



## Saint Joseph Catholic Church

P. O. Box 365 117 South Main St.

Loreauville, Louisiana 70552

(337) 229-4254

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Rev. Barry F. Crochet, Pastor

Rev. Godwin Nzeh CMF, Associate Pastor

Deacon Roland Jeanlouis, Pastoral Associate

[pastor@stjosephparishonline.org](mailto:pastor@stjosephparishonline.org)

[stjosephparishonline.org](http://stjosephparishonline.org)

### MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday Vigil Mass — 4:00 p.m.

Sunday — 7:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

9:00 a.m. at Our Lady of Victory

Monday — 6:45 a.m. at Our Lady of Victory

Tuesday — 5:30 p.m. at Saint Joseph

Wednesday — 6:45 a.m. at Saint Joseph

Thursday — 5:30 p.m. at Saint Joseph

Friday — 6:45 a.m. at Our Lady of Victory

First Saturday — 8:00 a.m. at Our Lady of Victory

### SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

Every Saturday from 3:00 p.m. to 3:40 p.m. and one-half hour before all weekday Masses, or by appointment during office hours.

### OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Thursday — 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

If possible please conduct parish business by phone or email.

### RECEPTIONIST/BOOKKEEPER/CEMETERIAN

Mrs. Gail Borel — [gail.borel@stjosephparishonline.org](mailto:gail.borel@stjosephparishonline.org)

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Mrs. Sherry Hebert — [sherry.hebert@stjosephparishonline.org](mailto:sherry.hebert@stjosephparishonline.org)

### EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION

The Adoration Chapel has reopened. The Main Church is also accessible from this entrance for your convenience.

### FUNERALS

Please contact the Church Office to make Funeral Service arrangements prior to your appointment with the Funeral Home.

### SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

Please contact the Church Office to make arrangements for your child's Baptism.

### SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

Please contact the Church Office six months prior to the desired date of marriage. No dates for marriage are reserved until after the first marriage interview with clergy.

### SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK

Please contact the Church Office to set up an appointment.



Grant Your faithful, we pray,  
almighty God, the resolve to run  
forth to meet Your Christ with  
righteous deeds at His coming,  
so that, gathered at His right  
hand, they may be worthy to  
possess the heavenly Kingdom.

### *Please pray for our parish family members who are sick:*

Stuart Sandoz, Duffy Domingue, Eric Clements,  
David Louviere, Trevor Louviere, Austin Willett,  
Wiley Poirrier, Inez Barras, Butch and Debbie  
White, Lydia May, Louis "CoCo" Landry Jr.,  
Rowena Borel, Falyon Sonnier, Caline Provost,  
Patricia Freyou, Lelia Broussard, Roshondra  
Nora, Noah Abraham, Jimmy LeBlanc, Chad  
Borel, Ashley Hebert, Stephen Dugas, Jade  
Delcambre, Pat and Elaine Villerman, Ira

Bourque, Hailey Thomasee, Lon Prioux,  
Brennan Wingfield, Betty Suire, Joe Judice, Mike  
Habetz, Lori Brasseaux, Jamie Brady, Lisa N.  
Dugas, Nona Bourque, Leroy Begnaud, Betty  
Champagne, Keri Bonin Boutte, Leroy and  
Gloria Courville, Anna Richard, Wayne LeBlanc,  
Melvin Broussard, June Granger, Max Borres, T-  
Boy and Diane Leger, Vivian LeBlanc, Beckie  
LeBaron, Patricia Sorrell, Ned Dugas, Ted

Habetz, David Dupuy, Hazel LeBlanc, Ava Rose  
and Olivia James Dworaczyk, Ray Broussard,  
Anne Adcock Hebert, Shyla Romero, Curt  
Tauzin, Randy Jett, Nicholas Richard, Bart  
Doucet, Ellenor Hebert, Jory L. Bernard,  
Annette Dugas, Kayla Barras Veronie, Glen  
Adcock, Jamie Ransonet, Lawrence Albert, Joan  
Arceneaux, Robert LeBlanc, Sr., Francis Crochet.

