



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 22, 2024

St. James Catholic Church

*3909 Harrison * Kansas City, Missouri 64110*

"Small enough to know your name, big enough to make a difference."

Message from Fr. Don Farnan

The religious stories of the Christmas season inspire us to a deeper understanding of our own earthly existence. Jesus came into the world in space and time, as do we: a particular century, nation, culture, family history, religious affiliation, and much more. His nativity changed the lives of some people in remarkable and incomprehensible ways, starting with Mary and Joseph. They influence us to respond to the voice of God and the guidance of angels with obedience, humility, and courage, as they did. But different things are required of us in twenty-first century America than of them in first century Israel, as Catholics and as privileged people who live with freedom, in wealth, and through advances that they wouldn't comprehend.

As we consider how Mary offered her assent to God's will and how Joseph trusted God through a mysterious pregnancy, nocturnal locutions, threat of murder to his wife and child, homelessness, their plight into a foreign land as refugees, a child missing for several days, and other hardships, we realize that our personal modern journey, no matter how difficult, is not outlandish to their struggles. Perhaps they can also help us empathize with those who suffer similar predicaments now as outcasts, immigrants, asylum seekers, those suffering poverty, mental illness, panic, or loss, and those without homes or support systems.

The nativity story ends with the gift of the Magi on the twelfth day of Christmas. It is, perhaps, an incentive for us, after exchanging gifts with one another, to bring our gift to God, to utilize the blessings entrusted to us so that Christ's presence on earth continues to be manifest. Consider how we can advance the story in the year ahead, a jubilee year for Catholicism, a holy year that implements the synod of the church-universal by bringing life to our faith-community, and a year that holds great promise for our parish.

At Saint James, we are assessing our identity as a community-led, justice-minded, worship-inspired parish that is shaped by an international presence that reflects the gift of Pentecost and grace of the Holy Spirit. Clearly, here, all are welcome; yet we face challenges of financial stability and growth. As we ponder our relationships with other institutes and social agencies in the area, we will continue to go deeper in our efforts to respond strongly to the needs around us. I look forward to opportunities that lie ahead in 2025.

Blessings in this sacred season of new life and great hope. Continue your very merry, happy, holy, holly-jolly time, and let's pray for one another as we usher in the new year.