



A Thanksgiving Prayer

Generous and loving God, we come before You with hearts filled with gratitude. In Your great goodness You have gifted us in so many ways. In fact, we know that EVERYTHING in our lives is gift.

Thank You for the gift of life – the unimaginable privilege of living in this world. And for Your unconditional love which surrounds each of us.

Thank You for all the beauty and majesty You have placed in our world – people of different races and cultures, the mountains, oceans, forests, lakes, deserts, and rivers.

Thank You for the countless kinds of trees and vegetation, for a multitude of species of animals, birds, fish, and insects.

Thank You for the blue sky during the day and the sparkling stars at night.

Thank You for our parents, our siblings, and our friends. They have had so much to offer to bless and enrich our lives.

Thank You for the gift of work. Help us, God, to carry it out with loving attention and respect for coworkers.

Thank You for all the things that we take for granted. Most of all, thank You, God, for Your presence in our lives. We rely entirely on You.

Eloise Hertel, OP



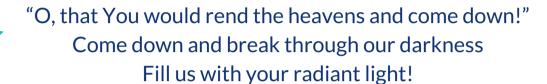
Rend the Heavens

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

"O, that You would rend the heavens and come down!"

Come down to teach us how to watch and wait

Fill us with grace to stay awake!



"O, that You would rend the heavens and come down!" Come down and enable us to see the lost and lonely Fill us with power to reach out!

"O, that You would rend the heavens and come down!"

Come down and touch the hearts of those broken and weary

Fill us with patience and hope to share!

"O, that You would rend the heavens and come down!" Come down into our exhausting isolation Fill us with a deep commitment to community!

"O, that You would rend the heavens and come down!" Come down into our grief-stricken hearts Fill us with your holy joy!











"O, that You would rend the heavens and come down!" Come down into our sin-soaked world Fill us with your saving grace!



"O, that You would rend the heavens and come down!" Come down and teach us understanding of our neighbors Fill us with your compassion!



"O, that You would rend the heavens and come down!" Come down upon our self-centered, prejudiced society Fill us with repentance and transformation!



"O, that You would rend the heavens and come down!"

Come down with speed and mercy and love

Bring Your Word, Jesus, to birth in our hearts and in our homes!



A Reflection on Psalm 85:11-12

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Promises! Promises! We hear many of them in the Scripture Readings for this day. But one verse from the Responsorial Psalm seems to put it all in perspective:



Kindness and truth shall meet.

Justice and peace will kiss.

Truth shall spring out of the earth

And justice look down from heaven.



Kindness and truth shall meet -

wouldn't we find life more hopeful if truth was spoken with compassion and all people were treated with respectful kindness?

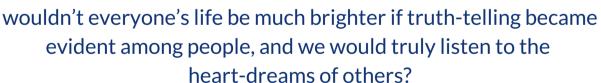


Justice and peace will kiss -



wouldn't we share a better world, one with peace, if sharing ideas and resources and care for each other truly became a way of life?









wouldn't the prodigality of God's blessings bring deep joy if we all took time to realize that God is always ready to give in overflowing measure?



and sunday of Advent

Once upon a time, two brothers who lived on adjoining farms fell into conflict. It was the first serious rift in 40 years of farming side-by-side, sharing machinery and trading labor and goods as needed without a hitch.

Then the long collaboration fell apart. It began with a small misunderstanding and it grew into a major difference and finally, it exploded into an exchange of bitter words followed by weeks of silence.

One morning there was a knock on John's door. He opened it to find a man with a carpenter's toolbox: "I'm looking for a few days' work," he said. "Perhaps you would have a few small jobs here and there I could help with? Could I help you?"

"Yes," said the older brother. "I do have a job for you. Look across the creek at that farm. That's my neighbor. In fact, he's my younger brother!

"Last week there was a meadow between us. He recently took his bulldozer to the river levee and now there is a creek between us. Well, he may have done this to spite me, but I'll do him one better. See that pile of lumber by the barn? I want you to build me a fence - an 8-foot fence - so I won't need to see his place or his face anymore."

The carpenter said, "I think I understand the situation. Show me the nails and the post-hole digger and I'll be able to do a job that pleases you."

