

Fourth Sunday of Advent

*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.**

Reading 1 Isaiah 7:10-14

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying: Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God; let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky!

But Ahaz answered,

"I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!"

Then Isaiah said: Listen, O house of David! Is it not enough for you to weary people, must you also weary my God?

Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign: the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.

Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6.

R. Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.

The LORD's are the earth and its fullness;
the world and those who dwell in it.

For he founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers **R**

Who can ascend the mountain of the LORD?
or who may stand in his holy place?

One whose hands are sinless, whose heart is clean,
who desires not what is vain. **R**

R He shall receive a blessing from the LORD,
a reward from God his savior.

Such is the race that seeks for him,
that seeks the face of the God of Jacob. **R**

Romans 1:1-7

Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised previously through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, the gospel about his Son, descended from David according to the flesh, but established as Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness through resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Through him we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles, among whom are you also, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ; to all the beloved of God in Rome, called to be holy. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel 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.



YOU WILL GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS

Among the Hebrews, they didn't give just any name to the newly born, arbitrarily, since the «name», as in almost all ancient cultures, indicated the being of the person, their true identity, what they hoped from them.

That why the Gospel writer Matthew is so interested in explaining to his readers right from the start the deep meaning of the name of the coming protagonist of his story. The «name» of the child that still hasn't been born is «Jesus», which means «God saves». He will be so called because «he will save his people from their sins».

In the year 70, Vespasian was designated as the new emperor while he was putting out the Jewish rebellion, and after marching to Rome he is received and acclaimed with the name «Savior» and «Benefactor». The Gospel writer Matthew wants to make things clear. The «Savior» that the world needs isn't Vespasian, but Jesus.

Salvation won't come to us from any emperor or from any victory of one people over another. Humanity needs to be saved from evil, from injustice and from violence; it needs to be forgiven and redirected toward a more dignified life for the human being. This is the salvation that Jesus offers us.

Matthew assigns him still another name: «Emmanuel». He knows that no one has been called this throughout history. It's a name that shakes us up, completely new, that means «God with us». A name that we attribute to Jesus because we believe that in him and from him, God accompanies us, blesses us and saves us.

The first Christian generations bore the name of Jesus etched in their hearts. They repeated it over and over. They were baptized in his name, they gathered to pray in his name. For Matthew, the name of Jesus is a synthesis of their faith. For Paul, nothing is greater. According to one of the first Christian hymns: «before the name of Jesus every knee shall bend» (Phil 2,10).

After 20 centuries, we Christians need to learn to pronounce the name of Jesus in a new way: with tenderness and love, with a renewed faith, in an attitude of conversion. With his name on our lips and in our hearts we can live and die with hope.

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