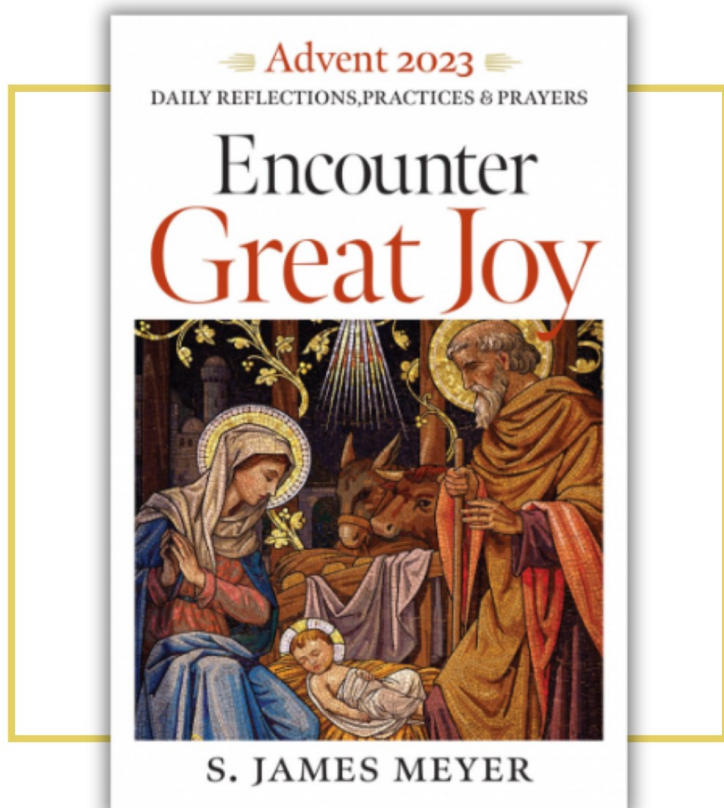




# Awakening to Moments of Grace

- ADVENT 2023 -

# JOURNAL



# First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 2023

## Encounter Your Reality

*"I'm a self-made man," the candidate proclaimed from the debate stage. "I was born into nothing, handed nothing, and through hard work I built myself up into the person I am today." His opponent replied with empathy, "How sad for you. Truly, I am sorry. I was God-made in God's image, and by myself I remain nothing."*

*Ego tricks us with the illusion that we create our own lives. When life is sunshine, we really want this to be true. But when hardship or illness hits, we know it's not. Spirit, on the other hand, reveals the truth that we are created by love, in love, for love, and to love. In other words, we are created in the image and likeness of God.*

*Advent prepares us to come face to face with this reality. We are invited to encounter divinity not in the trappings of power, wealth, and worldly success but in the vulnerability of a helpless, homeless infant born in the middle of the night. Such is the true nature of everything.*

S. James Meyer, *Encounter Great Joy: Daily Reflections, Practices and Prayers* (Waterford, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2023).

Used with permission.

### Questions To Ponder:

What have been your biggest highs and sighs in your life to date? The most important accomplishments and the most devastating disappointments?

Being created in the image and likeness of God for love changes everything, including our accomplishments and disappointments. How have you found this to be true in your life?

## **Lectio Divina: Read Mark 13:33-37**

Jesus said to his disciples:

“Be watchful! Be alert!

You do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man traveling abroad.

He leaves home and places his servants in charge,  
each with his own work,

and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore;

you do not know when the lord of the house is coming,  
whether in the evening, or at midnight,  
or at cockcrow, or in the morning.

May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.

What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’”

What word or phrase from this Scripture passage most resonates with you?

How will this reading shape your life this week as you begin your Advent journey?

## **Challenge for the Week:**

Create a list of ways that you experience moments of grace, times of God’s love in your life as a person created in the image and likeness of God.

