

Week 49



# THE ROSARY IN A YEAR

WITH FR. MARK-MARY AMES, CFR

## PHASE 3: MEDITATING ON THE MYSTERIES

### The Glorious Mysteries in Art

## THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

**“When the priests came out of the holy place,  
a cloud filled the house of the Lord”  
(1 Kings 8:10).**

**T**his week, we will meditate on a piece of sacred art depicting the Descent of the Holy Spirit: an eighteenth-century painting by Jean Restout the Younger titled *Pentecost*. After taking a moment to collect your thoughts and lift your mind to God, prayerfully gaze upon the image, noticing what catches your eye and what intrigues you. Points of reflection have been provided to assist in your meditation.



*Pentecost* by Jean Restout the Younger (1732), The Louvre, Paris

## Reflection and Contemplation

- Who is at the center of the painting as the most prominent person? Why is this appropriate? What is Our Lady's relationship with the Holy Spirit? Has Mary already experienced an outpouring or overshadowing of the Holy Spirit?
- Mary is looking up into heaven, and she does not look at all surprised by what is happening. She almost looks as if she is in dialogue with someone above. Do you think she is interceding with her spouse, the Holy Spirit?
- The descent of the Holy Spirit is shown occurring in a very large room. Some scholars argue that this occurred at the Temple. Why might it be fitting for it to occur at the Temple?
- Clouds completely cover the ceiling, as if heaven is coming to earth. How does heaven come to earth with the coming of the Holy Spirit? We are reminded of the cloud in Exodus, which rested on the Tabernacle (see Exodus 40:34–38), and the cloud at Solomon's dedication: "And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD" (1 Kings 8:10). How are each of these people who have received the Holy Spirit now "temples"?
- The color red stands out in this painting. When does the priest wear red during the liturgical year?
- Examine the faces of the disciples who are receiving the Holy Spirit. How would you describe their faces? What would you have felt if you were present there?

## Make It Your Own

What stood out to you about your Rosary experience this week?

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper appears to be from a notebook or a standard sheet of stationery.

Scan the QR code to view *The Rosary in a Year* videos on the Ascension app. Download the prayer plan at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8s69yd>.

*The Rosary in a Year* is a daily podcast, produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mark-Mary Ames, CFR. It takes Catholics on a journey to form a lasting habit of prayer and gain tools to enter more deeply into meditation on the lives of Jesus and Mary through the Rosary. This bulletin was adapted from the podcast and materials that complement the podcast.



# Sunday Q&A

Your Faith in Focus

## GIFTS OF AN HONORED PRAYER

### Why pray the Rosary this Advent?

The Rosary is a perennial Catholic prayer. As you journey through the season of Advent, it can be an especially fulfilling practice to begin, renew, or enrich your relationship with Our Lord and Our Mother in preparation for Christmas. Praying the Rosary has many benefits. Here are five.

#### 1. Deepens Your Relationship with God

Praying the Rosary helps you grow closer to Christ. It does so by inviting you to meditate on the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the mysteries of the Rosary, you walk alongside Christ and Mary, reflecting on their joys, sorrows, and triumphs. This repeated focus on pivotal moments in salvation history fosters an understanding of God's love and his plan for your life. The Rosary helps you align your heart with God's, offering an opportunity for quiet reflection, trust, and surrender to his will. With Mary as your guide, the Rosary strengthens your faith and leads you into a more intimate relationship with Christ.

#### 2. Strengthens Your Virtue and Helps You Overcome Sin

A significant benefit is that the Rosary encourages virtue and discourages vice. The repetitive prayers foster humility and perseverance, creating a habit of

turning to God in times of temptation. The meditation encourages you to reflect on Christ's example and grow in spiritual maturity. By praying the Rosary regularly, you invite God's grace into your life, fortifying you against sin and strengthening your spiritual resolve. Through Mary's intercession, the Rosary offers grace to resist sin, cultivate virtue, and enrich our relationship with Christ, empowering us to live a more holy and virtuous life.

