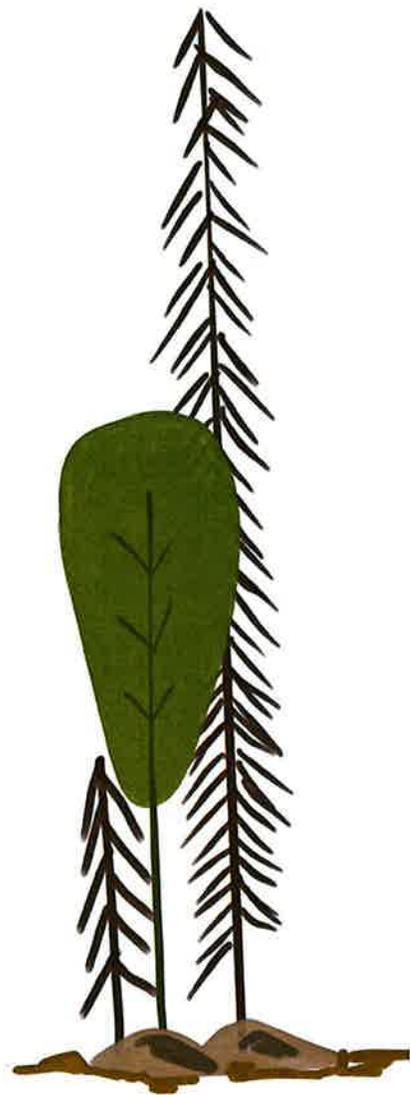
*Num 24:2-7, 15-17a*  
*Ps25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9*  
*Mt 21:23-27*

In today's readings, I found myself seeing them as lessons on how we can let God into our lives. In our first reading, we see what it can be like to see through God's eyes. Gardens, streams, skies, and all the beauties of the world, this is what we can experience on this Earth when we allow ourselves to see as God does. And taking this even further, we can see the beauty in each other, made in God's image, with all the wonderful things we bring into each other lives.

Our Psalm and Gospel acclamation provides us with a guide toward the joy we can experience from seeing through God's eyes in prayer. By reaching out and asking God for the guidance, we can be able to experience his creations in all their beauty. Explicitly, this is also for sinners! As we all are humans, we are asking God to be compassionate and kind, to show us mercy and love.

And finally in the Gospel, we learn maybe some ways not to go about this. It is okay to ask questions, in fact I think many times it can lead to a deeper understanding. However, we can often lose ourselves in the "next question" and not take a moment to appreciate what we have. Jesus shows us that if we are to question the very nature of what God has created, if we do not appreciate what has been given to us and see the beauty in that, then perhaps we need to reevaluate. How can we look at the complexity and wonder of a forest, for example, and still question its validity to exist? How can we look at one another and think we are not beautiful creations if God has the authority to create us?

—Sam Pilla



## Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent December 16, 2025

*Zep 3:1-2, 9-13*

*Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 and 23*

*Mt 21:28-32*

Do you ever say one thing and do another? That's what the sons in today's parable from Jesus said to their father. When did we hear from our parent, "Actions speak louder than words." In today's parable, the father tells his eldest son to go work in the field, the boy says, "I will not go" but changes his mind and goes later. The second son says "I will go" but never does. Jesus asks the elders, "who has done the Father's will? The first one," they said. But, as usual Jesus flips answers upside down! He compares the first son to prostitutes and tax collectors who believe John the Baptist but in reality they reject the call for repentance. The message? Promises only count when they are acted on.

Light the third candle on your wreath and remember: The call to change our way of life is the message from God this Advent. Jesus wants us to turn our heart to God and points toward that inner conversion we must undergo as followers of Jesus. How does He come? Not as those sons who do not follow through. But as the poor, the excluded, the refugee – all searching to belong. What does God expect? Thomas Merton reminds us, "It might be a good thing to open our eyes and see."

—Donna Day, SL



## Wednesday of the Third Week of Advent December 17, 2025

*Gen 49:2, 8-10*

*Ps 72:1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17*

*Mt 1:1-17*

The book of Genesis deals with the creation of the universe and mankind. It talks about Judah, one of Jesus's ancestors. It describes Judah holding the royal scepter and receiving Tribute from nations, a fitting description and prophecy of what the coming of Jesus will mean.

