



**Community of St. Bridget**  
*an inclusive catholic experience*  
**Second Sunday in Advent - December 8, 2024**  
Liturgist: Donna Nagel



The Annunciation by Fra Angelico

**Suggestion:** *Please have on hand bread and wine/juice, and a copy of this liturgy so you can fully participate.*

Into this day will break moments of awareness, tiny shards of light in the midst of darkness that illumine the whole reality of existence. May the words we hear and share be such moments and may we be thankfully blessed by their gifts.

**ALL:** Together we open our hearts to the Holy Wonder of Life.

Opening Song: **Root of the Root** by Sara Thomsen; Album: Song Like a Seed © 2019 Sara Thomsen Released on: 2019-11-27 Auto-generated by YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqQzGmlqtzo> (no video)

Return returning  
Return returning  
To the root of the root  
Home of your home  
Return, return

Come home, come home  
Come home, come home  
Come home, come home  
Home of your home

Shining light, guide me  
Golden light, inside me

Today our Gospel reading centers our attention on Mary's Annunciation. An *annunciation* is defined as a declaration, a proclamation or an invitation that usually has great significance. So while our focus will be on Mary's invitation to be the mother of Jesus, we will also reflect on our own personal annunciations and how they may facilitate the deepening of our relationship with God. So let us begin our prayer by lighting our Advent candle and asking the Divine Presence within us to guide us in making wise decisions in the name + of our Creator, our brother Jesus and the Holy Spirit, Sophia. Amen.

#### Lighting of the Advent Candle

1. May we, during this holy season, reflect on the many and different ways we can begin to make the Holy One's compassion and love available to our broken world.
2. May we learn together to reflect on the Divine call to generous response in the light of Christ's life, and *as we light this candle today*, may we look forward to the new birthing of Eternal Love in all creation, expressed anew in our love for all.
3. This is a personal call to become Christ's presence and action in our world. Together we can begin to image Christ whose compassion never fails.
4. We give you thanks, O Loving Mystery of Life, for this time of waiting when we search to find you present in our midst. May we be attentive, be reflective, and be responsive to your Advent Presence among us!

#### Transitioning Out of Darkness

O Fruitful Ground of our Being:

5. As you gather us into the darkness of winter, You call us inside to the great fires in our hearts, those fires we have never believed in. You ask us to warm the hands of hope in our secret soul places. You show us the heaven seeds that have been planted in our souls, and you remind us that heaven's answers rest in the dark ground of our beings.

**ALL:** *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

6. When the deep loneliness comes, you cradle us in your enriching dark arms. In the darkness you teach us to trust in what we cannot see, to hope for that which seems impossible, to have faith in the night of unknowing. You reveal to us the necessity of patience and the holiness of waiting in the dark as we enter into solitude.

**ALL:** *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

7. In the darkness you cover us with beauty: the poetry of the moon and stars, the loveliness of nocturnal creatures who make music in the forest's darkness, the mystery of silvery shadows. You soften the day's

light to show us the light of night. You give us the gift of rest and sleep. You send us your night angel to close our tired eyes and breathe dreams and visions into our longing hearts.

**ALL:** *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

1. Once upon a time in the holy darkness of our mother's womb, we waited for birth. Now we are being born again. We are growing wings in our sorrow's darkness and finding new eyes that can see in the dark. On your black earth pillow we rest our heads and hearts. We trust your unseen blessings.

**ALL:** *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

2. All of creation finds life in the watery womb of your darkness. Deep in the rich black soil of the earth many happy seeds are cradled in your nurturing womb. Soon the shell of the seed will crack open and blessings will rise up out of the darkness.

**ALL:** *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

#### Opening Prayer

Loving God, as we patiently await commemorating your unconditional love shown us in the birth of Jesus, may we set aside time to prepare our hearts for His arrival not only on Christmas day, but every day of our lives. You reveal yourself in many different ways and events and we ask that you enlighten our hearts and minds to those manifestations that our love for you, ourselves and our neighbor may grow deeper with each passing day. Amen.

#### LITURGY OF THE WORD\*

*We sense the movement of the Spirit of Life as we listen to the Scripture readings broken open and shared by all.*

**Responsorial:** Psalm 46 (Merrill, adapted)

**Cantor:** *May Love ever guide our lives.*

The Beloved is our refuge and our strength, a Loving Presence in times of trouble. We need not fear though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea, though its water roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with tumult. **R**

Our loving Creator is an ever-present help. Nations may be at war, countries left in ruins, yet the cosmic Sound of Silence is heard, slowly breaking through our hearts of stone. The Beloved is ever with us, the infinite Heart of Love. **R**

Come, behold the works of the Beloved, how love reigns even in humanity's desolation. "Be still and know that I am Love. Awaken! Befriend justice and mercy! Do you not know you bear my Love? Who among you will respond?" **R**

**Cantor:** 8 Alleluias

**First Reading - Gospel:** Luke 1:26-38

A reading from the Holy Gospel attributed to Luke:

In the sixth month after Elizabeth conceived, the angel Gabriel, a messenger, was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman. She was unwed, but betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David and Bathsheba. The young woman's name was Mary.

