

# Dear Padre,

## Does the Bible say that Mary was in her sixth month of pregnancy at the Annunciation?

The announcement of Jesus' birth in Luke begins, "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph...and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:26-27). This Scripture passage taken out of context could possibly give the impression that "in the sixth month" refers to Mary. However, it refers to Mary's cousin Elizabeth, who was in the sixth month of her pregnancy with John the Baptist. The proper context is a few verses before this one that reads, "Elizabeth conceived, and she went into seclusion for five months" (Luke 1:24).

Regarding Mary's pregnancy, at the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel tells her, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus.... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God" (Luke 1:31, 35). Gabriel also informs Mary, "And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren" (Luke 1:36).

In general, women already in their sixth month of pregnancy would likely be aware of their condition, and it would not be easy to conceal from others. ●



Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR / DearPadre.org

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
December 15	December 16	December 17	December 18	December 19	December 20	December 21
Advent Weekday	Advent Weekday	Advent Weekday	Advent Weekday	Advent Weekday	Advent Weekday	Fourth Sunday of Advent
Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a	Zep 3:1-2, 9-13	Gn 49:2, 8-10	Jer 23:5-8	Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a	Is 7:10-14	Is 7:10-14
Mt 21:23-27	Mt 21:28-32	Mt 1:1-17	Mt 1:18-25	Lk 1:5-25	Lk 1:26-38	Rom 1:1-7
						Mt 1:18-24



### A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

*There are many settings in which the Christian faith is considered absurd.... Yet, precisely for this reason, they are the places where our missionary outreach is desperately needed. A lack of faith is often tragically accompanied by the loss of meaning in life, the neglect of mercy, appalling violations of human dignity, the crisis of the family, and so many other wounds that afflict our society.*

HOMILY, ROME, MAY 9, 2025

# Our Parish COMMUNITY

December 14, 2025

Third Sunday of Advent (A)

Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10 / James 5:7-10 / Matthew 11:2-11



Say to the fearful of heart:  
Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God,  
he comes with vindication;  
With divine recompense  
he comes to save you.

ISAIAH 35:4



## The Gift of Questions

FR. THOMAS M. SANTA, CSsR

**W**e sometimes imagine that a sign of a strong faith is firm conviction and freedom from doubt. However, despite our imaginings, the authentic experiences of saints and ordinary people alike seem to point in another direction. The question of John the Baptist today—"Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" (Matthew 11:3)—suggests that John is filled with questions, and these are important questions because they are asked from the depths of King Herod's prison, which is not exactly the place of idle musings or concerns.

If John, who is a great saint and a man who encountered Jesus and witnessed the powerful manifestation of the Holy Spirit at his baptism, can have a question, doesn't it suggest that questions are acceptable—perhaps even needed? Perhaps questioning is an indication of faithfulness, not a lack of faith. Questions do not suggest that something is missing; rather, they confirm that something is growing and developing. The Baptist could just have easily said, "Jesus, you are doing and saying more than I ever imagined possible. Please help me to understand," or, to quote an unnamed saint, "I do believe, help my unbelief!" (Mark 9:24).

God will not shatter, and faith will not collapse, because you have questions or doubts.

Experience suggests that questions and doubts strengthen our belief and our commitment to a life of faith. ●

### Reflect

**Do I welcome questions, mine and others, as a way to grow in faith?**



SCAN TO  
LEARN ABOUT  
AUTHOR  
FR. THOMAS M.  
SANTA, CSSR



*OUR MISSION*  
Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20, NAB-RE)

ST. JOHN NEUMANN PARISH & CHURCH OFFICE, 714 Tenth Avenue, Marlinton WV 24954  
ST. MARK THE EVANGELIST MISSION, 92 Catholic Church Road, Rts 250 & 92, Bartow WV 24920  
ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX CHAPEL, 6332 Snowshoe Drive, Snowshoe WV 26209  
Telephone: St. John Neumann 304-799-6778, St. Bernard of Clairvaux 304-572-0847  
Website: PocahontasCatholic.org  
E-mail: Pastor@PocahontasCatholic.org

