

LITURGY & LIFE

THE EMMAUS JOURNEY

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Cycle B

A Catholic Update Companion to the Sunday Readings

FAITH WELCOMES CHRIST

Receive the promise • Listen with Mary • Trust God's grace • Welcome Christ

1: FOR THE HOMILIST/PCL OR OCIA CO-ORD.: CHRIST SPEAKS - WE LISTEN

Sunday Readings

Liturgical Color	Violet — Advent
First Reading	2 Samuel 7:1–5, 8b–12, 14a, 16
Responsorial Psalm	Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27, 29
Second Reading	Romans 16:25–27
Gospel	Luke 1:26–38

The Heart of This Sunday's Gospel

NOTHING WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD

The angel enters Mary's ordinary life with a word that changes everything. She is asked to receive a vocation she did not design, a future she cannot yet explain, and a grace greater than her own strength. Mary is troubled, but she does not turn away. She listens, asks how God's promise will be fulfilled, and receives the assurance that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her. Her final response is free, intelligent, and faithful: she places her life at the service of God's Word. The Annunciation reveals the pattern of discipleship. God takes the initiative, grace makes the response possible, and faith welcomes Christ before every detail is known. As Christmas approaches, the Church stands beside Mary and learns to say yes—not to a vague ideal, but to the living God who desires to dwell among His people.

The Liturgical Thread

Nathan first assumes that David should build a house for God, but God reverses the direction: the Lord will establish David's house and preserve his kingdom. Psalm 89 celebrates this covenant faithfulness. Saint Paul praises the God who can strengthen believers according to the Gospel and whose mystery, hidden for long ages, is now revealed to all nations. In Luke, Gabriel announces that the promised Son of David will receive an everlasting kingdom. Mary becomes the place where promise and fulfillment meet. She listens, asks, trusts, and consents. The readings move from God's initiative to the disciple's response: the Lord keeps His word, grace overshadows human weakness, and faith welcomes Christ.

THE MOVEMENT OF THE READINGS

God establishes His promise → The promise waits through history → Gabriel announces fulfillment → Mary listens and questions → Grace makes faith possible → Mary says yes → Christ is welcomed into the world

Listening With the Heart

Listen

Read Luke 1:26–38 slowly. Notice Gabriel’s greeting, Mary’s disturbance, the promise concerning Jesus, Mary’s question, the angel’s assurance, Elizabeth’s unexpected pregnancy, and Mary’s final response.

Reflect

What word or phrase draws your attention? Where are you tempted to demand certainty before responding to God? What question do you most need to bring honestly into prayer?

Pray

Ask the Holy Spirit for the freedom to listen without fear and the courage to make one faithful response. Place one unresolved decision or responsibility before God.

Rest

Remain quietly with the words: “The Lord is with you.” Let God’s presence become more important than your need to control every outcome.

Carry This Word

LUKE 1:38

“May it be done to me according to your word.”

2: FOR THE CATECHIST: THE CHURCH TEACHES - WE LEARN

Catechetical Focus

MARY, GRACE, AND THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

The Annunciation brings together God's promise, Mary's freedom, and the mystery of the Incarnation. God acts first: the Father sends the Son, the Holy Spirit overshadows Mary, and grace prepares her response. Mary is not a passive instrument. She listens, discerns, asks a truthful question, and freely gives herself to God's saving will. Her fiat is the obedience of faith—the wholehearted response of a person who entrusts herself to the God who speaks. The Church therefore honors Mary as Mother of God and as the first disciple, not because she replaces Christ, but because her entire life receives Him, points to Him, and serves His mission. Every Christian vocation follows this pattern: grace calls, faith responds, and Christ takes flesh in the world through a life offered to God.

Catholic Update Resources

PRIMARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

PENDING-4ADV-1 | Mary: Model of Discipleship

This Update provides the primary formation lens for the Annunciation. Mary's discipleship is seen in attentive listening, honest questioning, humility, courage, obedience, and persevering fidelity. Her greatness is inseparable from grace: God calls and equips her, while Mary freely cooperates. Read with Luke 1, the resource helps participants move beyond a merely sentimental image of Mary and recognize her as a mature believer whose entire life is centered on Christ. Catechumens and candidates are invited to consider how discipleship grows when a person receives God's Word, brings real questions into prayer, and acts faithfully before the whole road is visible.

