

THE JOURNEY



*"Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you."
~ Matthew 2:13*

Welcome to the online version of the St. Joseph/St. Raphael Advent Retreat. You can go through this retreat in its entirety in about 2 hours. If you don't have that long, break it into several smaller parts and complete the retreat over multiple days.

OPENING PRAYER: (*From the Liturgy of the Hours, Morning Prayer, 2nd Saturday of Advent*)

God, come to my assistance. (*Make the sign of the cross.*)

Lord, make haste to help me.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

HYMN: O Come, O Come Emmanuel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RP4iyJgrPvY>

Antiphon 1: (*Repeat between verses of the following psalm.*) As morning breaks, we sing of your mercy.

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praise to your name, Most High,
To proclaim your love at daybreak,
your faithfulness in the night,
With the ten-stringed harp,
with melody upon the lyre.

For you make me jubilant, LORD, by your deeds;
at the works of your hands I shout for joy.
How great are your works, LORD!
How profound your designs!
A senseless person cannot know this;
a fool cannot comprehend.

Though the wicked flourish like grass
and all sinners thrive,
They are destined for eternal destruction;
but you, LORD, are forever on high.
Indeed your enemies, LORD,
indeed your enemies shall perish;
all sinners shall be scattered.

You have given me the strength of a wild ox;
you have poured rich oil upon me.
My eyes look with glee on my wicked enemies;
my ears shall hear what happens to my wicked foes.
The just shall flourish like the palm tree,

shall grow like a cedar of Lebanon.

Planted in the house of the LORD,
they shall flourish in the courts of our God.
They shall bear fruit even in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,
To proclaim: "The LORD is just;
my rock, in whom there is no wrong."

PSALM PRAYER – Take our shame away from us, Lord, and make us rejoice in your saving works. May all who have been chosen by your Son always abound in works of faith, hope and love in your service.

Antiphon 2: *(Repeat between verses of the following canticle.)* **Extol the greatness of our God.**

Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak;
let the earth hear the words of my mouth!
May my teaching soak in like the rain,
and my utterance drench like the dew,
Like a downpour upon the grass,
like a shower upon the crops.

For I will proclaim the name of the LORD,
praise the greatness of our God!
The Rock—how faultless are his deeds,
how right all his ways!
A faithful God, without deceit,
just and upright is he!

Yet his degenerate children have treated him basely,
a twisted and crooked generation!
Is this how you repay the LORD,
so foolish and unwise a people?
Is he not your father who begot you,
the one who made and established you?

Remember the days of old,
consider the years of generations past.
Ask your father, he will inform you,

your elders, they will tell you:

When the Most High allotted each nation its heritage,
when he separated out human beings,
He set up the boundaries of the peoples
after the number of the divine beings;
But the LORD's portion was his people;
his allotted share was Jacob.

He found them in a wilderness,
a wasteland of howling desert.
He shielded them, cared for them,
guarded them as the apple of his eye.

As an eagle incites its nestlings,
hovering over its young,
So he spread his wings, took them,
bore them upon his pinions.
The LORD alone guided them,
no foreign god was with them.

Antiphon 3: *(Repeat between verses of the following psalm.)* **How wonderful is your name, O Lord, in all creation.**

O LORD, our Lord, how awesome is your name through all the earth!
I will sing of your majesty above the heavens
with the mouths of babes and infants.
You have established a bulwark against your foes,
to silence enemy and avenger.

When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and stars that you set in place—
What is man that you are mindful of him,
and a son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him little less than a god,
crowned him with glory and honor.
You have given him rule over the works of your hands,
put all things at his feet:

All sheep and oxen,
even the beasts of the field,
The birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
and whatever swims the paths of the seas.
O LORD, our Lord, how awesome is your name through all the earth!

PSALM PRAYER – Almighty Lord, how wonderful is your name. You have made every creature subject to you; make us worthy to give you service.

ISAIAH 11:1-5 - But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide, but he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide fairly for the land's afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.

RESPONSORY:

Your light will come, Jerusalem; the Lord will dawn on you in radiant beauty.
Your light will come, Jerusalem; the Lord will dawn on you in radiant beauty.
You will see his glory within you.
The Lord will dawn on you in radiant beauty.
Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
Your light will come, Jerusalem; the Lord will dawn on you in radiant beauty.

