

# *Advent Reflections*

*December 19, 2019*



When I read the scripture readings from my assigned date I immediately felt a sense of understanding, a little pain, and ultimately thankfulness. These readings resonate with me as, on a very personal level, I did not have an easy time getting pregnant. There were many times I thought “OK, maybe we are not meant to have a baby,” but I was not OK with that idea - in fact it was a very painful thought. Ultimately, I was blessed with having my daughter – Fiona Grace – who is now a freshman in college!

I truly believe my prayers for a child were answered. A baby is a blessing and what greater blessing do we have at Christmas than the birth of our Lord. It is important to focus on the significance of why we have Christmas at all. Our Lord is that very reason. His birth allows us to spend time with family and friends, recall Christmas days of the past, and create new and lasting memories. During Advent we need to give thanks for what we have and what we hope to have – not material things, not tangible things, rather those things we feel in our heart.

This Christmas I am looking forward to my daughter being home for her winter break. I am thankful that she had a good first semester at college and is happy. I am thankful that God sent her to me.

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**Reading 1** [JGS 13:2-7, 24-25A](#)

There was a certain man from Zorah, of the clan of the Danites,  
whose name was Manoah.

His wife was barren and had borne no children.

An angel of the LORD appeared to the woman and said to her,  
“Though you are barren and have had no children,  
yet you will conceive and bear a son.

Now, then, be careful to take no wine or strong drink  
and to eat nothing unclean.

As for the son you will conceive and bear,  
no razor shall touch his head,  
for this boy is to be consecrated to God from the womb.  
It is he who will begin the deliverance of Israel  
from the power of the Philistines.”

The woman went and told her husband,

“A man of God came to me;  
he had the appearance of an angel of God, terrible indeed.  
I did not ask him where he came from, nor did he tell me his name.  
But he said to me,  
‘You will be with child and will bear a son.  
So take neither wine nor strong drink, and eat nothing unclean.  
For the boy shall be consecrated to God from the womb,  
until the day of his death.’”

The woman bore a son and named him Samson.

The boy grew up and the LORD blessed him;  
the Spirit of the LORD stirred him.

**Responsorial Psalm** [PS 71:3-4A, 5-6AB, 16-17](#)

**R. (see 8) My mouth shall be filled with your praise, and I will sing your glory!**

Be my rock of refuge,  
a stronghold to give me safety,  
for you are my rock and my fortress.  
O my God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked.

**R. My mouth shall be filled with your praise, and I will sing your glory!**

For you are my hope, O LORD;  
my trust, O God, from my youth.  
On you I depend from birth;  
from my mother's womb you are my strength.

**R. My mouth shall be filled with your praise, and I will sing your glory!**

I will treat of the mighty works of the LORD;  
O God, I will tell of your singular justice.  
O God, you have taught me from my youth,

and till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds.

**R. My mouth shall be filled with your praise, and I will sing your glory!**

**Alleluia**

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

O Root of Jesse's stem,  
sign of God's love for all his people;  
come to save us without delay!

**R. Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Gospel [LK 1:5-25](#)**

In the days of Herod, King of Judea,  
there was a priest named Zechariah  
of the priestly division of Abijah;  
his wife was from the daughters of Aaron,  
and her name was Elizabeth.  
Both were righteous in the eyes of God,  
observing all the commandments  
and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly.  
But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren  
and both were advanced in years.

Once when he was serving as priest  
in his division's turn before God,  
according to the practice of the priestly service,  
he was chosen by lot  
to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to burn incense.  
Then, when the whole assembly of the people was praying outside  
at the hour of the incense offering,  
the angel of the Lord appeared to him,  
standing at the right of the altar of incense.  
Zechariah was troubled by what he saw, and fear came upon him.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah,  
because your prayer has been heard.  
Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son,  
and you shall name him John.  
And you will have joy and gladness,  
and many will rejoice at his birth,  
for he will be great in the sight of the Lord.  
He will drink neither wine nor strong drink.  
He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb,  
and he will turn many of the children of Israel  
to the Lord their God.

He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah  
to turn the hearts of fathers toward children  
and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous,  
to prepare a people fit for the Lord."

Then Zechariah said to the angel,  
"How shall I know this?  
For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years."  
And the angel said to him in reply,  
"I am Gabriel, who stand before God.  
I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news.  
But now you will be speechless and unable to talk  
until the day these things take place,  
because you did not believe my words,  
which will be fulfilled at their proper time."

Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah  
and were amazed that he stayed so long in the sanctuary.  
But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them,  
and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary.  
He was gesturing to them but remained mute.

Then, when his days of ministry were completed, he went home.

After this time his wife Elizabeth conceived,  
and she went into seclusion for five months, saying,  
"So has the Lord done for me at a time when he has seen fit  
to take away my disgrace before others."