



# Together in Prayer

A Bread of Life Family of Parishes

## 2024 ADVENT *Discipleship Challenge*

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Our Bread of Life / Pan de Vida Family of Parishes focused on the theme, “Together in Prayer,” this year. Prayer means many things to different people. At its core, it is an opportunity to deepen our relationship with God and to let the fruit of our prayer flow into our relationship with others. There are many ways or styles of prayer, but each requires a commitment of time and presence. St. Therese of Lisieux describes prayer as “A surge of the heart, it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy.”

When we make the time and space for prayer the Holy Spirit comes to our aid. As St. Paul

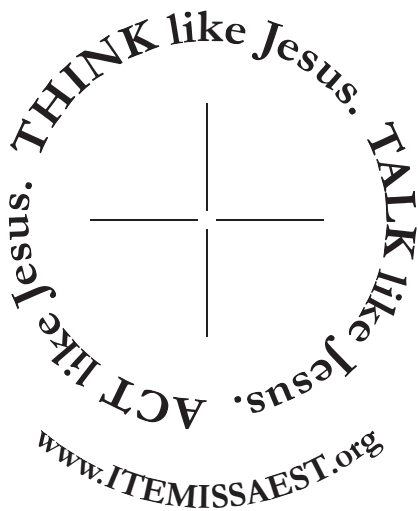
reminds us, “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words.” (Romans 8:26) If we provide the time and the attention, God will meet us where we are, and the Spirit of God will direct our hearts.

Prayer is also a communal exercise. Praying with others provides us an opportunity to support one another as disciples of Christ. Our communal prayers of thanksgiving, praise, and petition not only strengthen our connection with God, but our shared prayer allows us to build unity and deepen our faith. When we pray

CONTINUED ON PAGE 1



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together, we become conduits of God's grace where we share love, encouragement, forgiveness and hope with those in our midst. We are empowered by our communion with God and one another and sent forth to be Christ's hands and feet in the world.

Advent invites us to prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus in a special way. Time spent in prayer during our Advent preparation can provide a path towards experiencing the fullness of Christ's presence on Christmas Day and throughout the New Year ahead.

This "Advent Discipleship Challenge" provides us an opportunity to pray with the scriptures from the daily Mass readings. It also offers reflections with simple tasks or challenges focused on bringing prayer into our daily lives. We also hope that using these reflections will not only help you create a foundation of faith rooted in prayer, but also help you to make the coming feast of Christmas a love, joy, and peace-filled experience. May it also help us to bring this love, joy and peace to the world.

In Christ,

—*Ite Missa Est Team*



## First Week of Advent

**1** Sunday, December 1st  
 JER 33:14-16; 1 THES 3:12-4:2; LK 21:25-28, 34-36

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***“May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all.”*** — 1THESSALONIANS 3:12

In 25 short days, we will be celebrating the birth of Love in human form. December can be so stressful with all the preparations for the holiday season, and it can be so easy for our hearts to become weary by the anxieties of daily life. Amidst the busyness of the season, may we not forget the love of God which made our salvation possible. God sent Jesus because He loved us. Decide to spend a few minutes in prayer each day during Advent. If possible, choose a specific time and place to meet Jesus in prayer. Now, make it a commitment. May your time with Jesus “make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all” (1 Thessalonians 3:12).

**2** Monday, December 2nd  
 IS 2:1-5; PS 121:1-2, 4-5, 6-9; MT 8:5-11

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***“Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed.”*** — MATTHEW 8:8

We’ve recited the centurion’s prayer to Jesus many times at Mass. This fervent prayer and recognition of our unworthiness is a reminder that although we are unworthy in our thoughts, words, and actions, this does not prevent the Lord from giving Himself to us as the Bread of Life. Today, make this small yet powerful prayer your own. Pray it repeatedly like a chant or mantra. As you do so, focus on how this prayer can bring healing and peace to your heart and soul.

**ite missa est**  
GO, YOU ARE SENT FORTH

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Daily Mass Readings are available online at [www.itemissaest.org](http://www.itemissaest.org)

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Post your reflections on *Facebook* or record your thoughts and share with others who are participating in the challenge.