The book of Psalms is a prayer for the king to judge with righteousness, for the king to judge the poor fairly. It prays the king's kingdom will reach from sea to sea, his name never be forgotten, and his fame last as long as the sun, all of which prophesy the coming of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Matthew is about the genealogy and birth of Jesus Christ. It describes fourteen generations of Jesus from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from David to the Exile in Babylon, and finally fourteen generations from the exile to the birth of the Messiah. Jesus is the promised savior, the one through whom God fulfilled the promise he made to his people in the Old Testament. This good news is not only for the Jewish people, among whom Christ was born and lived, but for the whole world. Jesus is born.

Let us rejoice and be glad.

—*Bill Blow*



... Let Us  
Rejoice  
and be Glad

## Thursday of the Third Week of Advent December 18, 2025

*Is 54:1-10*

*Ps 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b*

*Lk 7:24-30*

Today's readings are uplifting and joyful in preparation for the upcoming birth of a child who shall be named Jesus. Jeremiah reminds us that a king will come to the descendants of Israel. The gospel tells the story of Joseph being visited by an angel who tells him not to divorce Mary but rather prepare for the birth of a son who will be named Jesus.

Perhaps most relevant to our time is the message of the psalm that states that "Justice and Peace shall flourish". During Advent we are asked to focus our lives on the joy that we are preparing for. I find that difficult on some days when the world is far from joyful. So it's important that we keep in mind that God has a plan for all of us and it is to bring us joy not sorrow and to make us flourish not fail. Rejoice. The time is near.

—Carolyn Coyne



## Friday of the Third Week of Advent December 19, 2025

*Is 56:1-3a, 608*  
*Ps 67:2-3, 5, 7-8*  
*Jn 5:33-36*

Today's Gospel focuses on the announcement to Zechariah that he will have a son who will come to be called John the Baptist.

*Do not be afraid Zechariah because your prayer has been heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, will bear you a son and you shall name him John. -Luke 1:13 mm*

The father's response seems perfectly natural.

*How shall I know this? -Luke 1:18*

Elizabeth was barren and the couple were both elderly.

The Angel Gabriel responds that Zechariah does not trust his words even though he is a messenger of God. For this Zechariah becomes mute. He returns home from the temple; he and Elizabeth will remain in seclusion until their son is born. The rest of this story will be found in the Gospel for December 22.

Meanwhile, this seems like an appropriate time for us to reflect on messengers and messages from God. Do we have a sense that God does speak to us? Does it seem that God speaks to us in prayer, be it communal or private? Are there other ways in which God's word comes to us?

- + in a time of quiet, perhaps while out in nature absorbing the beauty of creation
- + through a person who is an inspiration to me
- + in a challenging situation in my life, as I grapple with this and seek its meaning
- + through something that reaches my consciousness some time after a happening, something I've heard or experienced .



There may be other ways you believe /find God speaks to you. The next question is how do we receive these words, inspirations and invitations, even if they seem as unlikely as the message Zechariah received.

This Advent Season may we all continue to open our minds, hearts and lives to the messages and messengers that reveal our Emmanuel, God-with-us.

*—Madonna O'Hara, o.s.u.*

## Saturday of the Third Week of Advent December 20, 2025

*Ju 13:2-7, 24-25a*  
*Ps 71:3-4a, 5-6ab, 16-17*  
*Lk 1:5-25, 26-38*

Mary, help us to remember your equanimity and grace.

Angel Gabriel was a busy messenger in the last few months of the B.C. era! First, he visited Zechariah who was in the temple burning the incense -- carrying out his priestly duties. Gabriel told Zechariah that his and his wife Elizabeth's prayers were answered: Elizabeth would bear a son and they should name him John. John would grow up and do many and wonderful things for the Jewish people and the people of Palestine.

About six month later, Angel Gabriel showed up at Mary's house. Mary, of Mary and Joseph, would become Jesus' parents. But I get ahead of myself. Back to Zechariah. Angel Gabriel went on about all that John would do... But Zechariah wondered, "How can I know this? I am an old man and my wife is getting on in years." Gabriel probably picked up that Zechariah was more than thinking how things would work out and was probably wondering how he's going to make it with his son running around and messing up his orderly life....