# Second Sunday of Advent

December 10, 2023

## Encounter Real Presence

*Rita shivered on the concrete steps. It was a windy January night, and she was not “shelter material,” to use her words. Due to the complexities of various behavioral health issues, she was unable to stay indoors for more than a couple hours, especially around other people. Our outreach team was at a bit of a loss. We couldn’t fix her situation.*

*We wrapped her in a thick blanket, gave her a warm hat and gloves, and brought her something to eat. We stayed and spoke with her but left before our presence would agitate her. Comfort. Often in life and death, the only way to show our love for one another is through comfort.*

*Advent asks of us the same thing asked of the shepherds on that holy night, asked of hospice workers every day, and asked of all who have a beating heart: Will you provide comfort to the lost, lonely, hungry, hurting, vulnerable, fragile, sick, and dying people of God? What we do for the least among us, we do for Christ.*

S. James Meyer, *Encounter Great Joy: Daily Reflections, Practices and Prayers* (Waterford, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2023).

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### Questions To Ponder:

When is a time that you needed comfort or that you comforted a person in need?

Who is a person in your life who could use a phone call, an email, or a special note from you?

## **Lectio Divina: Read Mark 1:4-8**

John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist.

He fed on locusts and wild honey.

And this is what he proclaimed:

"One mightier than I is coming after me.

I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals.

I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

What word or phrase from this Scripture passage most resonates with you?

How will this reading shape your life this week as you continue your Advent journey?

## **Challenge for the Week:**

Send a note or email, or better yet, phone the person on the previous page that needs a word of comfort from you this week. Make a commitment to be Christ's presence in the world in this tangible way.

# Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2023

## Encounter the Unexpected

*In 1925, John Caples penned one of the greatest ads of all time—a mailer for a home-study course in music that led with the headline “They Laughed When I Sat Down at the Piano, But When I Started to Play!” It was a smashing success, playing off the tendency to underestimate the giftedness of people based on their appearance.*

*The Pharisees and high priests certainly knew what the messiah would look like, or at least thought they did. So, they disqualified Jesus. How often do we encounter the living Christ among us and around us but fail to recognize him simply because he looks like a cab driver? Or a grocery clerk? Or a skateboarder?*

*Advent challenges us to open our eyes to the surprising reality that Christ can and does show up in the most unexpected places. Are we ready for that?*

S. James Meyer, *Encounter Great Joy: Daily Reflections, Practices and Prayers* (Waterford, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2023).  
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### Questions To Ponder:

Who in your life most exemplifies the qualities of what you think the Christ is all about?

What holds you back from recognizing the Christ in every person that you meet?

**Lectio Divina: Read John 1:23-27**

"I am *the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'make straight the way of the Lord,'*"  
as Isaiah the prophet said."

Some Pharisees were also sent.

They asked him,

"Why then do you baptize  
if you are not the Christ or Elijah or the Prophet?"

John answered them,

"I baptize with water;  
but there is one among you whom you do not recognize,  
the one who is coming after me,  
whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie."

What word or phrase from this Scripture passage most  
resonates with you?

How will this reading shape your life this week as you  
continue your Advent journey?

**Challenge for the Week:**

This week make a special effort to welcome each person you  
meet as Christ—at home, in the workplace, at the grocery  
store—everywhere! Take note of the people that you find easiest  
to recognize Christ in them, and those you find the most difficult  
to do so.

# Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2023

## Encounter Awe

*Friends said Oscar was a changed man after a tumor was removed from his brain. Nothing riled him anymore. He brought a joyful presence to every encounter, and he greeted sun and rain alike with the same exuberance. Whether looking upon the majesty of a mountain or the nuisance of an anthill, he'd say, "Wow! Creation is such a miracle!"*

*It's one thing to gaze upon a rainbow with awe, but it's another thing entirely to be gobsmacked by a mud puddle. Yet, when we are truly inspired, that's exactly what we do. We find overwhelming joy in the love and laughter regardless of trinkets and tinsel. All of life is embraced for the experience, not evaluated against expectations.*

*On this Christmas Eve, we approach a smelly, dirty manger with unbelievable gratitude and awe. May you be overshadowed by the power of the Most High, and may the experience change the way you see everything from this day forward!*

S. James Meyer, *Encounter Great Joy: Daily Reflections, Practices and Prayers* (Waterford, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2023).  
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### Questions To Ponder:

When is a time that you experienced the most awe in your life?