**3** Tuesday, December 3rd  
IS 11:1-10; PS 72:1-2,7-8,12-13,17; LK 10:21-24

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***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.***

— ISAIAH 11:2

The Spirit of God provides the gifts mentioned in this passage from Isaiah. It is the same Spirit and the same gifts we receive at Confirmation and during our times of prayer. Today, silence your mind and heart for a special outpouring of the Spirit upon you. Spend five minutes quietly resting in God's presence. Focus on your breathing and pray, "Come Holy Spirit" repeatedly. As you do, open your heart to receive the Holy Spirit and receive the gifts He brings. End by giving thanks to God.

**4** Wednesday, December 4th  
IS 25:6-10; PS 22; MT 15:29-37

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***Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds.***

— MATTHEW 15:36

Jesus saw the needs of the people and provided for them. God knows our needs and provides for us in abundance. All of us have many needs. Some are trivial, while others are necessary for our sustenance. Today, speak to Jesus about your deepest temporal and spiritual needs. Also become conscious of another person's needs. Now place these needs into the hands of Jesus just like the disciples placed the loaves and fish in His hands. Trust that God, in his providential love and care, will provide for your needs.

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and other **ADVENT**  
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**5** Thursday, December 5th  
IS 26:1-6; PS 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27; MT 7:21, 24-27

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***Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock.*** — MATTHEW 7:24-25

We are reminded in today's gospel that our thoughts, words, and actions should flow from a strong faith in Jesus and His words. It is through scripture and time spent in prayer that we come to know God's will for us and have the strength to act upon it. As St. Ephraim says, "Do nothing at all unless you begin with prayer." When faced with a decision today, prayerfully ask God for the guidance to know His will in this situation. Whether they are trivial or important choices, make them intentionally. Discern where God's will might be leading you.

**6** Friday, December 6th  
IS 29:17-24; PS 27:1, 4, 13-14; MT 9:27-31

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***The Lord is my Light and my Salvation.*** — PSALMS 27:1

Feeling around in the darkness for glasses first thing in the morning is a very common experience for those who use corrective lenses. Today, the Responsorial Psalm says, "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation." Much like turning on a light can help you find your glasses, seeking the light of Christ can help our spiritual blindness. "Open the eyes of my heart, help me to see your face" is the opening line of the well-known Jesse Manibusan hymn. Let us make this refrain "Open the eyes of my heart!" our prayer today and consider praying this as a chant or mantra. May Christ dispel any darkness around us and heal our spiritual blindness.

**7** Saturday, December 7th  
IS 30: 19-21, 23-26; PS146: 1-6; MT 9: 35-10:1, 5, 6-8

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***While from behind, a voice shall sound in your ears: "This is the way; walk in it," when you would turn to the right or to the left.*** — ISAIAH 30:21

How do we know or discern what God is speaking to us and telling us to do? How do we know that the voice is from God? One answer is that if it is from God, then we know that we are called to do the most loving thing in that particular situation. This call to follow God's voice may not be easy because it might involve self-sacrifice and even pain. As we live this day today, may we intentionally choose the most loving action. It might be praying for someone we have trouble getting along with, or forgiving someone who may have hurt us, or selflessly giving of ourselves to make a situation better at home or work. Ask God for the grace to help you to follow through despite the challenges it brings.



## Second Week of Advent

# 8

Sunday, December 8th

BAR 5:1-9; PS 125; PHIL 1:4-6, 8-11; LK 3: 1-6

***And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception, to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.*** — PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11

Praying for others (intercessory prayer) is an important practice in our Christian faith. When we lift other people up in prayer, we place their needs and requests in God's hands and trust that God will hear our prayer. Today, choose one person and bring them to God in prayer. Consider sharing with that person that you are praying for them as a way to accompany them in their needs.

# 9

Monday, December 9th | Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

GEN 3:9-15, 20; PS 98: 1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4; EPH 1:3-6, 11-12; LK 1:26-38

***In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ.***

— EPHESIANS 1:12

This passage discusses God's plan for our adoption into his family, the blessings that come with that adoption, and the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary reminds us how Mary was chosen to be Christ's mother even before she was born. Take five minutes to reflect on Christ's ministry on earth, and how you too were chosen to be an active part of this ministry as a brother/sister in Christ. Choose one action to live out this calling.