#### 3. Promotes Peace and Reduces Stress

Perhaps a surprising benefit of praying the Rosary is that it promotes peace and reduces stress. This prayer invites you to enter into a calm, reflective dialogue with God through Mary's intercession. The gentle repetition of prayers, combined with a meditation on the mysteries of Christ's life, soothes the mind and heart, easing anxieties and fostering a sense of stillness. As you reflect on Christ's love and mercy, you are reminded of God's presence and providence, which brings comfort

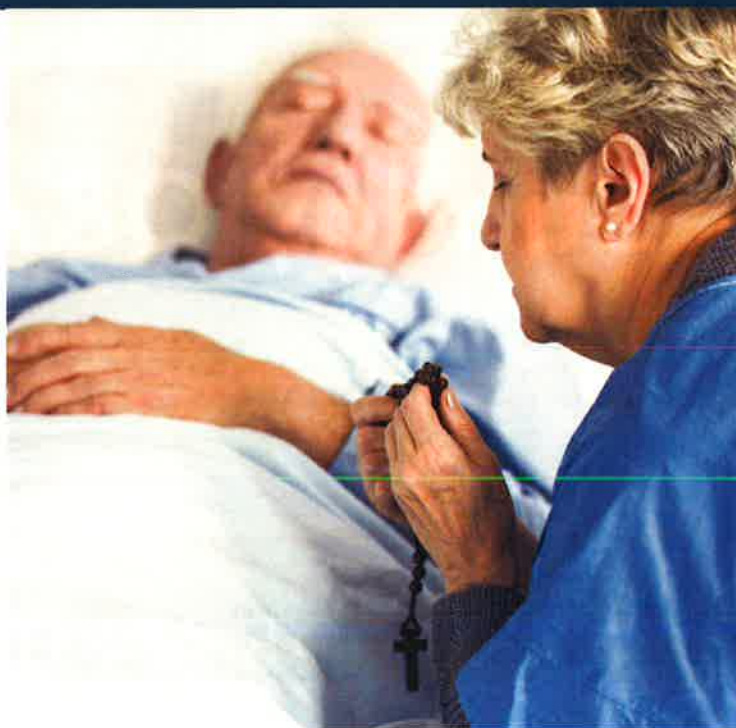
amid life's challenges. The Rosary helps you surrender your worries to God, encouraging you to rely on him entirely and offer up your daily obstacles.

#### 4. Increases Spiritual Protection

One of the greatest benefits of praying the Rosary is that it is a holy weapon against evil, as emphasized by saints like St. Padre Pio, who called it "the weapon for these times." Through its prayers, we invoke God's grace and strength, which fortify us against temptation and spiritual attacks. The meditative nature of the Rosary fills our minds and hearts with divine truths, leaving no room for the influence of evil. Mary, the Queen of Heaven, stands as a spiritual defender, and through the Rosary, she helps shield us from harm and leads us closer to her son, who is our ultimate refuge.

#### 5. Aids in Intercessory Prayer

The Rosary is a powerful tool for intercessory prayer, allowing us to lift the needs of others to God through Mary's maternal intercession. As we pray each decade, we can dedicate our intentions to loved ones, the sick, the suffering, or those in need of conversion. Mary, as our compassionate advocate, brings these prayers before her son, amplifying their efficacy. The meditative nature of the Rosary ensures our intentions are offered with focus and devotion, uniting our hearts with God's will and strengthening our connection to those we pray for.



#### Make It Your Own

Ascension offers readers the *Rosary in a Year* podcast. Whether or not you have been following along in that program, some great resources on the Ascension app can help you to pray. With your phone camera, scan the QR code here to download the Ascension app and pray the Rosary with your family.



#### Ponder and Pray

- What is your experience of the Rosary?
- With whom do you associate this practice?

#### Tip of the Week

Pray the Rosary this week. Find a buddy, set a specific time and place, and take advantage of great resources to help you enter into prayer.