Mary, too, was frightened and disturbed by the angel's visit and needed clarification on how things would happen. She was asking for understanding, not as a way of getting out of a difficult situation. Zechariah was silenced by Angel Gabriel for his doubting and "turning inward" behavior. After hearing Gabriel's message, Mary was unflappable in following God's request. "You see before you the Lord's servant. Let it happen to me as you have said." What calm assurance she gives to being the mother of Jesus, our Savior!

Zechariah came around to following God's plan and wholeheartedly went along with his son's naming (John) at the circumcision ceremony. He changed his thinking and regained his speech! Mary, a sign of equanimity and peace, can be a guide for us at times when little and big troubles come our way. She trusted in God.

—Bill Miller



# The Fourth Sunday of Advent

## December 21, 2025

*Is 7:10-14*  
*Ps 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6*  
*Rom 1:1-7*  
*Mt 1:18-24*



FOURTH SUNDAY OF  
**ADVENT**

Emmanuel, God is with us.

Matthew's Gospel refers to the passage in Isaiah (7:14) that tells Ahaz, King of Judah, that his child will protect the House of David. Judah should rely on God, not foreign alliances. The child will be named Emmanuel which means "God is with us." Matthew then applies this passage to Jesus.

How reassuring, how comforting, that sounds: God is with us. In all the turmoil, injustice, and cruelty we see in our present country and world, we may at times wonder where God is! A question that has nagged me for many years is who is the us? Isaiah and King Ahaz understood it as the child who would be born to Ahaz. Matthew expanded us beyond the House of David to include the Gentiles who believed in Jesus. When I was in second grade, my teacher said the us were Catholics, which I found confusing because my father and his family were Lutherans. Then the us was designated as Christians. After many fits and starts, inclusions and exclusions, the us referred to humanity. All humanity? Even the ones who don't agree with me politically, culturally, socially? People I don't like? "God is with us" can present more challenge than comfort.

While still trying to cope with the humanity issue, I am becoming more aware of how all life is inter-connected. A poor translation of one of the creation stories in Genesis said that humans should have dominion over the rest of creation. Rather a more accurate translation says that we are called to care for all creatures. We as humans depend on other forms of life and they depend on us. If they are healthy, we can thrive also. God entered into all creation at the Incarnation.

As we come to the end of Advent, of our longing and expectation, we are called to reflect on God-with-us. The coming of the Christ child, of God born into our world and loving us, of God born into and loving all creation, calls us to deepen our faith, to embrace this amazing God who first loved us.

As we gather at the manger and proclaim the Good News this Christmas, the celebration of Jesus' birth, may we respond more deeply to the challenges and reassurance of Emmanuel, God-with-us, all of us.

—Lynne Schmidt, SSND

# Monday of the Fourth Week of Advent

## December 22, 2025

*1 Sm 1:24-28*  
*1 Sm 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8*  
*Lk 1:46-56*

So many thoughts came to mind when I read these scriptures. Though familiar, I heard something new that has stayed with me.

These verses in Samuel tell the story of Hannah and her painful experience of wanting and waiting so long for a child. Then, her eventual joy with the birth of her son, Samuel, and her sacrifice of giving him to the Lord.

The scriptures in Luke tell the story of Mary learning that she will give birth to God's son, and her visit to her cousin, Elizabeth, who is also expecting in her older age. They are both overwhelmed with all that has taken place.

In each circumstance, all three women point to God. Right away. Literally, saying in their own words, "Look at what God did! Look!" Each of their lives have been disrupted in a powerful way with an expected child. Whether their "disruption" was longed for, prayed for, or unexpected, there is awe, wonder, and humility. As things unfold, even in uncertainty, there is a faith and trust in God, in what He is doing in their lives.

More than that, there is the recognition of how God has "disrupted" by turning everything upside down, doing the unexpected. There is an awareness of God's power and ability to do what does not make sense! All three women are witness to this and give praise to God with enthusiasm and certainty – even with questions or fear or sorrow.

This is a witness as I examine my own faithfulness in some very difficult circumstances, ironically, as a mother to my own two sons. Especially during Advent, I want to trust, to prepare and point to God, with faith in disruption.

—*Kelly Collins*



## Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Advent December 23, 2025

*Mal 3: 1-4, 23-24*

*Ps: 25: 4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14*

*Lk 1: 57-66*

So close to Christmas Day, these readings draw me back into the season of Lent. Malachi speaks of refining, purifying, sacrifice, and even the threat of doom. Luke speaks of fear and dismay and uncertainty. We're told the day of God's coming will be great and terrible.

