



23 December 2021 CHRISTMAS NOVENA – Eighth Day Year C

GOD NEVER LETS PEOPLE DOWN

On this eighth day of our Novena, as we rejoice with Elizabeth and Zechariah over the birth of the baby John, we are invited to reflect on God's faithfulness to His promises. God never lets anybody down. The whole history of salvation is a glorious record of the fulfillment of His promises.

The Lord's faithfulness is also a reminder for us to finally become dependable people who keep their promises to God and people, no matter what the cost. John the Baptist was faithful to his calling and mission even at the cost of his life. So was Jesus. So should we be, if we want to deserve the title of "Disciples of the Lord," the Faithful One. In this Eucharist, let us ask for all the people we love and ourselves the grace to be faithful to our baptismal promises.



INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon

(To be recited only when no Entrance Hymn is sung.)

A child shall be born for us, and he will be called God, the Almighty; every tribe of the earth shall be blest in him.

Greeting

P –The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all!
All–**And with your spirit!**

Penitential Act

P –Christmas is just two days away. Let us pause for a moment and realize how much more we should do to make the Lord really welcome in our lives. *(Pause)*

P –For our failure to listen to your word and put it into practice, Lord, have mercy!

All–**Lord, have mercy!**

P –For our failure to give a good example at home and in the place of work, Christ, have mercy!

All–**Christ, have mercy!**

P –For the divisions and rivalries that set us one against the other, Lord, have mercy!

All–**Lord, have mercy!**

P –May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and bring us to everlasting life.

All–**Amen!**

Gloria

All–Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will. We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you, we give you thanks for your great glory, Lord God, heavenly King, O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son, Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Fa-

ther, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us; you take away the sins of the world, receive our prayer; you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen!

Collect (Opening Prayer)

P –Almighty and everlasting God, as the nativity of your Son according to flesh draws near, grant our humble prayer, that we may know the mercy of the Word incarnate, who took flesh of the Virgin Mary and came to dwell among us.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All–**Amen!**

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LITURGY OF THE WORD



1st Reading *Mal 3:1-4.23-24*

Malachi, the last of the prophets, tells us that the coming of the Messiah was to be preceded by a "return" of Elijah, the "Prophet of fire." Here is how he describes the mission of the Lord's Messenger whom Christian tradition identifies with John the Baptist.

R –A proclamation from the Book of the Prophet Malachi

Thus says the Lord God:

Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me; and suddenly there will come to the temple the Lord whom you seek, and the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. Yes, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who will endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears? For he is like the refiner's fire, or like the fuller's lye. He will sit refining and purifying silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, refining them like gold or like silver that they may offer due sacrifice to the Lord. Then the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem will please the Lord, as in the days of old, as in years gone by.

Lo, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and terrible day, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with doom.

The Word of the Lord!
All—Thanks be to God!

Responsorial Psalm *Ps 25*

R –*Lift up your heads and see; your redemption is near at hand!*

R. M. Velez



*** Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths, guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my savior.** **R.**

*** Good and upright is the Lord; thus he shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice, he teaches the humble his way.** **R.**

*** All the paths of the Lord are kindness and constancy toward those who keep his covenant and his decrees. The friendship of the Lord is with those who fear him, and his covenant, for their instruction.** **R.**

Gospel Acclamation

All—Alleluia! Alleluia!

O, King of all nations and keystone of the Church: come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!

Alleluia! Alleluia!

Gospel *Lk 1:57-66*

The birth of John the Baptist proved the Lord's faithfulness to His promise and filled the baby's parents, their relatives and friends with great rejoicing. We are all invited to share in their happiness.

P –The Lord be with you!

All—And with your spirit!

P –A proclamation from the holy Gospel according to Luke

All—Glory to you, O Lord!

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her.

When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immedi-

ately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God.

Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.

The Gospel of the Lord!
All—Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

Homily

Prayer of the Faithful

P –The birth of John was a decisive step in the fulfillment of God's promise to send the Messiah. Mindful of the Lord's faithfulness, let us pray for the grace to treasure this moral quality in our lives:

All—Lord, make us faithful like You!

C –That the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Father, may be ever more faithful to her mission to be the instrument of salvation for all mankind, let us pray! **R.**

C –That all the priests and religious may be shining examples of faithfulness to their vows to live the radical demands of the Gospel, let us pray! **R.**

C –That in our families, husbands and wives may bring about the unity and harmony between themselves and among their children through their mutual faithfulness and dedication, let us pray! **R.**

C –That all teachers, catechists, and youth leaders may honor their commitment to give their very best for the proper formation of all the children and young people entrusted to their care, let us pray! **R.**

C –That all those who work to promote peace and justice in the world may reap the fruit of their labors, let us pray! **R.**

C –Let us pray in silence for our personal intentions.
(Pause)

Let us pray! **R.**

P –Lord God, enkindle in us a greater desire to see the fulfillment of Your promise and the determination to imitate You, who are the Faithful One who live and reign for ever and ever.
All–Amen!



Preparation of the Gifts

P –Pray, brethren . . .
All–May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P –Lord God, let the sacrifice you have given as the full expression of the Church’s worship establish us firmly in your peace, that we may celebrate with untroubled hearts the coming birth of our savior, who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
All–Amen!

Preface of Advent II

P –It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For all the oracles of the prophets foretold him, the Virgin Mother longed for him with love beyond all telling, John the Baptist sang of his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came.