**November 20, 2022**

<b>Regular Sunday Offering Envelopes</b>	\$ 4,141.00
<b>Regular Sunday Offering Loose</b>	\$ 2,698.00
<b>Regular Collection Total</b>	\$ 6,839.00
<b>Weekly Budget</b>	\$ 7,385.00
<b>Difference</b>	-\$ 546.00
<b>Present Loan Balance</b>	\$ 235,134.85
<b>Donation Against Loan Balance</b>	\$ 1,300.00
<b>Insurance Balance 2022-2023</b>	\$ 33,714.00
<b>Insurance Collection</b>	\$ 10.00

**The Sanctuary Lamp is burning for**

For the Community

**The Vocation Chalice is at the Adoration Chapel**

*Please pray for vocations. If you would like to have the vocation chalice  
in your home please call the rectory office at 229-4254*

**The Bi-Monthly Statue is in the home of**

Parishioners

**Flowers on the Altar are in loving memory of**

Eric Champagne, Lisa Adcock, Dot Bourque Boutte

**Saint Joseph Altar Candles are burning for**

Chad Romero, Deyna Champagne, Harold Champagne

Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants

and Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priest, Religious

Vance Breaux Sr., Lynn and Theresa Delcambre Families

Martha Escagne Rodriguez, Special Intention

Louto and Anite Gondron, Ovide Lancon, Lori Albert,

Steve and Donna Berard Special Intention

### Mass Intentions — 11/26 — 12/3

**Saturday 4:00 p.m.** — Clarence and Hilda Landry, Steve and Donna Berard, special Intension, Souls in Purgatory, Walter and Doris M. Judice, Judy Douet, Ronald, Louis and Mae Mae Broussard, T-Boy Leger, Jeffery and Theresa Viator, Mr. and Mrs. Roland Hebert, Gloria Albert (Special Intention), Nick LeBlanc, Jr. Family, Terry and Michael, Cobey Braquet, LeBlanc and Braquet Families, Doris Boutte Barras, Ossie Romero, Jr., Daisy and Perfice Armentor, Delores Simon, Craig Breaux, Sidney Breaux Family, Pauline B. Guidry, Roslie LeJeune, John Lacour, Special Intention, Billy Degeyter, Chester “Butch” Gonsoulin and Parents, Muchie Ransonet, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Clyde Hebert, Lucille Landry Hebert, Audrie Hebert Delahoussaye, Ancestors and Descendants, Robert Lee Prados, Lucille Breaux Prados, Nola Champagne, Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Landry and Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Elvage Prados, Matilda Prados and Becky Doucet Ancestors and Descendants, Gloria and Sam Delcambre and Family, Otto Sr. and Laurence Girouard, Terradot Family, Theresa Girouard Allen, Dr. J. R. Hebert, Perry Judice, Lorrain Breaux Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Ronald Albert, Johnny Albert Sr. Family, John V. Perez Family, Chad Romero, Deyna Champagne, Harold Champagne, Paul Crochet Family, Jordan Prince and Special Intention, Vance Breaux Sr., Sally Domingue, Cabrol and Domingue Family, Martha Escagne Rodriguez, Melvin Dugas, Roy Sr. and Gladys Berard, Lloyd and Anne Broussard, Simon and Felicie Granger, Forbus and Myrtle Mestayer, Kay Dooley and William and Dolores Dooley, Kim Decuir, Leed and Mabel Gondron, Carolyn Aquillard.

**Sunday 7:00 a.m.** — Suzette Judice, Dr. Harold and Kathleen Heitkamp, Breaux and Delcambre Families, Sandra Daigle, Maedale Maturin Neal, Jimmy Clifton, Clifton and Shirley Maturin Family, John Michael Steiner, Jay Gonsoulin Family, Paul Sonnier Family and Clyde Warfel Family, Antoine “Boy” LeBlanc Family, Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Albert Sr., Joe and Rita Habetz, Mary Kay Habetz, Thomas Voorhies, Tommy Breaux, Virginia Landry, Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry, Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope,

Priests, Religious, Maude Granger and Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Granger, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Granger Dr. Raymond Schneider, Elaine Schneider, Skip Schneider, Lolly Harbin, S.J. “Bute” Granger, Junius and Mary Hebert, Lovell Romero.

