

## Readings for the week of December 24, 2023

### Sunday:

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16/Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29/Rom 16:25-27/Lk 1:26-38

### Monday:

*Vigil:* Is 62:1-5/Ps 89:4-5, 16-17, 27, 29/  
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25/Mt 1:1-25 or 1:18-25  
*Night:* Is 9:1-6/Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13/  
Ti 2:11-14/Lk 2:1-14 *Dawn:* Is 62:11-12/Ps  
97:1, 6, 11-12/Ti 3:4-7/Lk 2:15-20 *Day:* Is  
52:7-10/Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6/Heb 1:1-6/Jn  
1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

### Tuesday:

Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59/Ps 31:3cd-4, 6 and  
8ab, 16bc and 17/Mt 10:17-22

### Wednesday:

1 Jn 1:1-4/Ps 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12/Jn 20:1a, 2-8

### Thursday:

1 Jn 1:5—2:2/Ps 124:2-3, 4-5, 7cd-8/  
Mt 2:13-18

### Friday:

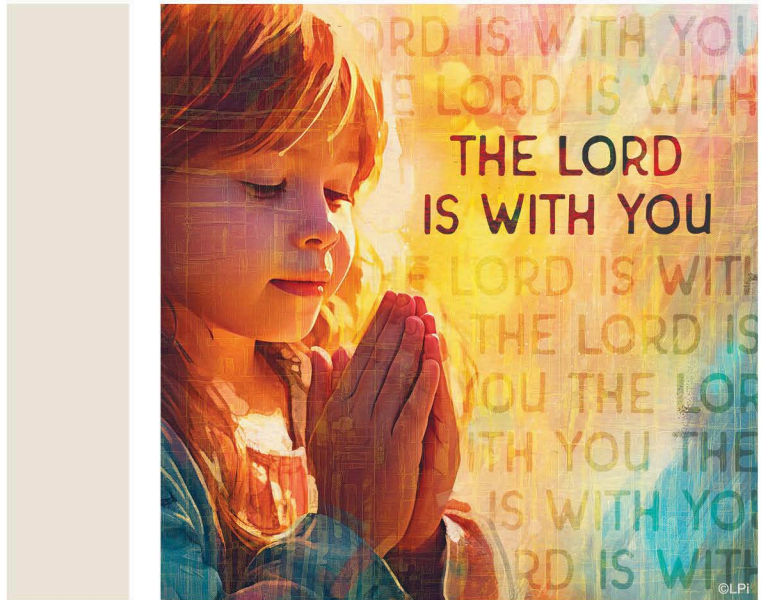
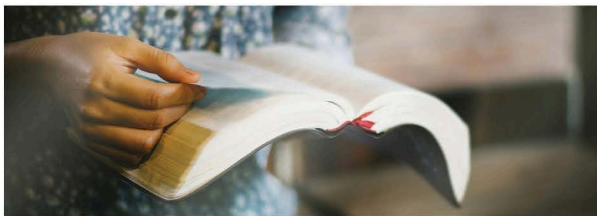
1 Jn 2:3-11/Ps 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 5b-6/  
Lk 2:22-35

### Saturday:

1 Jn 2:12-17/Ps 96:7-8a, 8b-9, 10/Lk 2:36-40

### Next Sunday:

Sir 3:2-6, 12-14 or Gn 15:1-6; 21:1-3/Ps  
128:1-2, 3, 4-5 or Ps 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9/  
Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17 or Heb 11:8, 11-12,  
17-19/Lk 2:22-40 or 2:22, 39-40



## Gospel Meditation

### Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

Life is troubling. Who among us has not struggled with anxiety and difficulties, sometimes massive ones? I certainly have, as have many of my loved ones. If we do, does this mean that we don't trust the Lord or just need to toughen up?

I don't think so. How encouraging for us anxious and troubled souls to hear Luke describe the Blessed Mother Mary in these words, **"But she was greatly troubled at what was said."** An archangel has visited her. An inconceivable promise has been made to her. Her life has become wildly unpredictable, perhaps more so than any person before or since. The first point for us: the Lord is with her precisely when she is troubled. Her anxiousness and God's presence are not mutually exclusive. Christianity is not about a trance-like robotic indifference. It's about the presence of divine love. Even in — especially in — troubled circumstances.

Our troubled soul can become our greatest treasure. What seems so troubling at first to Mary becomes the best possible thing, Jesus, the Savior and Lord, is now her son. All the difficulties and troubles remain, and yet her movement into the fullness of God is accelerated. What is troubling you right now? This scripture invites us now, this week, to hear the Lord's messenger say to us what he said to Mary, **"Do not be afraid! You have found favor with God."**

— *Father John Muir*

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## ( PRACTICING ) CATHOLIC

### What Is Your Fiat?

Are you an anxious people-pleaser prone to overcommitting yourself? Welcome to the club! We have slogans, and for your convenience I've listed them here:

"Sounds great!"

"No worries!"

"Absolutely, I can do that, not a problem!"