It is by his gift that already we rejoice at the mystery of his Nativity, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the

hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:
All–Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!

Memorial Acclamation

P –The mystery of faith!
All–When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again!



All–Our Father . . .

P –Deliver us, Lord . . .

All–For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

Sign of Peace

Breaking of the Bread

All–Lamb of God . . .

Communion

P –Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

All–Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

(To be recited only when no Communion Hymn is sung.)

Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if anyone hears my voice and opens the door to me, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.

Prayer after Communion

P –Grant pardon and peace, O Lord, to those you have fed with heavenly gifts, so that, at the coming of your beloved Son, we may hasten to greet him with lamps alight in our hands.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.
All–Amen!



P –The Lord be with you.
All–And with your spirit!

P –Bow your heads and pray for God’s blessing.
(Pause)

–May the Lord give you courage and strength to overcome all the difficulties of life.

All–Amen!

P –May He protect you from all dangers and keep you faithful to your duties.

All–Amen!

P –May He lead you in the path of holiness and peace.

All–Amen!

P –May almighty God bless you: the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All–Amen!

P –Go in peace to serve the Lord with faithful love.

All–Thanks be to God!

MAY THESE CHRISTMAS ITEMS HELP US PUT JESUS AT THE CENTER OF OUR CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS!



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JOY WITHOUT END IN THE HOUSE OF ELIZABETH AND ZECHARIAH

Elizabeth's pregnancy in her old age must have been much talked about in Ain Karim and possibly beyond it. Coupled with the loss of speech in Zechariah, it was definitely something so unusual as to border on the unbelievable. Curious people had so many questions to ask of Elizabeth that she decided to remain "unavailable" in her house. And perhaps she herself had her own questions: What if all that was just a self-delusion? Was her baby going to be "normal" or deformed? Stories abounded of children born late in life who were born handicapped either physically or mentally

Nor was Zechariah of much help to her. All along, the poor man was clamped in a barrier of silence that made communication even more difficult. He, too, had his hard questions to grapple with, as he kept wondering where he had gone wrong and how all the big things said by the angel about the boy to be born could become a reality.

The visit of Mary with all that happened during the first encounter **had done much to dispel doubts. The Holy Spirit had clarified many things to all and confirmed that, indeed, the child that Elizabeth was carrying was the object of God's special design.** Uncertainty and anxiety had given way to hope and expectation.

And when finally the baby was born, everything turned out better than expected. The baby was a boy, as the angel had foretold. He was perfectly healthy and his presence filled the hearts of his mother and father with unspeakable happiness.

God had indeed kept His promise! The whole event became for everybody a source of rejoicing and celebration.

Everybody was bursting with joy, especially Elizabeth. All her doubts and uncertainties had vanished. Now she felt as happy and fulfilled as any mother does when she gives birth to her first child. Zechariah also was deeply happy. But his happiness could only be seen. It could not be heard, for the poor man was still unable to speak. Everybody pitied him, but Zechariah kept clinging to a last branch of hope as he looked forward to the fulfillment of the last part of the angel's promise. (See Lk 1:20.)

Even that final cloud dissipated on the day of John's circumcision, eight days after his birth. All kept debating about the merits of Elizabeth's proposal to name the child "**John**" (**God is gracious**), rather than "Zechariah Junior," as the tradition would have mandated. The elderly father could not participate in the debate, for his lips were still sealed. But he had the key to the solution, for he was the one who had the legal right to decide on the child's name. "**His name is John,**" he wrote solemnly on the tablet they had handed to him.

The short sentence **did much more than settle the dispute on his son's name. It was a profession of faith in God's goodness.** This is why it loosened the fetters that had been crippling Zechariah's tongue since the vision in the Temple. For the first time after nine months, everybody could hear his voice as **he praised the Lord for His perfect faithfulness to His promises.**

Zechariah's miraculous recovery of his ability to talk capped the series of extraordinary events that had surrounded the conception and birth of the child. Clearly, through those happenings, God was sending a message not only to Zechariah and Elizabeth, but to a much greater audience. **God was in action, preparing something even more marvelous to be manifested in the future.**

What such a "marvelous thing" would be was anybody's guess. So people kept asking, "What will this child be?" The question had already been answered by the angel in the temple. The people would see the fulfillment of that additional promise thirty years later when Jesus, the Messiah, began his apostolic ministry. Zechariah and Elizabeth would no longer be around when that prophecy also was fulfilled. But as they closed their eyes to the light of the sun, they did not have the least doubt that what the angel said would come to pass in its own time. They knew by experience that **God always keeps His promises. This is something we, too, should never forget.**

Jess P. Balon

Advent/Christmas Trivia

POSADAS ("PANUNULUYAN")

The word *posada* means "shelter" or "lodging." This Advent custom, popular throughout the Spanish-speaking world, reenacts Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and their search for lodging along the way. The ritual lasts for nine days (December 16-24), representing the months of Mary's pregnancy. A group of people travels from house to house on their route, taking the role of pilgrims seeking lodging. Those inside the



homes are innkeepers who turn them away. At the last home, all are invited in for prayer and refreshments.

In the Philippines, this custom is called "*panunuluyan*" (from the rootword "*tuloy*," which means welcome). "Mary" and "Joseph" are accompanied by a group of people, while they sing and pray in front of every house they stop at. However, versions of this custom may vary from place to place.

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