The angel of God entered and said to Mary, "Greetings, favored one! God is with you." Mary was deeply disturbed by these words and pondered what this greeting could mean. But the messenger said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a child, a son, and you are to give him the name 'Jesus.' He will be great and will be called Child of the Most High. God will give to your child the seat of his ancestors, David and Bathsheba. He will rule over the House of Jacob, Leah, and Rachel forever, and his reign will have no end."

Mary said to the messenger, "But how can this come about, since I do not yet know a man?" Gabriel responded, "The Holy Spirit will breathe upon you, and the strength of the Most High will protect you in its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called "Born of God". And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth, in her old age, has also conceived. She, whom people called barren, is now in her sixth month - for nothing is impossible for God." Mary said, "May it be so. May your word be fulfilled in me. "Then the messenger sent by God departed from her.

The inspired words of the writer of Luke's Gospel. Amen.

**Cantor:** 8 Alleluias

**Second Reading:** An Excerpt from "*Called to Love*" by Ruth Haley Barton (adapted)  
A reading from the writings of Ruth Haley Barton:

For many of us knowledge of God's will is a subject fraught with doubt and difficulty. Is it really possible to know the will of God? We wonder. Do I really trust [God] to do what's best for me? How do I know whether I have "discerned" God's will or if it is just a good way to justify what I want? How do I make sense of those times when I thought I understood the will of God but it ended up being a mess? It was hard enough to trust God the first time. How can I trust God again?

For the Christian person, the choices we make are always about love and which choice enables us to keep following God into love. There may be other factors to consider, but the deepest question for us as Christian people is, *What does love call for in this situation? What would love do?*

Why is it that we so rarely ask this question relative to the choices we face? What distracts us from love in various situations in which we are trying to discern God's will? I don't know your answers to this question, but I can tell you a few of mine. For one thing, love is a major inconvenience at times. It is rarely efficient.... Furthermore, love challenges my self-centeredness, and sometimes it requires me to give more of myself than I want to give. Sometimes love hurts, or at least it makes me vulnerable. All the time, love is risky, and there are no guarantees.

And yet love is the deepest calling of the Christian life, the standard by which everything about our lives is measured... Any decision-making process that fails to ask the love question misses the point of the Christian practice of discernment. Discernment is intended to take us deeper and deeper into the heart of God's will: that we would follow God passionately into love—even if it takes us all the way to the cross.

The inspired words of the spiritual director, Ruth Haley Barton. Amen.

Shared Homily: Donna Nagel

Today our focus is on Mary and her response to God's invitation to play a vital role in bringing God's message of unconditional love and peace to all who choose to follow the Good News of Jesus.

If we pause for a minute to look at the picture of Mary as painted by Fra Angelico, we probably notice hesitation on Mary's part. According to our Scripture version today, she was engaged to be married, and having an angel appear to announce that her pregnancy would be especially blessed by God must have been very troubling. Yet, Mary's faith and love of God enabled her to take a very big risk and say "yes" even though she had no idea what the path before her held by way of joys and sorrows.

The precise details of the conception of Jesus will continue to be studied by theologians and no doubt be open to different interpretations. Nevertheless, no matter how it occurred we believe that it was God's intervention into the history of humanity to clearly communicate to us the unconditional love God has for all of us.

I like to think that Mary's hesitation to agree to God's invitation is not that different from the choices we have to make in our lives. No one has a crystal ball and can tell us what the future holds when we make a decision to marry someone, start a family, choose a certain job, file for divorce, join a religious community, remain single or become a member of a church or civic organization. Events may work out and bring us many moments of happiness, or situations can occur that bring us nothing but heartache as we question ourselves on "why" we made the decision we did.

In the end, life calls all of us to trust in the love our Creator has for each one of us no matter what our living situations might be. Just as God gave Mary the strength to endure the hardships and take pleasure in the joys of her decision to be the mother of Jesus, we too will have similar experiences as we say “yes” to God’s invitations to join in living and spreading by word and deed the Gospel message.

We may have challenging times ahead but let us never lose hope and faith that God will work for the benefit of all. It may not happen as quickly as we hope or even in our own lifetime, but good over evil will triumph and in the words of Julian of Norwich, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well". Let us go forward confident that our choices prompted by love will ultimately beget love.