SECONDARY CATHOLIC UPDATE

PENDING-4ADV-2 | Trusting God's Plan

This Update develops the chapter's secondary theme of providence and discernment. Trust does not mean pretending that uncertainty is easy or that every event is directly willed by God. Christian trust rests in God's character, saving purpose, and faithful presence. Mary's question—"How can this be?"—shows that faith may seek understanding without becoming unbelief. The resource helps participants distinguish trust from passivity, prayerful discernment from impulsive certainty, and obedience from fear. Together with the Sunday readings, it encourages one concrete response to the grace already being offered.

The Catechist's Companion

Key Teaching

God's promise reaches fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Mary, filled with grace, freely responds with the obedience of faith and becomes the first disciple to welcome and bear Christ.

Session Aim

Help participants connect God's covenant promise with the Annunciation, understand Mary's fiat as a free response to grace, distinguish Christian trust from passivity or certainty, and identify one concrete yes through which they can welcome Christ more fully.

Formation Objectives

- Trace the promise from the covenant with David to the angel's announcement concerning Jesus.
- Explain why Mary's question is compatible with faith and discernment.
- Describe grace as God's prior gift that enables a genuinely free human response.
- Explain why Catholic devotion to Mary is Christ-centered and rooted in her unique role in salvation history.
- Identify one concrete practice of trust, obedience, or service for the final days of Advent.

Integrating This Week's Catholic Updates

PENDING-4ADV-1 presents Mary as a model of discipleship whose listening, questioning, humility, courage, and fidelity are centered on Christ. PENDING-4ADV-2 explores the trust required when God's call unfolds without complete clarity. Together with the readings, the Updates form one movement: God remembers His covenant, Christ is announced, grace prepares the response, Mary freely says yes, and the disciple learns to welcome Christ through faithful action.

Expand the Conversation

- Why does God's promise to David matter for understanding the Annunciation?
- What is the difference between a faithful question and a refusal to trust?
- How can a person discern God's will without expecting perfect certainty?
- Why does authentic Marian devotion always lead the Church toward Christ?

Common Misunderstandings

- Mary's fiat is not passive resignation. It is an informed, free, and courageous response to God's grace.
- Trusting God does not mean believing that every painful event is directly caused or desired by Him.
- Questions are not automatically signs of weak faith. Mary asks how; Zechariah demands proof. The posture of the heart matters.
- Catholics do not worship Mary. They honor the Mother of God and ask her intercession because her vocation and discipleship belong entirely to Christ's saving work.
- Discernment is not waiting for absolute emotional certainty. It joins prayer, Scripture, Church teaching, wise counsel, moral responsibility, and concrete action.

Church References

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 26; 142–165; 484–511; 721–726; 963–975; 2617–2619. Scripture connections: Genesis 12:1–4; 2 Samuel 7:8–16; Isaiah 7:10–14; Luke 1:39–56; Luke 2:19, 51; John 2:1–11; John 19:25–27; Acts 1:12–14; Romans 1:1–6.

OCIA Connection

Catechumens and candidates are learning to receive a call before every consequence is known. Mary's response helps them see initiation not as the completion of a course but as a personal entrustment to Christ within His Church. Catechumens may connect her fiat with the growing desire for Baptism; baptized candidates may recognize a renewed response to grace already given. Sponsors and catechists should help participants discern freely, respect conscience, and avoid pressure while still inviting a clear and concrete response.

Catechist's Insight

PASTORAL CARE

Teach Mary in a thoroughly Christ-centered way. Some participants may come from traditions that misunderstand Catholic devotion to Mary; others may carry painful experiences of coercion, pregnancy, infertility, adoption, miscarriage, family estrangement, or abuse. Do not describe Mary's fiat in a way that romanticizes submission to harmful human authority. Her yes is free, graced, discerning, and directed to God. Make clear that trust in providence does not forbid questions, lament, professional counsel, healthy boundaries, or responsible action.

Let the biblical sequence govern the session: God promises, God acts, grace prepares, Mary listens, and Mary responds. Begin with Christ and the covenant before moving to Marian doctrine or devotion. Use the title "Mother of God" carefully: Mary is mother of the divine Person of the Son according to His human birth; she is not the source of His divinity. Invite participants to voice questions about Mary without embarrassment. Provide clear distinctions between worship, veneration, and intercession.

3: FOR THE CANDIDATE/CATECHUMEN: THE DISCIPLE RESPONDS - WE LIVE

Living the Gospel This Week

- Where do I need to hear again, “The Lord is with you”?
- What decision am I delaying because I cannot control the outcome?
- Do I bring honest questions into prayer, or use questions to avoid responding?
- Where has grace already given me more strength than I recognize?
- What relationship or responsibility is asking for a generous yes?
- How might my life help another person receive Christ?