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

*"Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?"*  
(Matthew 11:3, NAB-RE)

ANNOUNCEMENTS & NOTES

- **Collection this Sunday** at St. John Neumann and St. Mark the Evangelist is for the retirement fund for elderly members of religious orders.
- **Christmas decorating** will be after Mass next Sunday (December 21) at St. John Neumann and St. Mark the Evangelist. Everyone is welcome to participate.
- **Rescheduled senior lunch** is this Tuesday (December 16) beginning at noon at Marlinton United Methodist Church, and we're serving Mexican casserole and tossed salad. *You don't* have to consider yourself old to come!
- **Advent community prayer service** is every Wednesday at noon at Marlinton United Methodist Church. Bring a bag lunch and stay after for some fellowship. Fr. Arthur is giving the reflection this week.
- **Family Resource Network drive-through food pantry** will be this Wednesday (December 17) from 9 a.m. to noon, and 1-3 p.m. at 503 Third Avenue in Marlinton. *Please remain in your vehicle and have your vehicle trunk or back empty and clean, to help us load quickly and safely.*
- **Community Dinner** is this Thursday (December 18) at Marlinton Presbyterian Church 5:00-6:30 p.m. It's a Christmas dinner with ham, green beans, mac and cheese, and of course desserts and beverages. It's free and open to the public, so why don't you plan to attend and bring your family and friends with you?



Patty Bryant  
Margaret Bryant  
Ann Burke  
Danielle Cade  
Dick Connor  
Dale Kinnison  
Drema Moore  
Cynthia Olson  
Quinn Riffle  
Tristan Sizemore

EUCCHARIST THIS WEEK

Monday 8:00 a.m. St. John  
Wednesday 8:00 a.m. St. John  
Friday 8:00 a.m. St. John  
Saturday 5:30 p.m. St. Bernard  
Sunday 9:00 a.m. St. John  
11:30 a.m. St. Mark



*St. John Neumann Church is open for private prayer every day during daylight.*

*The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered before each Eucharist or by appointment, and at St. Bernard on Saturdays 4:30-5:00 p.m.  
The Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick is available any time upon request.*



Please call the Church office (304-799-6778) if you know of a parishioner who is sick, in the hospital or nursing home, homebound, deployed, or in prison.

To report an incidence of suspected child sexual abuse, please contact your local law enforcement agency, or you may confidentially contact WV Child Protective Services at 800-352-6513.  
To report suspected cases of sexual abuse by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, please contact the Diocese at 888-434-6237 or 304-233-0880.  
To report suspected cases of sexual misconduct or sexual abuse by a bishop or eparch, please contact [ReportBishopAbuse.org](http://ReportBishopAbuse.org) or call 800-276-1562.

	LAST WEEKEND	
	attendance	collection
St. John Neumann	38	\$824.00
St. Mark the Evangelist	13	\$248.50
St. Bernard Chapel	22	\$925.00
Fund for the Poor		\$46.00
<b>total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>\$2,043.50</b>

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - YEAR A

First Reading (Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10)

The desert and the parched land will exult;  
the steppe will rejoice and bloom.  
They will bloom with abundant flowers,  
and rejoice with joyful song.  
The glory of Lebanon will be given to them,  
the splendor of Carmel and Sharon;  
they will see the glory of the LORD,  
the splendor of our God.  
Strengthen the hands that are feeble,  
make firm the knees that are weak,  
say to those whose hearts are frightened:  
Be strong, fear not!  
Here is your God,  
he comes with vindication;  
with divine recompense  
he comes to save you.  
Then will the eyes of the blind be opened,  
the ears of the deaf be cleared;  
then will the lame leap like a stag,  
then the tongue of the mute will sing.

Those whom the LORD has ransomed will return  
and enter Zion singing,  
crowned with everlasting joy;  
they will meet with joy and gladness,  
sorrow and mourning will flee.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10,  
*Grail translation, 1995*)

*Response:* Lord, come and save us.