**10:30 a.m.** — Larry Crochet, Eric Champagne, Goldie T. Bonin, Leroy J. Bonin, Janell B. Broussard, Vance Rodriguez, Albert Rodriguez, Dr. J. R. Romero, Talmon Vice, Lori Albert, Louto Louviere, Jr., Glen Martin, Gondron and Deville Family Ancestors and Descendants, Holy Souls in Purgatory, Wayne Guillory and Mathilde Romero, Pliny and Caroline Breaux Walet, Patrick and Theresa Melancon Latiolais, Pliny Walet Family, Louis Breaux, Sr., Fly, Anthony Melancon, Sr., Cathy Defelice, Tracey Defelice Guilbeau, Sandra Angelle and Glenn Angelle, Angelle Family.

**Monday 6:45 a.m. OLV** — Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Brian Derouen.

**Tuesday 5:30 p.m. StJo** — Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, John and Doris Prados, Jason Suarez Family, Cameron Barrilleaux Family, Destani Armstrong Family.

**Wednesday 6:45 a.m. StJo** — Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families Ancestors and Descendants, John Michael Steiner, Andrew “Toupee” Bonin, Roy and Michael Thibodeaux, Lily Mae Richard.

**Thursday 8:00 a.m. StJo** — Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Glinda and Roy Guidry.

**First Friday 6:45 a.m. OLV** — Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families Ancestors and Descendants, Judice and Walet Families, Donna and Steve Berard Ancestors and Descendants, Lenette, Sr. and Anita Grivat, Special Intention, Gam and Velma Gondron, Pliny Walet, Carolyn B. Walet, Ancestors and Descendants, Rhule, Mabel and Wayne Gondron, Wade & Lou Dupre, Brian Robichaux, Jane Watkins, Claire Landry, Milton Martinez, Bishop Warren Boudreaux, Bishop Joseph Latino, Msgr. John Newfield, Msgr. Francis Amedee, Msgr. Andrew Frey, Rev. Albert Richardson, Msgr. Richard Soseman, Fr. Varin Slacke OFM, Ruben Rogers, Elizabeth Capps Rogers, Wayne Rogers, Alfred Crochet, Claude Hebert, Cecile Hebert, Deacon Jay Bergeron, Archbishop Harry Flynn, Sue Crochet.

**First Saturday 8:00 a.m. OLV** — Lloyd and Maudrey Landry, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families, Ancestors and Descendants, Mark and Penny Landry Ancestors and Descendants, Souls in Purgatory, Pope, Priests, Religious, Clarence and Nola Champagne Families Ancestors and Descendants, Donna and Steve Berard, Ancestors and Descendants, Wade & Lou Dupre, Brian Robichaux, Jane Watkins, Claire Landry, Milton Martinez, Bishop Warren Boudreaux, Bishop Joseph Latino, Msgr. John Newfield, Msgr. Francis Amedee, Msgr. Andrew Frey, Rev. Albert Richardson, Msgr. Richard Soseman, Fr. Varin Slacke OFM, Ruben Rogers, Elizabeth Capps Rogers, Wayne Rogers, Alfred Crochet, Claude Hebert, Cecile Hebert, Deacon Jay Bergeron, Archbishop Harry Flynn, Sue Crochet.

  
**Happy Birthday Fr. Crochet**  
**November 28**



### MINISTERS FOR NEXT WEEK

	Readers	Eucharistic Ministers	Altar Servers
December 3 4:00 p.m.	Jana Angelle	Brad Clifton	Volunteers
December 4 7:00 a.m.	Kyle Mestayer	Lynn Delcambre	Volunteers
10:30 a.m.	Brynn Blanchard	Joel Dugas	Volunteers
Immaculate Conception December 8 12:10 p.m.	Fran Dugas	Margaret Bonin	Volunteers
6:00 p.m.	Claudette Thibodeaux	Carolyn Roseberry	Volunteers

### Please pray for our Priests, Seminarians and Deacons

Eternal Father, we lift up to You these special men. Sanctify them. Heal and guide them. Mold them into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus, the Eternal High Priest. May their lives be pleasing to You. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