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE  
CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

- St. Anthony ..... 7:00 AM
- Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception ..... 9:00 AM
- Holy Angels ..... 5:30 PM
- St. Mary ..... (Spanish) 6:00 PM
- Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception ..... 7:00 PM

**10** Tuesday, December 10th | Our Lady of Guadalupe  
Is 40:1-11; Ps 95:1-3, 10-13; MT 18:12-14

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***“Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God.”*** — ISAIAH 40:1

Each one of us probably knows someone for whom the approaching holy days will not be joyful or easy. Perhaps an illness, the death of a loved one, or the prospect of being alone will make Christmas sad or difficult. Today, think of one person who may need some comforting and call or text them to tell them you are thinking about them and are praying for them. Offer whatever comfort you are able.

**11** Wednesday, December 11th  
IS 40:25-31; PS 103:1-2, 3-4, 8,10; MT 11:26-30

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***They that hope in the LORD will renew their strength, they will soar as with eagles’ wings; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint.***  
—ISAIAH 40:31

This scripture reminds us that God gives us freedom and hope. Today, take the time to bring before God an area of your life where you need hope and strength from the Lord. Or pray for someone you know, who might be weary and growing faint, and needs your encouragement and support.

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PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

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- Mañanitas (Vigil Prayer Service) in Church  
Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception ..... 7:00 PM
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**12** Thursday, December 12th | Feast of our Lady of Guadalupe  
ZEC 2:14-27; JUDITH 13:18bcde,19; LK1:26-38

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***And coming to her, he said, “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.”***  
— LUKE 1:28

In today’s gospel, the words that the angel Gabriel speaks are the same words we use when we pray the “Hail Mary.” Today, on the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray a decade of the rosary slowly as you meditate on Mary and her special role as the Mother of God. Ask for her intercession, so we can follow her lead and become “Christ- bearers” for the world today.

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PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

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- Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass  
Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception ..... 7:00 PM
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**13** Friday, December 13th  
 IS 48:17-19; PS 1:1-4, 6; MT 11:16-19

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***“I am the Lord, your God...leading you on the way you should go.”***

— ISAIAH 48:17

In this incredibly busy time of the year, it may be difficult to hear God’s voice above all the other voices demanding our attention. Yet God is asking us to follow wherever He leads us. In the prayer that Jesus taught us, the “Our Father”, Christ invites us to hallow God’s Name, to share our daily bread, to forgive others as God forgives us, to be watchful against temptations and to avoid evil. Pray the “Our Father” slowly and intentionally, asking God to lead you.

**14** Saturday, December 14th  
 SIR 48:1-4, 9-11; Ps 80:2ac,3b,15-16,18-19; Mt 17: 9a, 10-13

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***“Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”*** — MATTHEW 17:10

Jesus’ response to the above question was, “I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him.” (Matthew 17:12) God is present and active in our world. Today, look for a sign of God’s presence in your life. It might come in a sign from nature, in an experience, an event, or a conversation with someone. Acknowledge this sign as God’s presence and accept it with gratitude.

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## Third Week of Advent

**15** Sunday, December 15th  
ZEP 3:14-18; IS 12; PHIL 4:4-7; LK 3:10-18

***“Cry out with joy and gladness for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.”*** — ISAIAH 12:2-3, 4, 5-6

Advent is a time of hope and joy. Yet, war and violence claim human lives in every part of the world; human actions cause environmental degradation; and inhuman policies create immigrants and refugees. Despite all this, today’s scripture invites us to shout with joy and be glad with all our hearts. Consider reaching out to someone, somehow, someway, and be a cause for their joy.

**16** Monday, December 16th  
NUM 24:2-7, 15-17; PS 24:4-6, 7a-9; MT 21:23-27

***“Teach me your ways, O Lord.”*** — PSALM 25:4

Sit before an image of Jesus or the crucifix today. Make this your face-to-face time with Jesus. Start your prayer with these words, “Teach me your ways, O Lord”. Repeat these words as a mantra in these few minutes of prayer. Also choose to pray these words throughout the day, especially during life-situations and in your interactions with others. At the end of the day, reflect on how God has taught you His ways this day.