How did you recognize God, or a sense of the holy, in that moment of awe?



## **Lectio Divina: Read Luke 1:31-38**

And the angel said to her in reply,  
"The Holy Spirit will come upon you,  
and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.  
Therefore the child to be born  
will be called holy, the Son of God.  
And behold, Elizabeth, your relative,  
has also conceived a son in her old age,  
and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren;  
for nothing will be impossible for God."  
Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord.  
May it be done to me according to your word."  
Then the angel departed from her.

How will this reading shape your life this week as you continue your Advent journey?

### **Challenge for the Week:**

As you celebrate the beauty and awe of the Christmas celebrations, both at church, and also in your Church of the Home, take special note of those moments of grace that catch your eyes, your ears, and your imagination. Pause to say thanks in those moments of miracles and wonders.



**ADVENT 2023**

# ***Awakening to Moments of Grace***

*Advent is a time to be alert and awaken  
to God's grace and blessings.*

## **Advent Reconciliation Service**

Wednesday, December 6  
6:30 PM  
St Matthew's Church



## **Taize Prayer**

*Through the singing of simply recurring  
refrains & chants, listening of scripture,  
and periods of silence, come find peace  
during your Advent journey.*

Mondays:  
December 4 & 11  
6:30 - 7:30 PM



## **Busy Person's Retreat**

*The Busy Person's Retreat is  
a daily email with resources -  
a respite for busy people!*

To register, go to  
[www.gbres.org/busyretreat](http://www.gbres.org/busyretreat)



## **St. Nicholas Breakfast**

*Pancake and Sausage Breakfast  
with special guest: St. Nicholas*

Sunday, December 3  
Following 8:30 & 10:30 Masses



## **Women's Guild Bake Sale**

*This annual event of delicious treats  
supports the many projects sponsored by  
Resurrection's Women's Guild.*

December 9 and 10  
Following All Masses

## **Ecumenical Christmas Sing**

*Join nine local church choirs in an afternoon  
of celebrating the season with song.*

Sunday, December 10  
3:00 PM



## **The Chosen: Christmas Episodes**

*Gather together to watch and discuss  
The Chosen's two films depicting the events  
around the birth of Jesus.*

Tuesday, December 19  
6:30 PM



## **Isaiah: A Prophet For Our Time**

*Explore through prayer, video, and discussion  
how the messages of the prophet Isaiah  
speaks to us today.*

Tuesdays:  
November 28 - December 12  
8:45 - 9:45 AM or 6:30 - 7:30 PM



## **Service Saturday:**

### **Paul's Pantry**

*Make a difference and help feed the hungry  
by serving with your parish family.*

Saturday, December 16  
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM



## **Tree of Giving**

*Bring the joy of Advent by purchasing  
needed items for local agencies.  
Donation tags are on the Trees of Giving  
located by the main church entrance.*

November 21 - December 10th  
Learn more at [www.gbres.org/treeofgiving](http://www.gbres.org/treeofgiving)

***Find all Advent  
resources online at  
[gbres.org/advent](http://gbres.org/advent)***



## **ADVENT MASS TIMES**

Join your parish family in  
celebrating these liturgies.



### **Daily Mass**

*Mondays - Fridays*  
8:05 AM



### **Weekends**

*Saturdays*  
4:00 PM

*Sundays*  
8:30 & 10:30 AM



### **Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception**

*Thursday, December 7*  
6:00 PM

*Friday, December 8*  
8:05 AM

## **CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES**

### **Christmas Eve**

*Sunday, December 24*  
4:00 & 9:00 PM



### **Christmas Day**

*Monday, December 25*  
9:00 AM



### **Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph**

*Saturday, December 30*  
4:00 PM

*Sunday, December 31*  
8:30 & 10:30 AM



### **Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God**

*Monday, January 1*  
8:05 AM

ADVENT  
WHISPERS GRACE  
INTO  
WAITING HEARTS.

Join us virtually for any Mass or prayer experience at  
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