November 27	Rev. Edward Duhon/Brent Didier Deacon Jim Kinsel
November 28	Rev. Jacob Dumont, LC/Carter Domingue Deacon Brian Kirk
November 29	Rev. Nicholas Dupre/John Dugas Deacon Robert Klingman
November 30	Rev. Gilbert Dutel/Tré Fontenot Deacon Denis Lacroix
December 1	Pope Francis/ Rev. Blake Dubroc, Dir. of Vocations and Seminarians Dcn. Dennis Landry
December 2	Pope Emeritus Benedict/ Seminary Faculty, Parents, and Seminarian Benefactors Dcn. Barry Leblanc
December 3	Bishop J. Douglas Deshotel/Brother John Paul Fruge Dcn. Joshua Leblanc



### Catholic Daughters Angel Tree

The Catholic Daughters are providing Angel Cards to raise money for our Court. The cards can be dedicated in Memory of a loved one or in honor of someone for whom you want extra prayers. The cards will be hung on a Christmas tree in the church vestibule beginning the First Week of Advent. The cards will be a reminder for everyone to pray for these people.



We are accepting any donations. Contact any CDA member or check with the Parish Office to obtain the cards.

## ADVENT MISSION

Tuesday, November 29 through  
Thursday, December 1, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church, Loreauville, Louisiana

Fr. Neil Arce is Filipino and was ordained for and served in the Diocese of Beaumont, Texas. He is currently the Moderator of a contemplative eremitical community of the *Beloved Disciples of Jesus* in the Archdiocese of Capiz in the Philippines. It is a community inspired by Blessed Charles de Foucauld's spirituality. He lives in Jesus Caritas Hermitage in the mountains of Matinabus, Sigma, Capiz. He preaches retreats and lectures on spirituality and theology in the United States and Latin American countries. Fr. Neil also teaches at the seminary in the Archdiocese of Capiz.

### Topic of Advent Mission: *Spiritual Awakening*

Let us explore our Christian life as a life lived for God the Father, through Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus by the Power of the Holy Spirit.



# Calendar of Events

**Sunday, November 27, 2022**

*First Sunday of Advent*

**Tuesday, November 29, 2022**

*Advent Parish Mission*

Fr. Neil Arce

6:30 p.m.

Our Lady of Victory Church

**Wednesday, November 30, 2022**

*Advent Parish Mission*

Fr. Neil Arce

6:30 p.m.

Our Lady of Victory Church

*The Light Is On For You*

Extra Confession Time

5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

**Thursday, December 1, 2022**

*Advent Parish Mission*

Fr. Neil Arce

6:30 p.m.

Our Lady of Victory Church

**Friday, December 2, 2022**

*First Friday Mass*

6:45 a.m.

Our Lady of Victory Church

**Saturday, December 3, 2022**

*First Saturday Mass*

8:00 a.m.

Our Lady of Victory Church

*Christmas In The Village*

5:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.

Downtown Loreauville

**Sunday, December 4, 2022**

*Second Sunday of Advent*

**Wednesday, December 7, 2022**

*Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception*

[Holy Day of Obligation]

Confessions — 5:30 p.m.

Vigil Mass — 6:00 p.m.

OLV Church

*The Light Is On For You*

Extra Confession Time

5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

**Thursday, December 8, 2022**

*Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception*

[Holy Day of Obligation]

Confessions — 11:15 a.m.

Mass — 12:10 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

Confessions — 5:00 p.m.

Mass — 6:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

**Sunday, December 11, 2022**

*Third Sunday of Advent*

**Tuesday, December 13, 2022**

*Confirmation Mass*

Bishop Douglas Deshotel

6:30 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

**Wednesday, December 14, 2022**

*The Light Is On For You*

Extra Confession Time

5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

**Sunday, December 18, 2022**

*Fourth Sunday of Advent*

**Wednesday, December 21, 2022**

*The Light Is On For You*

Extra Confession Time

5:30 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

**Saturday, December 24, 2022**

*Christmas Eve*

[Holy Day of Obligation]

NO Confessions

Christmas Vigil Mass — 4:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church and

Our Lady of Victory Church

NO Confessions

Christmas Mass During the Night

6:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

**Sunday, December 25, 2022**

*Solemnity of the Nativity of Our Lord*

[Holy Day of Obligation]

Christmas Mass at Dawn — 7:00 a.m.

