

Dear Padre,

Do non-Catholics go to heaven?

Yes, they do, because of the grace of God at work in his people. To suggest otherwise would seem to imply that Catholics somehow have a “golden ticket,” or some kind of right that simply does not exist.

The Incarnation of Jesus healed the division between heaven and earth, a division established by the “sin of Adam” and confirmed by our own lives of sin. Through his passion, death, and resurrection, all has been restored to the manner that the Father first envisioned through his Creation. The division was between humanity and divinity, not between religious practices and divinity. Catholics believe and celebrate that God accepts all people of a good heart and a good spirit. God is not blinded by the labels that sometimes blind his people to the bigger reality.

When Catholics, or people of any religion, proclaim exclusivity and specialness, particularly when it concerns eternal life, all people should be very cautious about what they assume. To assume a certain type of arrogance—to yourself and to your belief and life of faith—that excludes others or separates another as “not one of us” simply has no place in the kingdom of God. ●

Fr. Thomas M. Santa, CSSR / DearPadre.org



PASCAL HUOT / SHUTTERSTOCK

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
December 8 <i>The Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i> Gn 3:9–15, 20 Eph 1:3–6, 11–12 Lk 1:26–38	December 9 <i>Advent Weekday</i> Is 40:1–11 Mt 18:12–14	December 10 <i>Advent Weekday</i> Is 40:25–31 Mt 11:28–30	December 11 <i>Advent Weekday</i> Is 41:13–20 Mt 11:11–15	December 12 <i>Our Lady of Guadalupe</i> Zec 2:14–17 or Rv 11:19a; 12:1–6a, 10ab Lk 1:26–38 or 1:39–47	December 13 <i>St. Lucy, Virgin and Martyr</i> Sir 48:1–4, 9–11 Mt 17:9a, 10–13	December 14 <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i> Is 35:1–6a, 10 Jas 5:7–10 Mt 11:2–11

Do you have a question for the Padre?
Go to DearPadre.org to send your question and to learn more about *Dear Padre*.



A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

With the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit, let us build a Church founded on God’s love, a sign of unity, a missionary Church that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the word, allows itself to be made “restless” by history, and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity.

HOMILY, ROME, MAY 18, 2025



Will You Notice the Shoot?

ANN M. GARRIDO

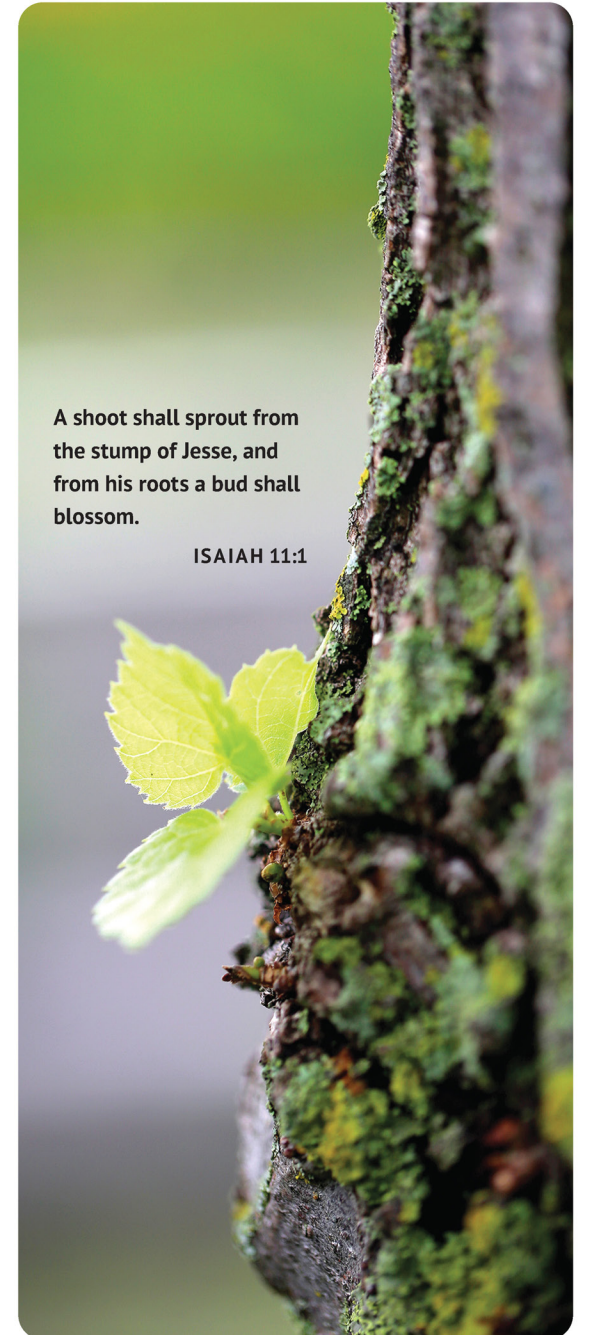
Today’s first reading from the prophet Isaiah offers a familiar Advent image: the shoot sprouting from the stump of Jesse. The verses immediately preceding speak of God walking through the forest with an ax: “The tall of stature shall be felled, and the lofty ones shall be brought low” (Isaiah 10:33). But now, amidst all the destruction, a tiny sign of new life emerges, and the Spirit of God descends upon it, bearing many gifts—wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, awe, delight.