CANTICLE OF ZECHARIAH:

Response: *(Repeat between verses of the following canticle.)* **Banish your fears, O people of Zion; God, your own God, is coming to you, alleluia.**

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,
for he has visited and brought redemption to his people.
He has raised up a horn for our salvation
within the house of David his servant.
Even as he promised through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old: salvation
from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us,
To show mercy to our fathers and to be mindful of his holy covenant
and of the oath he swore to Abraham our father,
and to grant us that, rescued from the hand of enemies,

without fear we might worship him in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.

And you, child, will be called prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
to give his people knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God
by which the daybreak from on high will visit us
to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.

INTERCESSIONS:

Response: Lord, protect your people.

To Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, who will come again in glory with great power, let us
make our humble prayer.

Lord Jesus, you will come with great power, look on our lowliness and make us
worthy of your gifts.

You came to be good news for humankind, may we always proclaim your saving
work.

You are worthy of praise, for you have life and rule all things, help us to wait in joyful
hope for the coming of your glory.

We long for the grace of your coming, console us with the gift of your own divine life.

OUR FATHER

CONCLUDING PRAYER: Lord, let your glory dawn to take away our darkness. May
we be revealed as the children of light at the coming of your Son, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever.



PREPARATION FOR MEDITATION

READ LUKE 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

“BREATH OF HEAVEN”

By Amy Grant

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8_475FKJWQ

I have traveled many moonless nights
Cold and weary with a babe inside
And I wonder what I've done
Holy father you have come
And chosen me now to carry your son

I am waiting in a silent prayer
I am frightened by the load I bear
In a world as cold as stone
Must I walk this path alone?
Be with me now
Be with me now
Breath of heaven
Hold me together
Be forever near me
Breath of heaven
Breath of heaven
Lighten my darkness
Pour over me your holiness
For you are holy
Breath of heaven

Do you wonder as you watch my face
If a wiser one should have had my place
But I offer all I am
For the mercy of your plan
Help me be strong
Help me be
Help me

Breath of heaven
Hold me together
Be forever near me
Breath of heaven
Breath of heaven
Lighten my darkness
Pour over me your holiness
For you are holy
Breath of heaven

GUIDED MEDITATION – THE JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM *(Read the following meditation slowly and thoughtfully.)*

Let yourself relax. Let yourself float back through time. Picture yourself reclining on a soft grassy hillside. The soft ground feels good under your aching muscles. You've been on a journey for days. It feels good to stretch your limbs. You know you should get up, but the morning air is chilly so you pull your cloak closer and you scoot closer to your husband. You still aren't used to sleeping this close to a man, but you can feel the warmth radiating off of him and you relax your head against his shoulder.

You feel him shift next to you and place his big strong hand on your arm. "Mary," he whispers, "are you awake?" You sigh and roll over looking into his kind brown eyes. "Yes," you answer. Joseph smiles at you and looks down at your swollen stomach. He knows you are only days away from your delivery, and he did not want to bring you on this journey, but there was no other choice. "Why don't you lie here while I start a fire and make breakfast?" Before you can protest, he jumps up and spreads his cloak over you. *What are you thinking as you savor the warmth of two cloaks and listen to Joseph preparing breakfast? (PAUSE.)*

Soon the smell of the morning meal lures you from your bed. You taste the warm porridge as you watch Joseph saddling the donkey. You know you will spend most of the day bumping up and down in that saddle and hope this is the last day of your journey. You and Joseph have camped every night of this two-week trip in order to save your money for nights in a real inn once you reach your destination. You hope to sleep in a real bed tonight. *What else do you feel, see, hear, or smell as you stand on the hillside? (PAUSE.)*

Now it's time to set out on your journey. Joseph helps you onto the donkey's back. You notice he has used some of the swaddling clothes you brought for the baby to pad the saddle and make your ride more comfortable. With everything packed, Joseph begins to lead the donkey down the hillside. *What are you thinking right now? (SHORT PAUSE.) How do you feel physically? (ANOTHER SHORT PAUSE.)*

Step after step, bump after bump, the hours and the miles pass. *How do you and Joseph occupy your time? (PAUSE.)*

The sun is high in the sky when you stop to rest. You spread your cloak on the grass and pull some stale flatbread and dates from your pack. When your simple meal is prepared, you take a clay vessel to the nearby stream where Joseph is watering the donkey. Bending over to fill your jug with water, you feel the baby kick hard. You rush over to Joseph and place his hand on your stomach so he can share this moment with you. *What are you feeling in your heart right now? (PAUSE.)*