The older brother had to go to town, so he helped the carpenter get the materials ready and then he was off for the day. The carpenter worked hard all that day – measuring, sawing, and nailing.

About sunset when the farmer returned, the carpenter had just finished his job. The farmer's eyes opened wide and his jaw dropped.

There was no fence there at all.

It was a bridge... a bridge that stretched from one side of the creek to the other! A fine piece of work, handrails and all! And the neighbor, his younger brother, was coming toward them, his hand outstretched..

"You are quite a fellow to build this bridge after all I've said and done."

The two brothers stood at each end of the bridge, and then they met in the middle, taking each other's hand. They turned to see the carpenter hoist his toolbox onto his shoulder.

"No, wait! Stay a few days. I've a lot of other projects for you," said the older brother.

"I'd love to stay on, the carpenter said, but I have many more bridges to build."

Francine Schwarzenberger, OP







Gaudete Sunday! Rejoice! It is halfway to Christmas. Are you rejoicing that Christmas is coming soon? Are activities getting in the way of a spiritual preparation for Christmas? Are you still in quarantine? Are you frustrated because you can't get out to do Christmas shopping? As I write this in September, I don't have a clue as to what things will be like in December. Maybe the Sunday reading of Paul to the Thessalonians should be our message. Regardless of what is happening it is important to:





Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.
In all circumstances give thanks,
for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.



Yes, it is a time to rejoice. In the midst of all that is happening – frenetic shopping or regret that we can't celebrate Christmas as we usually do, God is with us. God is guiding us through these days.

A child can teach us what is important. Children don't worry about what is going to happen tomorrow. They enjoy the moment – what is right in front of them. So too as we await the celebration of the child, the Son of God, let us again turn to that letter Paul wrote centuries ago.

May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sr. Theresa Fox, OP





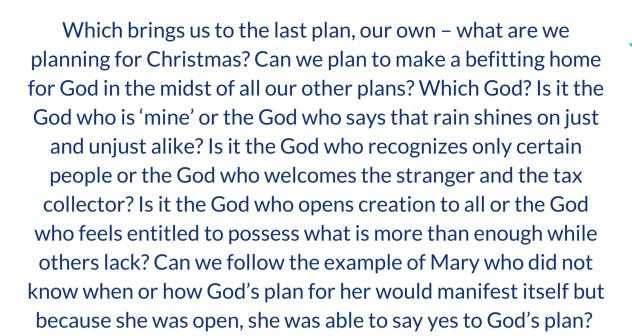
Planning for Christmas 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

When do you begin planning for Christmas? Maybe you don't write it down, but because of those you love or feel you have an obligation to someone, you start thinking about cards, gifts, food, and so on. Even though the final days before Christmas find you hurrying to get things done, you have been planning for perhaps more than a month.

In the first reading of the Sunday, the Fourth Week of Advent, we learn about planning. David was also planning to do something for someone he both loved and to whom he felt he had an obligation because of all that had been done for him. He planned to build a beautiful house for God. But God was like some of us who receive gifts we don't want or need. God told David that his plans were not what God wanted, that God was content with things as they were.

In the Gospel reading, we meet up with Mary, who did not plan to receive a gift from God and yet who received a gift beyond all comprehension or imagining. She was presented with God's own plan, and she received it humbly, not for herself alone but as the angel told her, a gift that was given for the entire world. So in the readings today we hear of plans, David whose plan was not accepted, Mary who did not plan but accepted God's word, and of God who planned the greatest gift of all for all of us.





What a Christmas it would be if all of us could welcome Christ however he might come to us this Christmas in the poor or the rich, the sick or the healthy, the strong or the weak, in persons of any race, religion or political ideology. After all, he did say that whenever one does good to the least of his, they do it to him. Maranatha, Lord Jesus!

Rita Schwarzenberger, OP





Jesus, you came among us as the Light of the Word, a child born in the quiet of Bethlehem, a child held in the presence of love.

As we celebrate Christmas this year, we pray for our sisters and brothers throughout the world.



and deep sadness since last Christmas. We offer our simple prayer:

Jesus, be for all of us, the light that shines in the darkness, the gift that brings us joy, the hope that brings us peace.

We open our hearts and hands to all your blessings.