Saint Joseph Church

Christmas Day Mass — 9:00 a.m.

Our Lady of Victory Church

**Saturday, December 31, 2022**

*Solemnity of Mary*

[Holy Day of Obligation]

Confessions — 3:00 p.m.

Vigil Mass — 4:00 p.m.

Saint Joseph Church

**Sunday, January 1, 2023**

*Solemnity of Mary, Mother God*

[Holy Day of Obligation]

Mass — 7:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Saint Joseph Church

9:00 a.m.

Our Lady of Victory Church



# "If I Were the Devil"

In 1965, the famous radio personality Paul Harvey presented a program entitled "If I Were the Devil." It is amazing to realize how over 57 years ago he accurately prophesied the future spiritual condition of the United States. Many of his statements were considered ridiculously outlandish at that time in history. Yet, where do we find ourselves today? He says:

If I were the devil ... If I were the Prince of Darkness, I'd want to engulf the whole world in darkness. And I'd have a third of its real estate, and four-fifths of its population, but I wouldn't be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree — You.

So I'd set about to take over the United States. I'd subvert the churches first beginning with a campaign of whispers. With the wisdom of a serpent, I would whisper to you as I whispered to Eve: 'Do as you please.'

To the young, I would whisper that 'The Bible is a myth.' I would convince them that man created God instead of the other way around. I would confide that what's bad is good, and what's good is bad. And the elderly I would teach to pray, after me, 'Our Father, who art in Washington ...'

And then I'd get organized. I'd educate authors in how to make explicit literature exciting, so that anything else would appear dull and uninteresting. I'd threaten TV with dirtier movies ... I'd pedal narcotics to whom I could. I'd sell alcohol to ladies and gentlemen of distinction. I'd tranquilize the rest with pills.

If I were the devil, I'd soon have families at war with themselves, churches at war with themselves, and nations at war with themselves; until each in its

turn was consumed. And with promises of higher ratings I'd have mesmerizing media fanning the flames.

If I were the devil, I would encourage schools to refine young intellects, but neglect to discipline emotions — just let those run wild, until before you knew it, you'd have to have drug sniffing dogs and metal detectors at every schoolhouse door.

Within a decade I'd have prisons overflowing, I'd have judges promoting pornography — soon I could evict God from the courthouse, then from the schoolhouse, and then from the Houses of Congress. And in His own churches I would substitute psychology for religion and glorify science. I would lure priests and pastors into misusing boys and girls, and church money. If I were the devil, I'd make the symbol of Easter an egg and the symbol of Christmas a reindeer or a tree.

If I were the devil, I'd take from those who have, and give to those who want until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious.

And what do you bet I could get whole states to promote gambling as the way to get rich? I would caution against extremes and hard work. I would caution against Patriotism and moral conduct. I would convince the young that marriage is old-fashioned, that lust is more fun — that what you see on TV is the way to be. And thus, I could undress you in public, and I could lure you into bed with diseases for which there is no cure. In other words, if I were the devil, I'd just keep right on doing what he's doing.



## From Darkness to Light: An Advent Meditation by Dr. Holly Ordway

As is so often the case, the world gets things exactly reversed. From before Thanksgiving to December 25, it's all about buying, and doing, and buying more stuff, so that by Christmas, everybody is exhausted. Then the carols stop and the decorations come down, emphasizing the post-holiday letdown.

But the Church knows better. During Advent, we wait; we prepare; we reflect. On Christmas Day, we *begin* to celebrate Christmas, and we keep on celebrating for twelve days, till the feast of the Epiphany on January 6. In fact, in the ancient tradition of the Church, the season continues until February 2, Candlemas — exactly forty days after Christmas. Advent, Christmas, and Candlemas form almost a mirror image of Lent and Easter. As in Lent we reflect on the Crucifixion and Resurrection, so during Advent, Christmas, and Candlemas we reflect on the Incarnation.