Suddenly three men approach from the road. This area is known for robbers. You remember how you were warned to travel in a caravan, but you and Joseph waited to depart for Bethlehem hoping you would deliver the baby early and not have to travel in your current state. As the men draw closer, Joseph protectively draws you behind him. One of the men raises his hand in greeting, "Hail, friends. We have been walking since daybreak and are only stopping for water, as you have." Peering from behind Joseph's back, you see the two younger men kneel beside the stream and begin to scoop up the water with their hands. You look down at your sole drinking vessel full of water. *What do you do or say? (PAUSE.)*

When the men have finished drinking, all of you sit on the ground around your cloak. The men pull out their own lunches. As you eat, Joseph asks, "Have you come by way of Bethlehem?" "Yes," answers the older man. "My sons and I were there to register for the census. We have been there three days. It's so crowded, we had to sleep on the streets. The inns are all full, and the whole town is like a festival! You'd be wise to avoid it if you can." *How do you react to his words?*

After you finish your meal, you all stand to continue your separate journeys. You wish each other well. The older man pulls a pomegranate out of his pack. "For the beautiful lady and her child," he says. *What does this gesture mean to you? (PAUSE.)*

Soon you are again bumping along the road. As you get closer to Bethlehem, you meet more and more travelers. Most of them say things like, "We left as soon as we got registered. We weren't spending another night in that place." *What are you wondering? (PAUSE.)*

Dusk falls, but still you travel on, weary and tired. You feel like you could fall sleep in the saddle. Your back has hurt for hours, but you have said nothing to Joseph. Finally, he stops, and you look up. There is the little town of Bethlehem, but it doesn't look so little tonight. People are everywhere! They are streaming in and out of the town and lining the hillside surrounding the walls. You want to get off the donkey and walk, but Joseph, ever protective, asks you to wait until you find a place to stay. He goes to the first inn, but a sign on the door says they are full. At the second inn, a rough-looking man is emptying a bucket into the street. As you approach, he waves both of you away, goes back inside, and slams the door. *What are you thinking about as you journey from inn to inn? What are you noticing? (PAUSE.)*

There is only one more inn in the town. Joseph knocks at its door. The innkeeper opens the door only to say, "We have no room. No one has had rooms available for days. You'll have to go back outside the walls and camp." Just then you feel a cold wetness on your legs and a mighty pain hits you so suddenly you cry out without meaning to. Your cry startles the innkeeper who looks first to your stomach and then to the water dripping from your foot. "Take her around back to our stable and make her comfortable there. My wife is a midwife. I will send her right out." *What is in your heart as you hear your baby will be born in a stable? (PAUSE.)*

Joseph has no trouble finding the stable. He ducks down a side street away from the crowd leading your donkey. Joseph tries to open the door, but it is locked from the inside. You fear you will have to continue your journey, but then the door is opened by the same man who sent you back there. He opens the door just enough for Joseph, the donkey, and you to pass through and quickly bolts it from the inside. It is warm in the stable. You see a bed already spread out on the soft hay. "My wife and I were planning to sleep here ourselves tonight, but you need this bed more than we do. I'll take care of your animal and then bring you some food and water." Another pain hits you just as Joseph and the man lift you down from the donkey. When it has subsided, Joseph and the midwife get you settled on the makeshift bed while the man leads your donkey away. The hay is softer than the hillside. The stable is warm and recently cleaned. The familiar smells of fresh hay and animals are comforting. You have food and water if you need them. And privacy to deliver your first child. Even a midwife to keep vigil with you through the long night ahead. You look in Joseph's kind brown eyes again. *What are you feeling? What are you thinking? What is the prayer in your heart? (LONG PAUSE.)*

Slowly let your consciousness drift back through the centuries to this room. Become aware of your present-day surroundings. As you become fully aware, hold your thoughts from this meditation in your heart.

JOURNALING

Take some time to record your personal reflections from the meditation.

ACTIVITY – THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

READ MATTHEW 2:1-23

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the

Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

When they had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

When Herod realized that he had been deceived by the magi, he became furious. He ordered the massacre of all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi. Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet: "A voice was heard in Ramah, sobbing and loud lamentation; Rachel weeping for her children, and she would not be consoled, since they were no more."

