



The Word

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Week of December 21

Call to Prayer and Sharing

- + *Leader invites all into a few moments of silent reflection to remember that we are in the presence of God. (reflective pause)*
- + *Then: "In the name of the Father and of the Son . . ."*

The Word of God

- + *Leader reads part or all of one of the scripture texts from the previous Sunday.*

Matthew 1:18-24

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.
When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph,
but before they lived together,
she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.
Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man,
yet unwilling to expose her to shame,
decided to divorce her quietly.
Such was his intention when, behold,
the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,
"Joseph, son of David,
do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.
For it is through the Holy Spirit
that this child has been conceived in her.
She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins."
All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:
*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,*
which means "God is with us."
When Joseph awoke,
he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him
and took his wife into his home.

Faith Sharing

- + *Leader reminds everyone of the Question of the Week which relates to the particular group gathered . . .*

Child: What does your family do to make you feel loved and safe?

Teens: How has God helped you journey through uncertain moments in your life?

Adult: What qualities of Joseph are revealed in this passage and how do they relate to your life?

We offer this form of contemplative sharing for pondering Scripture and for the faith sharing which follows.

- Listen/ Read (Lectio): Ponder God's word and listen for what touches your heart.
- Meditate (Meditatio): Notice what you notice. Allow God's word to resonate in you.
- Speak/Share (Oratio): Prayerfully share with the group your thoughts and feelings.
- Rest in God's presence (Contemplatio): Notice God's presence and be still, surrounded by God's love.
- Choose to act (Actio): Trusting in God's nearness, commit to action rooted in love.

Time is provided for sharing responses to the question. Silence between responses is to be expected. Allow about 15 minutes for faith sharing. For larger groups, leader invites members to divide into groups of three or four for faith sharing.

- + *When the sharing comes to an end, the leader invites everyone to take a moment to silently and reverently hold what has been shared together.*
- + *Continue with the meeting, turning to the agenda.*

Concluding the meeting

At the end of the meeting, the leader closes with the following prayer:

Good and Gracious God,
your love for us surpasses all understanding.
As we leave here today,
be with us in all our comings and goings,
and in all that we say and do.
We pray this in the name of Christ Jesus who is our Light.
Amen.