

The Fourth Sunday of Advent: December 19, 2021

The Collect: Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Micah 5:2-5a: You, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace.

Psalm 80:1-7

- ¹ Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
- ² In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.
- ³ Restore us, O God of hosts; * show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.
- ⁴ O LORD God of hosts, * how long will you be angered despite the prayers of your people?
- ⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears; * you have given them bowls of tears to drink.
- ⁶ You have made us the derision of our neighbors, * and our enemies laugh us to scorn.
- ⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts; * show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Hebrews 10:5-10: When Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And it is by God's will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once

Luke 1:39-55: In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

The Prayers of the People

Our response today is, "and come to help us." Let us pray.

The Mighty One has done great things for us. And so we appeal to God once again, praying,
Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Prepare in us a mansion for yourself, O Christ. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Restore us, O God of hosts. May we know security. May we know peace. May we know the benefits
of the reign of your Christ. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Show the strength of your arm, O God: lift up the lowly. Fill the hungry with good things. Look on
your children with favor. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Have mercy on all captives and prisoners, O God. Remember them and come to their aid. We pray
that the Wall around Bethlehem and all other barriers to come down. Fill our hearts with mercy. May
we learn to forgive even as you forgive us. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Strengthen and embolden your church, that it may serve the world in your name. We pray for
Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Jennifer, our Bishop; Mauricio, Bishop of Brasilia; the Church of the
Providence of Central Africa; for Ben, Karen and the people of the Church of the Nativity,
Indianapolis; and for Debbie, our priest. We also pray for the Diocese of Haiti and St. Andres in
Mithon. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Be present with the faith community of St. Alban's. Guide our leaders to make good decisions for our
future, to create a place of ministry that is broader than we can imagine, with community partners who
will impact the neighborhood around us in ways we cannot do alone. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Strengthen and embolden our leaders, that they may serve all people in ways that improve our world;
we remember especially Joseph, our President; Kamala, our Vice President; the Representatives;
members of Congress; and the Courts; for Eric, our Governor; Joe and all our mayors; and all those
in positions of authority who have been charged to serve all people. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Hear the prayers of your people, O God, of hosts. May those who have fed on the bread of tears,
feed instead on your strength, O Lord. Show them the light of your countenance and be their
salvation. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**

Great Shepherd, gather your flock into your eternal kingdom. Bless, the dying, embrace the dead,
and comfort those who mourn. Stir up your strength, O Lord; **And come to help us.**