

174 The Kingdom of God Is Within You

(PAGE W11) ISAIAH 40:25-26, 29-31 • LUKE 7:17-26

Our God who comes to save us is mighty. Those who trust in God are also strong. They are like John the Baptist, who wasn't afraid to be tough on himself and to stand up for what was right. During this Mass let us pray that Jesus, whom John preached about, will make us strong witnesses like John.

Universal Prayer

The response is “*God, give us strength!*”

That the pope, bishops, and other church leaders look to God for strength and wisdom, we pray to the Lord.

That our country's leaders realize that those who are in power have a responsibility to help the weak, we pray to the Lord.

That those who suffer in prisons or on the streets or in hospitals may find hope and strength in Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

That all of us may be renewed during Advent to live as followers of Jesus and to spread the Good News of his love, we pray to the Lord.

Special Features

- As a communion reflection, show slides that demonstrate the power of God: mountains, stars, canyons, oceans, an eagle. During the presentation, play one of the songs listed under “Songs” or pray a prayer about God as our strength.
- For the responsorial psalm, have the children fold their hands for “let your mercy be on us” and raise them for “as we place our trust in you.”

Songs

God Gives His People Strength; If God Is for Us; The King of Glory Comes; The King Shall Come;

Mighty Lord; O Come, Divine Messiah; On Eagle's Wings; On Jordan's Bank

Homily Ideas

Visual: Vitamin pills

Ask the children if they have ever felt so tired that they couldn't keep their eyes open or couldn't stand. They had no energy left. Tell them that one Christmas song has the line “The weary world rejoices.” In Advent we look forward to Christ's coming to wake us up and fill us with new life and energy. Jesus the Messiah gave new life and hope to the blind, the lame, the deaf, the crippled, and the poor. He was strong enough to do this then, and he can fill us now with life.

• • •

Recall that the reading from Isaiah promises us that if we trust in God we will be as strong as eagles that soar in the sky. An eagle that weighs from eight to twelve pounds is capable of carrying away an animal of seven and a half pounds. Ask what kind of strength Isaiah is talking about (strength to do good, to suffer, to love). God is almighty. We can see that from the billions of gigantic stars God has created. God will give power to those who ask for it.

• • •

Remind the children that Jesus said that John the Baptist was strong and not like tall grass blown by the wind. John did not live a comfortable, easy life. He called people to repent, and he prepared the way for Jesus and God's kingdom. In the end John was killed for it. Ask the children if they are strong enough to be a follower of Jesus, to witness to Jesus, to be a Christian. Give examples of strength, perhaps examples shown by the children themselves.

• • •

Show the bottle of vitamins and name the vitamins a Christian life requires: Vitamin A—Action: Do what Jesus says and you will have energy to do even more. Your muscles will be built up. Vitamin B—Belief: Believe in Jesus and his promises. Pray to believe even more. Vitamin C—Confidence: Trust that God loves you. God within you will help you make the right decisions. Vitamin D—Daring:

Dare to love the way Jesus did. Love God with all your heart. Love the people in your life. This may sometimes take a lot of courage.

• • •

Tell the children the quotation: God and I are the majority. Ask what it means (with God on our side, no one can overpower us).

175 My Heart Praises the Lord

(PAGE W14) 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4 • LUKE 1:46-56

Mary, the Mother of God, is a key figure during Advent. We look to her, the first and best Christian, as our model. As Mary cooperated with God in saving the world, we, too, offer ourselves as God's servants, willing to do what God asks. With Mary we praise and thank God. The word "Eucharist" means thanksgiving. We offer this Mass to praise and thank God for the great work of our salvation.

Universal Prayer

The response is "*Lord, hear our prayer*"

That the Church may always be open to the coming of God as Mary was, let us pray to the Lord.

That world leaders may remember that their role is to serve others, let us pray to the Lord.

That pregnant women may be helped to anticipate the birth of their children with joy, let us pray to the Lord.

That we may long for God, let us pray to the Lord.

That we might all be generous in letting God use us for spreading the kingdom of justice and peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Special Features

- Have an Advent Mary candle displayed in the sanctuary. Explain it before Mass.
- Distribute holy cards, medals of Mary, or blue ribbons.
- Make up gestures for the first reading so that it can be read as an echo pantomime with the children repeating each line and gesture.
- As a communion reflection, play a recording of Mary's canticle, the Magnificat, such as John Michael Talbot's "Holy Is His Name." Liturgical dancers might perform a dance of praise to the music.

Songs

Behold a Virgin Bearing Him; Come, My Children; Come, O Long-Awaited Savior; Do Not Delay; Hail Mary: Gentle Woman; I Have Loved You; Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming; Magnificat; Mary's Joy; Mary's Song; May We Praise You; My Soul Rejoices; See How the Virgin Waits; Sing Alleluia, Sing; Sing of Mary; We Praise You

Homily Ideas

Visual: A flute or other wind instrument

Begin the homily with a song about Mary, such as “Hail Mary: Gentle Woman.”

• • •

Show the wind instrument and ask how it works (someone blows air through it). Explain that someone once compared Mary to a reed or a flute because she let God’s breath work through her.

She said yes to God’s messenger, the angel Gabriel, and she agreed to be the Mother of God. She was puzzled about how this would be, and she probably knew there would be suffering involved. Still she said yes. God was able to do great things through Mary, just as a musician is able to make beautiful music through a flute.

• • •

Explain that Mary was not proud and puffed up about her important role. As the one who would give birth to the Messiah everyone was waiting for, she could have been self-centered. Instead, she reached out to others. One of the first things Mary did was to give service to an older relative named Elizabeth who was pregnant. Mary, carrying Christ within her, went to help someone. She did what Paul in the first reading tells us to do, she comforted someone in great need.

• • •

Tell the children that when Elizabeth told Mary she knew she was God’s mother, Mary broke out in a song of praise to God that the Church prays every day in its official evening prayer. This song of praise is called the Magnificat.

• • •

Point out that in her song Mary predicted that God was about to overturn the old way of doing things. The weak would become powerful, and the powerful would be made weak. Mary foretold that because of God’s goodness to her everyone would call her blessed. Ask: When do we call Mary blessed? (in the Hail Mary). You might have the children pray the Hail Mary now and raise their hands when they reach the part that calls Mary blessed.

• • •

Comment that in her song, Mary praised God for the good things God did, especially for keeping the promise to send a savior. She praised God for being just and merciful. Ask: What are some things we could praise God for? How can we praise God? Mention that the angels praised God the night Jesus was born. Ask what they said (glory to God in the highest).

• • •

Mention to the children that as they prepare their hearts during Advent, they should be making them into hearts full of praise.

Sample do not duplicate