*Please share how the readings spoke to you today.*

*Holding these thoughts in the sacred space among us and strengthened by the support of one another, we now proclaim our affirmation of faith:*

#### Affirmation of Faith\*\*

3. We believe Advent is an opportune time to transition out of the darkness of our doubts and pain and look with joyous expectation that the God of all love will provide whatever we need to see the light.
4. We believe that Mary had many questions regarding her role as the Mother of Jesus. We believe she had many trying moments like any other mother and wondered if she had made the right decision in accepting her pregnancy that was blessed by Our Creator.
5. We believe that Mary’s faith and love for God enabled her to fulfill her role and responsibilities as the mother, mentor and apostle of Jesus.
6. We believe that our loving God will provide everything we need to be faithful to our calling in life if we but ask for the assistance in the name of Jesus.
7. We believe our loving Creator will bring peace, joy and justice for all according to God’s timetable, not ours.
1. We believe Holy Spirit, Sophia, will guide us to fully embrace the gifts given to each of us so we too will be faithful followers of Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

#### Prayer of the Faithful

We pray for a deeper understanding of the coming of Christ in our world to lead us out of our darkness into light. Our response today is: **Lead us into Light.**

*For whom and for what shall we pray?*

Eternal Source of Life, help us to discover how we can be most useful in bringing your message of love and inclusion to reality. May we work unceasingly to bring the joy of our new birth in Jesus to everyone especially to those who have lost any hope that justice will exist for all of us. Amen.

### LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

#### Sign of Peace

As we prepare this sacred meal, we reaffirm that just as Jesus was anointed, so is each of us. And so, we celebrate our Creator's fruitful love as we extend our blessing to one another with joy. May the peace that our brother, Jesus, offers, be always with us!

#### Offertory (All raise bread and cup)

We place on our plate the harvest to be won by labor's love. And into the cup we pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the Earth's fruits.

#### Prayer Over the Gifts

**ALL:** O Gracious One, giver of the gifts we bring, receive them from your church gathered here today, affirming the sacrament of your Presence among us. Amen

The Holy One is with us, abounding in Love!

2. We open our hearts in Christ, who lives and loves, heals and empowers through us, and we give thanks to the Source of all Life.
3. Birther God, you brought forth all creation from your Life-Giving Womb. O Love of the Ages, who was born from Mary's womb, we praise you and leap for joy in your presence.
4. O Holy One of ancient Israel, you revealed yourself in a shining star, in humble shepherds, in a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. You embrace us with infinite love in every situation and relationship. You dwell in the depths of our hearts.
5. We invite you this day to set us free, heal us, transform us and empower us as we gather around the table of your love. As we celebrate this sacred mystery in the embrace of the Holy One of Birthing, we proclaim your praise:

***Holy is This One,*** Richard Bruxvoort Colligan, *Our Roots Are in You.* 2013  
Worldmaking.net.

<https://youtu.be/wc13T8GMuao?si=bUlcoXZ7ajP7khBB> (no video)

Holy, holy, holy is this one  
Holy, holy, holy is this one

In the wilderness, on the mountain  
were you always?

Here among us, come to love us  
were you always?

6. Praise to you, all-giving Mystery, born of Mary. You are the body and blood of woman. We glorify you, nurturing God for the dawning of the sacred promise of God's Anointed, fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ.

**ALL:** May Sophia Spirit be recognized in the gifts of this Eucharistic table, as we celebrate the +transformative power within this bread and fruit of the vine given to nurture afresh in us, the discerning gifts of wisdom, light and truth.

7. We celebrate the birth of Jesus, our newborn Emmanuel who came to give us fullness of life. During this holy season we share the bread of freedom and lift the cup of blessing. We invite all, especially those on the fringe of church and society, to join us around this banquet of love.

As Jesus gave birth to the New Covenant, he took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, and shares it with us now saying:

**ALL:** *Take this all of you and eat it. This is my very Self given to you.*  
**(All raise bread)**

At the end of the meal Jesus took the cup, blessed you, Birther of Life, and shares it with us now saying:

**ALL:** *Take and drink this cup of the new and everlasting covenant. It is poured out for you and for all, so that you might be free. Whenever you remember me like this, I am among you.* **(All raise cup)**

Let us proclaim the sacred presence of our nurturing God:

**ALL:** Christ, by your life, ministry and death, by your rising to new life within us, you have given birth to your new creation.

**(All raise bread and cup)**

**ALL:** For it is through learning to live as Jesus lived,  
And why he lived,  
And for whom he lived,  
That we awaken to your Spirit within,  
Moving us to worship you truly,  
Life-giving God,  
At this time, and all time, and in all ways.