So often, when we scroll through the news, our attention is captured by violence and war and the “mighty” who make great noise when they fall. “Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees,” echoes John the Baptist in today’s gospel. If we are looking for where God’s Spirit can be found, however, Isaiah reminds us we will need to look elsewhere. We will need to attend to the quiet, fragile resurrections taking place below the surface when it appears as if all has been lost. If we seek wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, awe, and delight, we will need to look where the little ones of the earth are found. We must have our eyes open for the shoots.

The gospels emphasize that Jesus was one such little one. Although the glory days of his people seemed to have come to a crashing close, they have not. In him, we glimpse the truth that life is stronger than death. We see that the future has not been erased, no matter how terrible the past. In him, we find our hope. ●

Reflect

Are my eyes open to the small signs of God’s work in the world, or am I too distracted to notice?



A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.

ISAIAH 11:1



OUR MISSION
 They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.
 (Acts 2:42, 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



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

EUCHARIST THIS WEEK

Monday 12:00 p.m. St. Mark
 6:00 p.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 or call 800-276-1562.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE PASSAGE
Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance.
 (Matthew 3:8, NAB-RE)

ANNOUNCEMENTS & NOTES

- **Feast of the Immaculate Conception** is Monday (December 8) and it is a day of obligation.
- **Church calendars for 2026** are now available for the taking.
- **Religious Christmas cards** are now available from the Knights of Columbus. A free-will offering is welcome.
- **Senior lunch** is this Tuesday (December 9) 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.
- **Family Resource Network Mobile Food Pantry** at BFD fire station in Green Bank is Wednesday (December 10) from 10-11:30 a.m. *Please remain in your vehicle and have your vehicle trunk or back empty and clean, to help us load quickly and safely.*

	LAST WEEKEND	
	<u>attendance</u>	<u>collection</u>
St. John Neumann	34	\$387.00
St. Mark the Evangelist	16	\$172.00
St. Bernard Chapel	26	\$81.00
Fund for the Poor		\$65.00
<i>total</i>	76	\$705.00



Catholic Sharing Appeal - 2025

	<u>donors</u>	<u>goal</u>	<u>pledges</u>	<u>% of goal</u>
St. John Neumann & St. Bernard	11	\$3,800	\$6,780	178%
St Mark the Evangelist	6	\$1,600	\$1,400	88%

Thank you to all those who contributed.

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SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT - YEAR A

First Reading (Isaiah 11:1-10)

On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse,
and from his roots a bud shall blossom.
The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him:
a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
a spirit of counsel and of strength,
a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD,
and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD.
Not by appearance shall he judge,
nor by hearsay shall he decide,
but he shall judge the poor with justice,
and decide aright for the land's afflicted.
He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.
Justice shall be the band around his waist,
and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.
Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
the calf and the young lion shall browse together,
with a little child to guide them.
The cow and the bear shall be neighbors,
together their young shall rest;
the lion shall eat hay like the ox.
The baby shall play by the cobra's den,
and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair.
There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain;
for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD,
as water covers the sea.
On that day, the root of Jesse,
set up as a signal for the nations,
the Gentiles shall seek out,
for his dwelling shall be glorious.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17,
Grail translation 1963)

Response: Justice shall flourish in his time,
and fullness of peace for ever.