Scan for **DAILY**  
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**17** Tuesday, December 17th  
ZEP 3:1-2, 9-13; PS 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19, 23; MT 21:28-32

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***“Thus, the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Messiah, fourteen generations.”***

— MATTHEW 1:17

God uses Jesus’ family to help reveal Jesus’ identity as the promised Messiah. More than just a long list of names, the opening of the Matthew’s Gospel shows us that, God is not only faithful in His Promise to send a Messiah through the Davidic line, but God is faithful in all of His promises. Jesus’ family tree includes many people whose story includes vice, brokenness, and sin. Knowing this can bring us hope. Jesus can bring goodness and redemption to our own imperfect families, broken lives, and sinful society. Jesus enters into our messiest situations to bring us healing, hope, and salvation! Spend some time praising God for his faithfulness, the gift of family, and His ability to “write straight with crooked lines.” Bring to Jesus a family, work, or social situation, and offer it to him.

**18** Wednesday, December 18th  
IS 45:6-8 18, 21-25; PS 84:9-14; LK 7:18B-23

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***As king he shall reign and govern wisely, he shall do what is just and right in the land.*** — JEREMIAH 23:5B

Our world faces numerous challenges. There are so many people in need of justice - victims of terrorist attacks, victims of famine, and those who are oppressed. While justice may feel unattainable for us to achieve on our own, Jeremiah proclaims that one day the king will come, who will rule perfectly. We know that the King has come and is with us now. For we find in Emmanuel, the promise that “God is with us”. Pray a decade of the rosary today for someone, or a group of people who, in your understanding, experience violence, injustice, hunger, abuse, or oppression.

**19** Thursday, December 19th  
JGS 132-7, 24-25a; PS 71:3-4a, 51-6ab,16-17; LK 1:5-15

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***But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard.”*** — LUKE 1:13

We turn to God in prayer to ask for healing, guidance, or even a particular request. Often we become discouraged when we do not receive a quick or desired response. St. Padre Pio says: “Pray, hope, and don’t worry.” Today, bring your petitions before God. Now, leave it in God’s hands in deep trust and go forward believing that God will take care of the rest. Allow God’s Spirit of peace and hope to fill you as you believe that God has a plan for you and that God’s plan is good.

**20** Friday, December 20th  
GN 49:2-8, 8-10; PS 71:1-4, 7-8, 17; MT 1:1-17

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***“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.”*** — LUKE 1:30

Fear is an instinctive reaction to the unknown. Mary felt afraid when the angel appeared to her. Are there unknowns in your life that make you experience fear? Sit with this for a few minutes and ask God to reveal the root of your fear. Entrust your fear into God’s hands, and trust that, like Mary, God will accompany you beyond fear. And, like Mary, may you respond, “May it be done according to your word.” (Luke 1:38).

**21** Saturday, December 21st  
JER 23:5-8; PS 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19; MT 1:18-24

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***“Our soul waits for the LORD, who is our help and our shield, for in him our hearts rejoice; in his holy name we trust.”*** — PSALM 33:20-21

There is power in the name of Jesus. The name Jesus literally translates to “God saves.” When we call upon His holy name with faith and trust, we tap into a wellspring of grace. It gives strength in times of weakness and solace in times of despair. Jesus goes by many other names and titles including: “Emmanuel”, “Prince of Peace”, “Light of the World”, “Savior”, and “Good Shepherd” to name just a few. What name or title resonates most with your heart right now? Take five minutes to meditate on that title and reflect on the peace and comfort it brings to you.



Fourth Week of Advent

**22** Sunday, December 22nd  
MIC 5:1-4; PS 79:2-3, 15-16, 18-19; HEB 10:5-10; LK 1:39-45

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***“Behold, I come to do your will, O God.”*** — HEBREWS 10:7

Jesus came into the world in obedience to God’s will. Even though it was difficult, Jesus made sacrifices to accomplish God’s will. Are there particular areas in your life that you struggle to accomplish God’s will? For example, being selfless, being humble, being generous, being forgiving, being patient, or being gentle and kind. In prayer, ask God’s help to do His will in one area of your life.