The word “advent” means “arrival”: we await the arrival of Our Lord Jesus Christ — both past and future. Past: because at Christmas, we celebrate the Birth of Jesus, for He is not an idea or a metaphor, but truly God and truly man, an individual, specific man born on a particular day in history. Future: because we look forward to Our Lord's Second Coming, on the Last Day, when all the dead will be resurrected either to eternal life or to eternal punishment — Heaven or Hell. It's an unsettling thought, but also a clarifying one: it *matters* whether we live and die in friendship with God or in rejection and opposition to Him. That's why the traditional themes of Advent — Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell — are serious ones, and why Advent is a partially penitential season: the three purple candles and corresponding priestly vestments are the same color used during Lent.

And so, during Advent, we should be reflecting that our earthly life will come to an end — either in our own death, or in the Coming of the Lord. Are we like the wise virgins in the parable, who had their lamps full of oil, ready to meet the

Bridegroom? Or are we like the foolish virgins, who didn't give it a thought and were unprepared and left outside when the Bridegroom came?

The Church has a great tradition of helping us to prepare, by the Great “O” Antiphons, which are short prayers that show different aspects of Who Christ is. Here, I've chosen just one of the antiphons to reflect on .

### ***O Clavis (O Key of David)***

*O Key of David, and Sceptre of the house of Israel; that openest, and no man shutteth, and shuttest, and no man openeth: come and bring the prisoner out of the prison-house, and him that sitteth in darkness and the shadow of death.*

O Clavis is the fourth Antiphon in the sequence, which means it stands at the turning-point; it is perhaps the most significant of the Antiphons, as it sums up our problem and Christ's promise; it helps us to understand why the words of the Prophet Isaiah are so important for Christmas: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

Sadness, grief, and suffering are part of human life, but in our modern day, we often don't really know how to deal with sadness. We want a quick fix, to feel better right away, and that not only puts pressure on ourselves when we feel low, it also puts terrible pressure on *other people* to pretend that they're doing okay when really they're not. We walk in the darkness and the shadow of death, and pretend we're in the sunshine.

Now, I want to say straightaway that depression is a complex issue. Sometimes there's a biochemical component, for which medication can help a great deal. Sometimes it's linked to other medical or psychological concerns, as in post-partum depression or post-traumatic stress. It is always good to offer up our suffering to Christ, but when depression is deep or long-lasting we should *also* seek help as needed and encourage others to do so.

What I want to focus on here is the spiritual experience of depression.

Depression is not the same thing as ordinary sadness or a bad mood. It often seems to come out of nowhere, not related to any specific cause: a very common image is the “black dog” that

just comes round to visit sometimes. Just saying “cheer up!” to someone suffering from depression is cruel. If I'm depressed, I would very much like to cheer up, but I can't — that's the problem! And saying “Think about all the things you can be grateful for!” doesn't help either. Okay, now I think about those things, and I still feel depressed, but now I also feel *guilty* for being depressed.

The truth is that many of us experience depression at times, or in ways, that are not life-threatening but are still difficult and distressing.

That's one of the reasons why “the prisoner sitting in the darkness and shadow of death” is such a profound image for Advent, in our over-commercialized culture. Let's face it, the holiday season is tough. We're bombarded with images that say we should be merry, and happy, and surrounded by the perfect family, and joyful, and buying lots of stuff! And if we are sad or lonely, or have difficult and wounded relationships with family, or just live far away from them, or if we are financially struggling, ill, or just plain tired — then we compare ourselves to this super-happy, perfect, completely unrealistic ideal, and of course we fall short, and find ourselves in darkness.

It's no surprise that studies show that rates of depression go up during the holidays. All this pressure to be extra happy makes it harder to be *naturally* happy, and all these messages that we *should* be super happy make it all the more apparent when we're not — creating a downward spiral.

We can spend a lot of time, energy, and money running away from our own experience of darkness and the shadow of death — but if we are not afraid to look at it, it can help us draw closer to Christ.

Without Christ, we are *all* prisoners in darkness. We cannot rescue ourselves from our own sins and our own alienation. We are the people walking in darkness — and it is when we recognize that that we can truly rejoice that the light has come.