When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod,* he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazorean."

Imagine you are Joseph or Mary. Joseph having just awakened from the dream in which God told him to flee to Egypt wakes Mary quickly. He barely takes time to explain his dream because time is of the essence. Both of them start making quick preparations for the long journey, packing what they can carry on their backs and donkeys.

Ask yourself:

- How would you feel if you were told that you were in great danger and had to quickly leave behind your friends, home, belongings and maybe even some of your family?
- How would it feel to not know where you were going?
- Who would you take with you?
- What would you take with you?
- What do you think you would need for a really long journey?
- What would you have to leave behind?

This activity was designed to be done in pairs. (If you don't have a partner, it's fine to do the activity by yourself.) You will need a total of 18 index cards or small pieces of paper. Divide the cards into 3 piles of six: one stack for Mary, one for Joseph, one for Baby Jesus. On each of those cards, write one item you would pack for the journey to Egypt. [Remember, you are Joseph or Mary.] Together decide on 6 items to pack for the Baby Jesus. Think carefully about what you really need to take. Don't forget: Your items might be heavy to carry or difficult to look after. You have 5 minutes to write on your cards the six things that you want to take. Remember to discuss this together.

PENCILS DOWN!

It's time to go! You can't take anything else. Bring your bag with you and climb onto a donkey. If you are Mary, you hold the Baby Jesus in your arms as well as your own bag. If you are Joseph, you carry your bag and the bag you hastily packed for the baby. You are on your way. Take a last look at your home. You are very unhappy because you have to leave friends behind, but there is nothing that you can do. You start to cry as you think about all the happy times that you spent with them and pray they will be safe.

The saddle is uncomfortable and the donkey bumps and stumbles along the road. Soon you realize that the donkey cannot carry so much weight. You pause and take one item out of each bag. You try to pick the item you will need the least. You discard it along the roadside hoping someone who needs it will find it and be able to use it. You have 2 minutes to do this. Discard one card from each bag into the center of the table. What do you have left?

You get back on your donkey and continue into the night. The donkeys have to climb steep mountains. They get slower and slower and suddenly a strange choking noise comes from the older donkey. It dies right there on the spot! Then the other donkey dies, too! You must continue the journey on foot, but you find that your bags are too heavy to carry. Make them lighter by taking the heaviest item out of each bag. You have 2 minutes to decide which items to leave behind. Discard another card from each bag into the center of the table. What do you have left?

Time is up! You need to start walking.

You struggle on but you find it harder and harder to keep going. Night has turned to day, and the desert sun is getting hotter and hotter. There has been no rain for more than a year so the roads are hard, full of holes and difficult to walk on. Mary slips and twists her ankle. She cannot go on without help. Joseph will have to carry all the bags. Joseph is strong, but he can't carry all three bags. One bag will have to be left behind. The two bags Joseph is carrying can each contain no more than 5 items. Redistribute the items into the two bags and discard what you can't carry. You have 3 minutes to sort this out. Now what do you have?

Again, your time is up! You have to keep going.

You walk for several days up and down mountains and across hot sand. Finally, you reach the shores of the Red Sea. You are overjoyed to see the fishing boats waiting at the dock. You know that safety awaits on the other shore in Egypt.

You meet a fisherman, but he will not let you get on his boat without payment. You have no money, but he agrees to let you on board in exchange for the most valuable thing in each bag. The boat is leaving in 2 minutes and you must decide what you will give him. Discard the most valuable item from each bag in the center of the table.

Time's up! You board the boat and set sail with a big sigh of relief. The boat is very small and the fisherman now says that you have too much luggage. You must lighten the load by throwing one of your bags overboard. You may keep up to 6 items in the one remaining bag. Redistribute your items and discard what you cannot keep. You have 4 minutes.

Toss that bag overboard! The boat is now light enough to carry you to the other shore. However, in a few minutes, a storm breaks out. The sea is rough and stormy. The boat starts to leak and sea water floods in. You manage to save your bag, but it is soaking wet and anything that could be damaged by water is ruined. You have 2 minutes to check the belongings in your bag and throw away anything that is ruined.

Finally, you have reached safety in Egypt! What do you have with you to begin your new life?