It is the LORD who keeps faith for ever,  
who is just to those who are oppressed.  
It is God who gives bread to the hungry,  
the LORD, who sets prisoners free.

the LORD who gives sight to the blind,  
who raises up those who are bowed down,  
the LORD, who protects the stranger,  
and uphold the widow and orphan.

It is the LORD who loves the just  
but thwarts the path of the wicked.  
The LORD will reign for ever,  
Zion's God, from age to age.

Second Reading (James 5:7-10)

Be patient, brothers and sisters,  
until the coming of the Lord.  
See how the farmer waits  
for the precious fruit of the earth,  
being patient with it  
until it receives the early and the late rains.  
You too must be patient.  
Make your hearts firm,  
because the coming of the Lord is at hand.  
Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another,  
that you may not be judged.  
Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates.  
Take as an example of hardship and patience,  
brothers and sisters,  
the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

Gospel Acclamation (Isaiah 61:1)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring glad tidings to the poor.

Gospel (Matthew 11:2-11)

When John the Baptist heard in prison  
of the works of the Christ,  
he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question,  
"Are you the one who is to come,  
or should we look for another?"  
Jesus said to them in reply,  
"Go and tell John what you hear and see:  
the blind regain their sight, the lame walk,  
lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised,  
and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.  
And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me."

As they were going off,  
Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John,  
"What did you go out to the desert to see?  
A reed swayed by the wind?  
Then what did you go out to see?  
Someone dressed in fine clothing?  
Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces.  
Then why did you go out? To see a prophet?  
Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.  
This is the one about whom it is written:  
Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;  
he will prepare your way before you.

Amen, I say to you,  
among those born of women  
there has been none greater than John the Baptist;  
yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

#### Reflection (2022)

Wait, be patient, don't complain. That's the message we hear today from St. James. Advent is the season of waiting and expectation, not just 2,000 years ago, but now as well. We wait for the coming of Christ, even though we do not know the time or place. We should be patient in everything in life, even though patience isn't always the easiest thing in life. And certainly as Christians we must not complain about each other, even though every one knows there is so much to complain about!

But just like the message of the first week of Advent for peace, and the message of the second week of Advent for harmony, waiting, being patient, and not complaining are virtues that can make us better Christians, and can be effective ways to draw others to Christ.

#### Reflection (2025)

"Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" John the Baptist asked that question to Jesus. Do we ask the same question today, and do we believe, as did John, that yes, Jesus is the one who is to come?

Or rather, do we follow our favorite athletes, entertainers, politicians, or maybe even conspiracy theorists? Do we let them decide what we are to think, how we are to act, and who we are to hate?

Jesus' answer was simple: "Go and tell John what you hear and see." The athletes, entertainers, politicians, and conspiracy theorists can't do the things that Jesus can do. That is proof that he is "the one who is to come."

**14 December 2025**  
**Third Sunday of Advent - Year A**  
**Gaudete Sunday (Philippians 4:4-6)**

*Penitential Rite*

I confess to almighty God, and to you, my brothers and sisters,  
that I have greatly sinned, in my thoughts and in my words,  
in what I have done, and in what I have failed to do,  
through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault;  
therefore I ask blessed Mary ever-Virgin, all the Angels and Saints,  
and you, my brothers and sisters, to pray for me to the Lord our God.  
May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,  
and bring us to everlasting life.  
Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

*Prayer of the Faithful*

Almighty God, you give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, and so we ask you to hear our prayers:

- for the leaders of the Church, that they will lead others to follow the Lord Jesus, we pray
- for politicians everywhere, that they will be honest and truthful, we pray
- for our Jewish brothers and sisters, as they begin the Hanukkah celebrations this Sunday evening, we pray
- for peace in the Holy Land, and throughout the world, we pray
- for all of us gathered for Eucharist, that we will be witnesses of faith in our community, we pray
- for all those who have died, that they will be saved, we pray
- and for your other intentions  
(*pause*)  
for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, we pray

Merciful Father, hear our prayers, as we await the coming of your Son. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.