## CHRISTMAS 2024 MASS SCHEDULE

Tuesday, December 24th | Christmas Eve

- Holy Angels  
3:30 PM Prelude ..... 4:00 PM Mass
- Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception  
4:00 PM Pageant ..... 4:30 PM Mass
- St. Helen  
4:45 PM Prelude ..... 5:00 PM Mass
- Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception  
6:30 PM Prelude ..... 7:00 PM Spanish Mass
- St. Anthony  
6:30 PM Prelude ..... 7:00 PM Mass
- St. Mary  
6:30 PM Prelude ..... 7:00 PM Mass
- St. Anthony  
10:00 PM Prelude & Carols ..... 10:30 PM Mass
- St. Helen  
11:30 PM Prelude ..... 12:00 AM Midnight Mass

Wednesday, December 25th | Christmas Day

- Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception  
8:30 AM Prelude ..... 9:00 AM Mass
- Holy Angels  
10:45 AM Mass
- St. Mary  
12:15 PM Spanish Mass

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**23** Monday, December 23rd  
IS 7:10-14; PS 23:1-6; LK 1:26-38

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***“His name is John.”*** — LUKE 1:60

No one thought that Elizabeth and Zechariah were going to name their child John. But they did the unexpected in obedience to God’s command. Discipleship often leads us to unexpected places. God is a God of surprises. In a few moments of prayer, commit yourself to remaining open to how God might reveal Himself to you in the unexpected experiences, and events of your life. Pray for the grace to recognize Him in them.

**24** Tuesday, December 24th  
2Sam 7:1-5, 8bb-12, 14a, 16; PS:89:2-3,4-5,27,29-19; Lk 1:67=79

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***“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel: for he has come to his people and set them free.”*** — LUKE 1:67

The above verse comes from the canticle of Zechariah. In this canticle, Zechariah praises and thanks God for His faithfulness and the fulfillment of God’s promise of salvation. As we prepare for the celebration of Jesus’ birth tomorrow, take five minutes from this busy day to gratefully remember that Jesus’ incarnation is God’s way of fulfilling His promise. Like Zechariah, praise and thank God for his faithfulness by praying his canticle (Luke 1:67-79).

**25** Wednesday, December 25th | Christmas Day: The Nativity of our Lord  
IS 9:1-6; TIM 2:11-14; LK 2:1-14

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***“For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.”*** — LUKE 2:11

The good news of the birth of Jesus was announced by the angels to the poor shepherds in the above words. Indeed, a Savior has been born! He is Christ, the Lord! On this Christmas day, amidst the festivities, the gifts, the celebrations, take a few minutes to welcome the Christ child into your heart. Make room and make it the warmest welcome. Also bring the fruits of this Advent discipleship challenge and offer it to him as a gift. May this moment become for you a moment of the salvation Christ came to bring to the world.



*Merry Christmas*

# “ONE BREAD, ONE BODY.”

Holy and Loving God,  
throughout the ages you have sought to  
love, redeem, save and be with us.  
At the appointed time  
You showed us your face in Jesus-  
the word made flesh,  
the God who dwelt among us.  
Showing your limitless love,  
Jesus broke bread saying, “This is my Body.”  
He took wine and said, “This is my Blood.”  
He then laid down His life on the cross and died for us.

In bread and wine,  
He continues to dwell among us.  
Each time we celebrate the Eucharist,  
we enter into Communion with Jesus and with one another.

In this Communion, we-  
the greatest and least, sinner and saint,  
rich and poor, young and old,  
from the East, West, North, and South  
citizen, immigrant, and refugee-  
become THE ONE BODY OF CHRIST.  
As the Body of Christ,  
may we be the sacrament of your  
love, redemption and unity in our world.  
Father, we ask all this, through Christ our Lord,  
and in union with the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

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GO, YOU ARE SENT FORTH  
MT 28:19