O God, give your judgment to the king,
to a king's son your justice,
that he may judge your people in justice
and your poor in right judgment.

In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the Great River to earth's bounds.

For he shall save the poor when they cry
and the needy who are helpless.
He will have pity on the weak
and save the lives of the poor.

May his name be blessed for ever
and endure like the sun.
Every tribe shall be blessed in him,
all nations bless his name.

Second Reading (Romans 15:4-9)

Brothers and sisters:
Whatever was written previously
was written for our instruction,
that by endurance
and by the encouragement of the Scriptures
we might have hope.
May the God of endurance and encouragement
grant you to think in harmony with one another,
in keeping with Christ Jesus,
that with one accord you may with one voice
glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you,
for the glory of God.
For I say that Christ became
a minister of the circumcised
to show God's truthfulness,
to confirm the promises to the patriarchs,
but so that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.
As it is written:
Therefore, I will praise you among the Gentiles
and sing praises to your name.

Gospel Acclamation (Luke 3:4, 6)

Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths:
all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

Gospel (Matthew 3:1-12)

John the Baptist appeared,
preaching in the desert of Judea and saying,
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"
It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken
when he said:

A voice of one crying out in the desert,
Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.

John wore clothing made of camel's hair
and had a leather belt around his waist.

His food was locusts and wild honey.

At that time Jerusalem, all Judea,
and the whole region around the Jordan
were going out to him

and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River
as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees
coming to his baptism, he said to them,

"You brood of vipers!

Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?

Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance.

And do not presume to say to yourselves,

'We have Abraham as our father.'

For I tell you,

God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees.

Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit
will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

I am baptizing you with water, for repentance,

but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I.

I am not worthy to carry his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fan is in his hand.

He will clear his threshing floor

and gather his wheat into his barn,

but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Reflection (2022)

The images in Isaiah are wonderful: the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the kid, the calf and the young lion, with the little child to guide them. It's a image of a world of peace and harmony. "There shall be no harm or ruin on ... my holy mountain," Isaiah says, because the "earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD."

Well, we as Christians, are "filled with knowledge of the LORD," which is why St. Paul says to us "to think in harmony with one another," and that is despite all our differences, differences that existed even his day. When we as Christians are in harmony, then we are also at peace, and as St. Paul says, we "glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." When we do that, others too will follow.

Reflection (2025)

John the Baptist was baptizing with water for repentance. That's interesting, because we often hear about people acknowledging their wrongdoing or sins, taking responsibility for their actions, and making apologies. But that is not repentance. Acknowledgment, responsibility, and apology are necessary first steps towards repentance, but repentance goes beyond those first steps. It is about the determination to change, with concrete actions that show a change – those are the "good fruit" of repentance.

So when the Pharisees and Sadducees come to John for his baptism of repentance, he calls them out, because they had no repentance, they had no "good fruit as evidence of [their] repentance." They were the self-righteous leaders of the Jewish people, who were without humility and believed they were always correct. They thought they were without sin and regarded others with disdain. Sound like some people today?

For us as Christians, we should *always* wonder if our desires and actions are *with* fault, not through a false sense of humility, but because we always want to follow Christ's commandments more closely. And when we realize we fall short, we should acknowledge our wrongdoing, take responsibility for them, and apologize, but *also* determine to change, and act to change. That is true repentance.

7 December 2025
Second Sunday of Advent - Year A

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 Father, we come before you, lifting up the needs of our Church, our world, and our whole human family, and we ask you to hear our prayers:

- for the leaders of the Church, that they will be prophetic voices for the Gospel, we pray
- for the leaders of our nation, that they will develop a spirit of wisdom, understanding, and fear of the Lord, we pray
- for our state road workers and all those who serve our communities, that they will be safe, we pray
- for justice and peace in our country and throughout the world, we pray
- for all of us gathered for Eucharist, that we will have a spirit of conversion and repentance, 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, you sent your beloved Son to save us and lead us on the right path. We ask you to hear our prayers, and strengthen us to follow your Gospel. We pray through Christ our Lord. Amen.