

## Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year A

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that hinders our faith, that eagerly we may receive your promises, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### FIRST READING: Isaiah 7:10-16

*An Israelite and Aramean military coalition presented a serious threat to King Ahaz of Judah. In response, Ahaz decided to secure his throne and kingdom by seeking Assyrian help. Isaiah reminds Ahaz that human attempts to establish security will fail. The prophet gives the sign that is the only source of true safety: Immanuel, God is with us!*

<sup>10</sup>The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, <sup>11</sup>Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven. <sup>12</sup>But Ahaz said, I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test. <sup>13</sup>Then Isaiah said: “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary my God also? <sup>14</sup>Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. <sup>15</sup>He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. <sup>16</sup>For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.”

**Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19** *Let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved. (Ps. 80:7)*

<sup>1</sup>Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph <sup>1</sup> like a flock;  
shine forth, you that are enthroned up- <sup>1</sup> on the cherubim.  
<sup>2</sup>**In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, <sup>1</sup> and Manasseh,  
stir up your strength and <sup>1</sup> come to help us.**  
<sup>3</sup>Restore <sup>1</sup> us, O God;  
let your face shine upon us, and we <sup>1</sup> shall be saved.  
<sup>4</sup>**O LORD <sup>1</sup> God of hosts,  
how long will your anger fume when your <sup>1</sup> people pray?**  
<sup>5</sup>You have fed them with the <sup>1</sup> bread of tears;  
you have given them bowls of <sup>1</sup> tears to drink.  
<sup>6</sup>**You have made us the derision <sup>1</sup> of our neighbors,  
and our enemies laugh <sup>1</sup> us to scorn.**  
<sup>7</sup>Restore us, O <sup>1</sup> God of hosts;  
let your face shine upon us, and we <sup>1</sup> shall be saved.  
<sup>17</sup>**Let your hand be upon the one at <sup>1</sup> your right hand,  
the one you have made so strong <sup>1</sup> for yourself.**  
<sup>18</sup>And so will we never turn a- <sup>1</sup> way from you;  
give us life, that we may call up- <sup>1</sup> on your name.  
<sup>19</sup>**Restore us, O LORD <sup>1</sup> God of hosts;  
let your face shine upon us, and we <sup>1</sup> shall be saved.**

## **SECOND READING: Romans 1:1-7**

*Most of the Christians in Rome do not know Paul. In this letter's opening he introduces himself as an apostle divinely appointed to spread God's gospel. The gospel's content is the promised coming of Christ, and Paul's mission is to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations, including his Roman audience.*

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, <sup>2</sup>which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, <sup>3</sup>the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh <sup>4</sup>and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, <sup>5</sup>through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, <sup>6</sup>including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

<sup>7</sup>To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **GOSPEL: Matthew 1:18-25**

*Matthew's story of Jesus' birth focuses on the role of Joseph, who adopts the divinely-begotten child into the family of David and obediently gives him the name Jesus, which means "God saves."*

<sup>18</sup>Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. <sup>20</sup>But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup>All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

<sup>23</sup>"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,"

which means, "God is with us."<sup>24</sup>When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, <sup>25</sup>but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.