Reflection:

- What did you bring at the beginning of the journey?
- Did you bring the right things?
- Did you think about food and water?
- How did you feel when you had to give up your belongings?
- What was the most difficult part of the journey?
- How did you feel about what was happening to you?
- How did you feel at the end of the journey?
- How do you think the Holy Family felt?

TAKE A MOMENT TO RECORD ANYTHING YOU WANT TO REMEMBER FROM THE ACTIVITY.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

What struck you the most about either the mediation or the activity?

What surprised you the most about either?

Have you ever been in a situation similar to Mary and Joseph? Do you know anyone with a similar story?

CLOSING PRAYER SERVICE:

OPENING PRAYER:

Lord, descend on us and open our hearts to receiving your presence. Fill us with your Spirit.

Lord Jesus, you are the Breath of God. Descend on us and guide us in your ways.

Amen.

***O Come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.***

SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 2:2-4

In days to come, the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest mountain and raised above the hills. All nations shall stream toward it. Many peoples shall come and say: "Come, let us go up to the LORD's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths." For from Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and set terms for many peoples. They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; one nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you are the Peace of God. Descend on us and guide us in your ways. Amen.

***O come, O Wisdom from on high,
Who orders all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.***

SCRIPTURE READING: Wisdom 9:9-11

Now with you is Wisdom, who knows your works and was present when you made the world; who understands what is pleasing in your eyes and what is conformable with your commands. Send her forth from your holy heavens and from your glorious throne dispatch her that she may be with me and work with me, that I may know what is pleasing to you. For she knows and understands all things, and will guide me prudently in my affairs and safeguard me by her glory.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you are the Wisdom of God. Descend on us and guide us in your ways. Amen.

***O come, O come, our Lord of might,
Who to your tribes on Sinai's height
In ancient times did give the Law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.***

SCRIPTURE READING: Micah 6:6-8

With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow before God most high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with myriad streams of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my crime, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? You have been told, O mortal, what is good, and what the LORD requires of you: only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you are the Mercy of God. Descend on us and guide us in your ways. Amen.

***O come, o Branch of Jesse's stem;
From every foe deliver them
That trust your mighty power to save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.***

SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 11:1-9

But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD. Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide, but he shall judge the poor with justice, and

decide fairly for the land's afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked. Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips. Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat; the calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall graze, together their young shall lie down; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the viper's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair. They shall not harm or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea. On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the peoples— him the nations will seek out; his dwelling shall be glorious. On that day, the Lord shall again take it in hand to reclaim the remnant of his people that is left from Assyria and Egypt, Pathros, Ethiopia, and Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the isles of the sea.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you are the Deliverance of God. Descend on us and guide us in your ways. Amen.

***O come, O Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that sets us free,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.***

SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 9:2-6

You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest, as they exult when dividing the spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, the rod of their taskmaster, you have smashed, as on the day of Midian. For every boot that tramped in battle, every cloak rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for fire. For a child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, upon David's throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice, both now and forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you are the Hope of God. Descend on us and guide us in your ways. Amen.

***O come, O Dayspring from on high,
And cheer us by your drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadow put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.***

SCRIPTURE READING: Ezekiel 37:12c-14

I will make you come up out of your graves, my people, and bring you back to the land of Israel. You shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves and make you come up out of them, my people! I will put my spirit in you that you may come to life, and I will settle you in your land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD. I have spoken; I will do it—oracle of the LORD.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you are the Light of God. Descend on us and guide us in your ways. Amen.

***O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of humankind;
Make all our sad divisions cease,
And be for us the King of peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to you, O Israel.***

SCRIPTURE READING: Isaiah 49:1-6

Hear me, coastlands, listen, distant peoples. Before birth the LORD called me, from my mother's womb he gave me my name. He made my mouth like a sharp-edged sword, concealed me, shielded by his hand. He made me a sharpened arrow, in his quiver he hid me. He said to me, You are my servant, in you, Israel, I show my glory. Though I thought I had toiled in vain, for nothing and for naught spent my strength, yet my right is with the LORD, my recompense is with my God. For now the LORD has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb, that Jacob may be brought back to him and Israel gathered to him; I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God is now my strength! It is too little, he says, for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you are the Salvation of God. Descend on us and guide us in your ways. Amen.

Lord, descend on us and open our hearts to becoming your presence. Fill us with your Spirit.

Lord Jesus, you are the Breath of God. Descend on us and guide us in your ways. Amen.