Life needs death as much as death needs life to wield its power. I think of birth and baptism, the turn of the seasons, and the garden. It's the stuff of poetry, like Seamus Heaney's "Baptism":  
I came from water through the hoop of bone  
Into this cold pool in the womb of stone.

I drowned my first  
mind in the font's  
small well,  
A new world break-  
ing on my fontanel.

Or Mary Oliver's  
"White Owl Flies  
Into and Out of the  
Field":  
maybe death  
isn't darkness, after  
all,  
but so much light  
...scalding, aortal  
light –  
in which we are washed and washed  
out of our bones.



God's love is the water that cleanses as much as drowns, the fire that warms as much as burns, the hand that uproots as much as sows. The work of giving and receiving love is indeed great and terrible. Yet good news prevails. Because God is gracious (the Hebrew origin of the name John), we are given prophets and messengers to catch our attention, stir our hearts, shake us out of complacency, and pave the way. Moreover, "we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1) that we never need to walk the path alone.

May we be church to one another now, doing the gruelling work of love as one body. May we see in this infant Jesus God's call to be human above all. In the words of Fr. Jon Sobrino, "There's nothing more essential than the exercise of mercy on behalf of a crucified people, and nothing more humane and humanizing than faith."

—Abbey Schumacher

## Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Advent December 24, 2025

*2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16  
Ps 89:203, 4-5, 27 and 29  
Lk 1:67-79*

My name is Kokhba (pronounced Kawkbah in Aramaic), and I am the youngest and smallest star in the firmament. My siblings tease me that I am of no significance. Early on this day though, our Creator has told me otherwise. Tonight my light will be bright enough to foreshadow the place where the Light of the World will Incarnate in Miriam's DNA. In



the days to come, I will continue to be the light in the heavens, pointing to the Trinity's confirmation of Their faithfulness to all of Creation (Ps. 89:3); I will be the small heavenly light pointing to the Radiant Dawn, the splendor of Eternal Light, Who will shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death (Is. 9:2), and I will also guide the Magi to the Savior's birthplace in the days to come. I will shine very brightly from tonight until the end of time, so that humans might always remember that I point to the Light of the World, the little infant born in a dirty stable, known only to his mother Miriam, his stepfather Joseph, and the lowly animals living there, as Christ Jesus. Those who reflect on this anticipatory night of the fully human and Divine birth, will come to know that I not only guide travelers, but pilgrims on their Journey back to the Creator. My name is Kokhba, luminescent light, and it is my honor to point to the Light of the World, forever.

—Donna Zuroweste

## The Nativity of the Lord December 25, 2025

*Is 62:1-5/Acts 13:16-17, 22-25  
Mt 1:1-25, 1:18-25*

“Oh Holy Night, ...night when Christ was born... oh night divine.” I love this Christmas carol because it so perfectly captures the peace and tranquility of the nativity scene. When I hear this song, I am mentally transported back to the stable. I see Mary holding her precious new born and marvel that our Father chose to send His son, not as someone to reign over us, but as a helpless infant who will need to be nurtured and protected. I hear God say “love this child as I have loved you.”

The tenderness of this scene deeply touches me. I am humbled by the magnitude of God’s mercy and generosity in sending His son to redeem a broken and sinful world. As a community, we reflect on this grace and are inspired to seek out ways to provide hope and comfort to others, especially those in need. We can continue to feed the hungry and clothe the poor, but may we also seek to offer the less tangible gifts of love, friendship, forgiveness, and encouragement for a brighter future. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we thus embody the true spirit of Christmas.



Let us remember that this night was not only divine but transformative. The birth of Christ calls us to embody humility, compassion, and selfless love in our daily lives. As we gather in worship and fellowship, may we be inspired to carry the light of Christ into our communities, offering peace where there is conflict, hope where there is despair, and joy where there is sorrow. May this Christmas reflection deepen our faith and renew our commitment to live as Christ taught us, embracing all with open hearts and hands.

—Nancy Buck

**Thank you to all who submitted  
reflections for our  
Advent booklet this year.**





# WE INVITE YOU TO ATTEND OUR CHRISTMAS SERVICES



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