**Cantor:** Amen! (x2)



### Communion Rite

In the power of this Eucharistic meal, O Divine Spirit, and in union with all peoples, we unite our thoughts and prayers, asking for wisdom and courage as we share these gifts among us:

1. Loving God, you call us to live the Gospel of peace and justice:  
*We will live justly.*
2. Loving God, you call us to be your presence in the world:  
*We will love tenderly.*
3. Loving God, you call us to speak truth to power:  
*We will walk with integrity in your presence.*

This is the Bread of Life and Cup of Blessing, through which we are nourished and we nourish one another.

**ALL:** In the sharing of this holy meal, may it be for us a sacred reminder of all that has been offered in this unfolding story as we give thanks for everything that gives us life, shapes and animates our bodies, our minds and our spirits.

*All are invited to receive at our Tables of Friendship!*

Communion Song Meditation: ***Midwife Divine Now Calls Us*** by Jann Aldredge-Clanton; Words © Jann Aldredge-Clanton from *Inclusive Hymns for Liberating Christians* (Eakin Press, 2006)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZF97GiUsn2A> (video begin .07 stop 3.05)

Midwife Divine now calls us forth from our safest place,  
beckoning always forward out into unknown space.  
She sings a birthing song  
to calm our fears and help us  
through days so hard and long.

Midwife Divine inspires us through holy darkness deep,  
moving through realms of mystery to wake all dreams that sleep.  
Her loving plan unfolds  
as tenderly She guides us  
through pathways new and bold.

O may we join Her labor to bring new life to birth;  
crowned in Her ancient splendor, we claim our sacred worth.  
Our Midwife shows the way

to worlds of love and beauty,  
more than our words can say.

*Let us pray together in the Name of Jesus:*

4. O Birther! Father- Mother of the Cosmos!  
Focus your light within us - make it useful.
5. Create your reign of unity now-  
through our fiery hearts and willing hands  
Help us love beyond our ideals  
and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures.
6. Animate the earth within us: we then  
feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all.  
Untangle the knots within  
so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other.
7. Don't let surface things delude us,  
But free us from what holds us back from our true purpose.  
Out of you, the astonishing fire,  
Returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.

#### Closing Prayer

Creator God, we thank you for all the ways you assist us with the choices we make. May we continue to listen to your promptings in the silence of our heart, in the Scriptures we read and the assurance we find in nature. Life is a mystery unfolding and we trust that you will be with us always to guide us on our journey to oneness with you. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

#### Announcements:

Blessing: Let us extend our hands to bless one another:

Listening together,  
**ALL:** We wait for the light.

Standing together,  
**ALL:** We trust in the light.

Praying together,  
**ALL:** We hope for the light.  
Seeking together,  
**ALL:** We step out with the light.

Singing together,  
**ALL:** We are blessed by the light.

**ALL:** We go into this week, held together by the love of our Generous Creator, clothed with the nature of Jesus our Companion and reinforced by the strength of +Holy Spirit Sophia. Amen.

*We go in faith to ponder in our hearts the mystery and the wonder of this Holy Season!*

Closing Song: **We Are Bringing God to Birth**, Laura and David Ash, *She is Remembered* © 2022.

<https://youtu.be/P2Lp6114rio?si=BI9feDUPDTbDcOgh>  
**(no video – end at 3.18)**

**Refrain:**

We are bringing God to birth, bringing love to Earth.  
We are bringing God to birth, bringing love to Earth.

Once you called a woman dear, called her out beyond her fear.  
Now you call me, who am I, to bring your love to earth and sky? **R**

I'm the vessel, you the seed; plant your love for all in need.  
Prepare this place for love to bloom, this my body, this my womb. **R**

Now your Spirit grows within, melting darkness, washing sin,  
Be the one whose love reveals, comforts, strengthens, holds and heals. **R**

Move me here where I am cold. Make me strong and make me bold  
for the work I'm meant to do, birthing Spirit ever new. **R**

When the time for birth is near: pushing, pressing, blood and tears;  
gentle maid of Nazareth, give me courage, give me breath. **R**

Holding Christ now in my hands, threat of war throughout the lands,  
with these hands I offer peace to the greatest and the least. **R**

Mary, Mother, laughing yes, with your strength and tenderness,  
Let my "yes" be joined with yours - healing spirits, opening doors. **R**

***Thank you for your courage to worship in a spirit  
of equality and justice!***

***You are welcome to join us again and invite a friend to support  
This Community with your presence and prayer.***

- \* Psalm and First Reading (Gospel): taken from the *Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary* published by the Women's Ordination Conference. Second Reading: *Called to Love* by Ruth Haley Barton as published in *Richard Rohr's Daily Meditations*.
- \*\* Affirmation of Faith - reflection by Donna M. Nagel