

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 21, 2025

By Al Mansfield

Isaiah 7:10:16

Psalm 80

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

A VIRGIN SHALL CONCEIVE

The season of Advent, obviously, is very much concerned with the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Fourth Sunday of Advent is in particular. Today's liturgy seems to have a distinctive Marian quality. We hear Isaiah's prophecy about a virgin conceiving and bearing a son, whom she will call Emmanuel. Today's gospel cites these words and proclaims them fulfilled in the Virgin Mary.

ISAIAH

Ahaz was king of Judah 735-715 BC. In 2 Kings 16:2, we are told that, "He did not please the Lord." He made some disastrous religious and political decisions, especially in the events surrounding the Assyrian invasion (732 BC). Ahaz was headstrong and stubborn; he did not listen to Isaiah, who was trying to speak the Lord's word to him. Nevertheless, it was to him that the most famous prophecy about the Messiah was given: "The virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall name him Emmanuel "

The Responsorial, Psalm 24, refers to the Lord, the king of glory, entering the world.

GOSPEL

Today's gospel is from the Infancy Narrative in Matthew. Both Matthew and Luke state that Mary and Joseph were betrothed when Mary conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jewish betrothal created a legal, contractual bond between the two parties, but they did not live together until the marriage was solemnized, that is, completed or finalized. Mary was found to be with child before the marriage ceremony took place, prompting Joseph's initial intention to "divorce her quietly."

The gospel relates that God intervened by sending an angel in a dream to tell Joseph of the divine nature of the child Mary was carrying. The angel quotes the prophecy from Isaiah seen in the first reading: "Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel." St. Matthew adds the meaning of the name - "God is with us." Joseph trusted and obeyed the word of the Lord through the angel.

ROMANS

Our second reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. Paul refers to himself as "a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God."

Paul speaks of Jesus as a descendant of King David "according to the flesh, but established as Son of God in power..." Paul situates Jesus within the human family but makes clear that he is also divine.

Paul says that his call to apostleship is to "bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles..."

THE TIME IS AT HAND

This is the last Sunday of the Advent Season. Each year gives us the opportunity to relive and renew the coming of the Lord into our world and our lives, even as we prepare for his final coming at the end of time. As our

Blessed Lady brought forth Jesus and laid him in a manger, may she help to bring us all closer to her Son this Christmas and always!