Choosing to Be an Intentional Disciple

WHAT IS CHRIST ASKING OF ME TODAY?

Where is God inviting me to offer one free and faithful yes before I can see the whole path?

Intentional discipleship does not require knowing every future detail. It requires responding faithfully to the grace available now. Choose one concrete yes: begin a needed conversation, accept a responsibility, seek wise counsel, return to prayer, make peace, serve someone quietly, or take the next appropriate step in the OCIA journey.

Holy Habit

THE DAILY FIAT PRAYER

At the beginning of each day, pause before the first major task. Pray slowly: “Here I am, Lord. Let Your word be fulfilled in me.” Name one responsibility, relationship, fear, or decision you are placing before God. At day’s end, ask: Where did I receive grace? Where did I resist? What question do I need to bring honestly into prayer? Conclude with Luke 1:38.

Faith Into Practice

- Pray Luke 1:38 at the beginning of each day.
- Read the Annunciation once during the week without rushing.
- Write one unresolved question and bring it honestly to prayer.
- Seek counsel from a trusted priest, catechist, sponsor, or mature Catholic about an important decision.
- Complete one responsibility you have been avoiding.
- Offer one hidden act of service without seeking recognition.
- Pray one decade of the Rosary while contemplating the Annunciation.

Personal Reflection

What am I afraid God may ask of me? Which part of Mary’s response—listening, questioning, trusting, or acting—most challenges me? What one faithful yes would make more room for Christ in my life this week?

4: FOR THE SPONSOR: THE CHURCH SENDS - WE WITNESS

Sponsor's Path of Accompaniment

Share Your Faith	Tell about a time when God's call became clear only one step at a time. Name the uncertainty honestly, explain how prayer or the Church helped you discern, and describe what faithful action looked like. Avoid presenting yourself as someone who never doubted; witness instead to grace at work within real questions.
Walk Together	Read Luke 1:26–38. Ask: "What do you notice about the way Mary listens and responds?" Then ask: "Where are you being invited to trust God more deeply?" Listen without rushing to solve the person's uncertainty. Help distinguish a genuine call from pressure, fear, or the desire to please others.
Pray Together	Pray one decade of the Rosary, the First Joyful Mystery: the Annunciation. Before each Hail Mary, alternate naming one grace needed for discipleship—listening, courage, humility, trust, freedom, perseverance, or joy. End together: "May it be done to me according to Your word."
Experience the Church	Visit a Marian image, shrine, or side altar in the parish. Discuss how authentic Marian devotion always leads to Jesus. If appropriate, attend an Advent Reconciliation service, Lessons and Carols, or a parish Rosary and notice how Scripture, prayer, and community help the Church welcome Christ.
Continue the Journey	Each person chooses one daily "fiat" practice before the next meeting: pray Luke 1:38 each morning, accept one neglected responsibility, seek counsel about a decision, offer an act of hidden service, or respond generously to one concrete need. Share what the practice revealed about grace and freedom.

Faith at Home

Create a household "Yes to God" card. Place a Bible beside the Advent wreath and read Luke 1:26–38. Invite each person to write one simple response to Christ for the coming week: forgive, serve, pray, reconcile, welcome, or help. Place the cards near the wreath. Light the candles and pray together: "Lord Jesus, find room in our home and hearts." Conclude with the Hail Mary or Luke 1:38.

Parish Life

Help the parish welcome Christ by welcoming people. Pay attention to visitors, those returning after a long absence, people who are alone, families under strain, and OCIA participants approaching Christmas with mixed emotions. Choose one visible practice of hospitality—personal greetings, accessible seating, transportation, invitations to fellowship, or accompaniment at a parish Advent celebration.

Go Forth This Week

Welcome Christ with one faithful yes, and carry His presence into one person's need.

Prayer for the Week

Father of mercy, You fulfilled Your ancient promise by sending Your Son into the world. You prepared Mary by grace and received her free and faithful yes. Teach me to listen before I act, to bring my questions honestly into prayer, and to trust Your presence when the road is not clear. Holy Spirit, overshadow the places in me ruled by fear, self-protection, or control. Form in me the obedience of faith. Let Your Word take root in my choices, relationships, responsibilities, and service. Through Mary's intercession, make me ready to receive Christ, carry Christ, and reveal Christ with humility and joy. As Christmas draws near, may my life become a dwelling place for Emmanuel, God-with-us. Amen.

Emmaus Insight

Emmaus faith begins when the disciple welcomes the Word before the whole journey is understood.