Christ is the Key. He died to save each one of us from our own, individual prison. When we go to confession and

the priest speaks the words of absolution, we need to recognize those as the words of Christ, because indeed the priest is acting *in persona Christi*, as Christ, when he hears confession. That's why when the priest says, "Your sins are forgiven," they actually are forgiven, at that moment, for real — not just as a nice thought or an encouraging word, and not just sins in general, in the abstract, but yours: the particular ways you went wrong, or failed to do what was right. Sometimes we suffer through no fault of our own; sometimes we suffer because of our own sin. But in all cases, Christ is the Key who can free us from every prison and all forms of darkness.

Now, to be freed from darkness and imprisonment does not mean to be freed from suffering. It *does* mean that our suffering is meaningful and redemptive. When Christ as the Key unlocks us, it can be a very painful experience — so much so that we may be tempted to stay locked up in our prison cells. We may be tempted to say, "I'm a good person. I'm doing just fine. My little sins are no big deal" — which means we are hiding the truth from ourselves, and we are in fact in a much worse state than we realize. Or we may be tempted to say, "My sins are too big, God can't possibly forgive me, I can't forgive myself" — but no sin is too great for God to forgive, and He wants to forgive us; He wants to unlock the door of our prison-cell and let in the light.

This is where we must take courage. Let us pray that Christ the Key of David will open us into the Light and Life of the Kingdom of God.

### Tomorrow I Will Come

The seven O Antiphons — Christ as Wisdom, Lord, Root, Key, Day-Spring, King of the Nations, and Emmanuel — spell out a promise. If we take the first letter of each Latin antiphon in reverse order — E for Emmanuel, R for Rex, O for Oriens, and so on — it spells out a phrase in Latin: ERO CRAS, which means, "Tomorrow I will come."

"Tomorrow I will come" — here, these seven Antiphons point toward the coming feast of the Nativity, Christmas,

when we will celebrate the Incarnation, God-with-us in the flesh.

This reverse order is no mistake or coincidence. It's a reminder to us that the Incarnation turns everything upside down, just as Mary proclaims in the Magnificat!

And it's fitting that as we reflect on Christ, we also reflect on His Mother Mary.

In ancient tradition, She is said to have conceived Christ in Her *Heart* at the moment of Her "Yes" to the Archangel Gabriel, and then to have conceived Christ in Her *Womb* at the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. Only Mary, ever, has the privilege of physically conceiving and bearing the Christ-child, but all of us can conceive Him spiritually, by saying "yes" to the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, when we receive His Body and Blood in Holy Communion, we become *like* Mary in that we carry Jesus within ourselves.

"Tomorrow I will come," the Advent Antiphons promise, looking ahead to Christmas — and we can reflect also on the tremendous humility of Christ, and His infinitely valuable gift to us, that while we await His second coming in glory He is already *here*, now, today, in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

There's a prayer to Our Lady of Walsingham, which I include as part of my own daily prayer, that sums all of this up beautifully:

Grant, we pray, Almighty God, that, as in the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Blessed and Ever-Virgin Mary did conceive Your Son in Her Heart before She conceived Him in Her Womb, so we, Your pilgrim people, rejoicing in Her Motherly care, may welcome Him into our hearts, and so become a holy house, fit for His eternal dwelling, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

This Advent, as we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and as we await His Second Coming, let us ask Mary for Her help to prepare a holy house for Christ in our hearts, so that we may truly welcome the Key Who brings us out of darkness into the Light of Life.

Dr. Holly Ordway is the Fellow of Faith & Culture of the Word on Fire Institute. She is a Visiting Professor at Houston Baptist University and holds a PhD in English from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is the author of **Tolkien's Modern Reading: Middle-earth Beyond the Middle Ages** (Word on Fire Academic, 2021), **Apologetics and the Christian Imagination: An Integrated Approach to Defending the Faith** (Emmaus Road, 2017), and **Not God's Type: An Atheist Academic Lays Down Her Arms** (Ignatius, 2014). Dr. Ordway is also a published poet and a Subject Editor for the *Journal of Inklings Studies*. Her academic work focuses on the writings of the Inklings, especially C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.







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