

# Encountering THE SEASON

Advent for the Family

Fourth Sunday of Advent (C)

Micah 5:1-4a  
Hebrews 10:5-10  
Luke 1:39-45

## Dear Family:

Read the reflection about asking for God's blessing and discuss the "Ponder and Pray" questions and prompts, thinking about how Our Lord is calling you to act. Then consider the challenges of the "Live It" section, have fun with the family activities, and dive into the *visio divina* prayer exercise.

## Lord, Abide with Us

"Once again, O LORD of hosts, look down from heaven, and see; take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted, the son of man whom you yourself made strong."

—From the Responsorial Psalm (80) for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Today, on this Sunday before Christmas, we humbly ask God to continue to bless the good work he began in us during this Advent season.

It is not easy to open our hearts to trust, to be vulnerable, and to work through our fear in difficult circumstances, but that is where the journey has taken us. We now are here, approaching the manger of the King.

“ Restore us, O Lord God of hosts!  
let thy face shine, that we may be saved! ”  
—Psalm 80:19



Enter the Manger by Mike Moyers

The verse from Psalm 80 that is part of today's reflection asks God particularly to "take care of this vine, and protect what your right hand has planted, the son of man whom you yourself made strong."

Let's also ask our Creator to remain with us, continuing to strengthen and

grow us from where he planted and tended to us during this Advent season. As we approach Emmanuel ("God is with us"), let us show the newborn Jesus the hearts we have prepared as a gift for him during these Advent weeks. Let us allow his love to enlighten our souls as we celebrate the gift of his coming.

To read more about trusting God, see Rejoice! An Advent Pilgrimage into the Heart of Scripture, Year C.

## Ponder and Pray

- How have you felt your heart shift and change from the beginning of Advent until now? It's okay if you haven't sensed any discernible change. The Lord is still working.
- How do you anticipate Christmas looking different after entrusting your heart to God in these past weeks?
- How can you make your celebration of Christmas more prayerful, more aligned with the movements of God in your heart?

## Live It

As life ramps up and gets crazier and busier this week, find some pockets of time to pray and give thanks to God. Relate your frustrations, hopes, disappointments, and delights with him, inviting him into your Christmas. You may even find opportunities to invite others into these moments of prayer. If so, let it happen! Your witness may change someone's entire Christmas.

## Visio Divina

Study this week's image for a few moments, pondering what it is communicating beyond the parts of the painting. Then prayerfully read the questions, asking God to illuminate your mind to all he wishes to say to you through this image.

### Question 1:

What emotions fill your heart as you see Joseph leading Mary into the cave?

---

---

---

---

### Question 2:

What feelings might be filling their hearts at this moment?

---

---

---

---

### Question 3:

What does the cave feel like? Smell like? A lot is happening at this penultimate point of the Christmas story. In your mind, complete the picture.

---

---

---

---

## Fun For the Family

(From *Rejoice! An Advent Pilgrimage into the Heart of Scripture, Year C*)

Take time this week to take part in a quiet family activity, such as going on a walk, playing a relaxed game, or watching a nostalgic Christmas movie. Or have one person put on earmuffs or headphones to muffle sound. Then have that person try to guess what the other family members are saying by reading their lips. Think about how God is speaking to you through these simple, quiet times with your family.

For free videos and downloadable resources featuring *Rejoice! An Advent Pilgrimage into the Heart of Scripture, Year C* with Fr. Mark Toups, scan this code with your camera.