These are your go-to responses for when someone requests a favor that is a huge inconvenience, but you would rather die than disappoint. It's not exactly disingenuous — it's just a little neurotic. Again, welcome to the club.

You know who doesn't belong to this club? The Blessed Mother. For many reasons, I'm sure, but the biggest one is that she's always completely up-front. Take her response to the Angel Gabriel: "Let it be done."

If there are more powerful words than these, I can't think of them now. And yet, as responses go, this certainly isn't an enthusiastic one. There was never a human creature more willing to obey God than Mary, full of grace, so it makes it all the more striking that her response to Gabriel is this reserved — and it makes it all the more certain that she means exactly what she says.

*Let it be done.*

Not: Yes, this is exactly that I asked for!

Not: Nope. This sounds awful. Count me out.

But precisely this: If God is asking, my answer is yes.

The Angel Gabriel visits us all, in a way, at some point or another, bearing news we did not expect. When we can say, in the face of that uncertainty, "Let it be done," we are embracing our calling as disciples. We are becoming like Mary.

*"Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord." — Luke 1:38*

*Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman*

## Why do we do that? Catholic Life Explained

### Question:

Why do Catholics light candles in church?

### Answer:

Candles have been part of the Church's worship from the earliest times. In the days before electricity, candles and oil lamps were the ways that people lighted buildings. Even today, we often still depend on candles during power outages, relying on their flickering flames to bring light into the dark.

Like our ancestors, we also light candles on special occasions. Think about a festive family meal or a romantic dinner for two — there will often be candles on the table, special objects for a special event. We light candles on birthday cakes and carry them in processions. We also place candles at makeshift memorials that appear when there has been an accident or act of violence. In these moments, their light casts aside a different kind of darkness — the darkness of grief, fear, and death.

The custom of the early Christians lighting candles and lamps at the tombs of the martyrs gave way to the practice of having candles at Mass, honoring the sacredness of the celebration.

As Christians decorated their worship spaces with statues and icons, they would burn candles in front of sacred images and the relics of the saints, basically "shining a light" on what they held to be sacred. When pilgrims would visit these shrines, they would often bring candles to light before the image or relic. These candles came to be a symbol of the person, and their prayer and the burning these candles came to be understood as an extension and continuation of the prayer that was offered. What began as a practical way to provide light has come to be a symbol of the hopes, desires, loves, losses, fears, and faith of everyday Christians offering their prayers to God and his saints.

# Weekly Prayer

## Sunday's Readings

### First Reading:

“Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.” (2 Sm 28:16)

### Psalm:

For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord. (Ps 89)

### Second Reading:

The revelation of the mystery kept secret for long ages but now manifested through the prophetic writings and, according to the command of the eternal God, made known to all nations to bring about the obedience of faith. (Rom 16:25-26)

### Gospel:

“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.” (Lk 1:31)

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## Live The Liturgy Inspiration of the Week

God's plans are not always what we imagined. Sometimes they make us hesitate. Be like Mary. Say “Yes, Lord” — and God will show you that His imagination is better than yours.

## Observances for the week of December 24, 2023

- Sunday:** 4th Sunday of Advent; Christmas Eve  
**Monday:** The Nativity of the Lord  
**Tuesday:** St. Stephen, First Martyr  
**Wednesday:** St. John, Apostle and Evangelist  
**Thursday:** The Holy Innocents, Martyrs  
**Friday:** St. Thomas Becket, Bishop and Martyr  
**Next Sunday:** The Holy Family; New Year's Eve



## Saint of the week

Servant of God Michelle Christine Duppong worked as a FOCUS missionary and a lay parish minister in the early 2000's. Her life was a testament to her commitment to God and social justice work. She died at age 31 in 2015 but her legacy lives on today in those whose lives she touched.

## Prayer

Jesus, I praise and thank you for the life of your servant Michelle Duppong. In her life and suffering, she joined you in your thirst for souls and embraced the cross offered to her. Following her example, I ask for the special grace of [personal intercession] and, if it brings you greater glory, that she be honored by your Church. Jesus, I ask this in your Holy Name.

Amen.

*-With ecclesiastical approval of Bishop David D. Kagan, Diocese of Bismarck*

(Prayer Source: <https://bismarckdiocese.com/prayer-of-intercession>)



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.”

- Lk 1:35

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## Questions of the Week

Invite Parishioners to Reflect and Respond to Scripture

### First Reading

We hear how God established his covenantal promise with King David to raise up a son after him and ensure that David’s house and kingdom will stand firm forever. What promises have you kept with family or friends?

### Second Reading

Paul concludes his letter to the Romans with a hymn of praise to God. As Advent draws to a close, for what can you praise God?

### Gospel Reading

Today’s Gospel reading is the annunciation to Mary of the upcoming birth of Jesus. Mary’s unconditional acceptance offers us a model to follow. How open are you to God’s work in your life?



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FOREVER  
I WILL SING YOUR  
*goodness.*

PSALM 89



Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father.” - Lk 1:30-32

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