#### Dive Deeper

The Ascension blog article from which today's reflection was drawn outlines ten benefits of praying the Rosary. To read it, scan the QR code



or visit: <https://ascensionpress.com/blogs/articles/benefits-of-praying-the-rosary>.

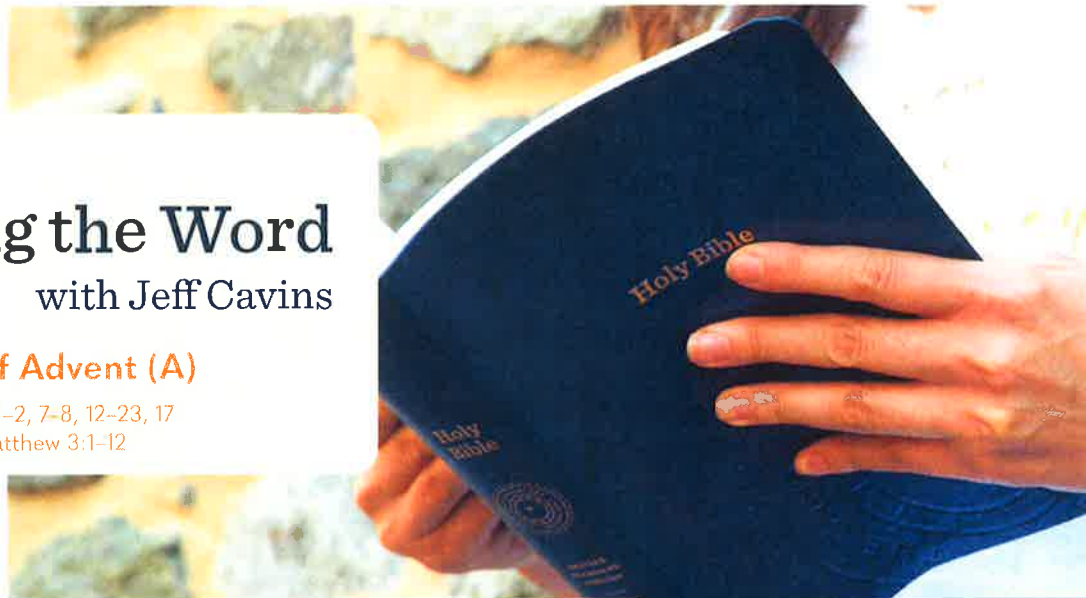


# Encountering the Word

with Jeff Cavins

## Second Sunday of Advent (A)

Isaiah 11:1-10 • Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-23, 17  
Romans 15:4-9 • Matthew 3:1-12



## To Prepare for Jesus, We Must Bear Fruit Worthy of Repentance

Advent is a time of anticipation and preparation for the coming of Jesus. In today's Gospel, we encounter John the Baptist preaching repentance at the Jordan River. The vivid description of John's attire and location is significant; John is fulfilling the role of Elijah, the prophet who was expected to return before the Messiah. His call to "prepare the way of the Lord" is not about superficial changes but *real transformation* (Matthew 3:3). John prepares the people for the greater one, the one who is coming: Jesus.



St. John the Baptist by Iulian Rosu (2021),  
Church of Santi Martiri Nereo e Achilleo, Milan

When the religious leaders arrive, John rebukes their reliance on heritage and titles, warning them that true preparation for the Messiah involves bearing fruit worthy of repentance. It is not enough to claim spiritual lineage or religious rituals—what matters is the fruit of a life transformed by God's grace.

Isaiah 11 describes the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel,

strength, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. Paul builds on this in Galatians 5, listing the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These virtues are the evidence of our repentance and growth.

As we approach Christmas, we are invited to examine our hearts. Are we clinging to sin or spiritual complacency, or are we producing the fruit of repentance? Now is the time to remove what hinders us and turn fully to Christ. Let us prepare our hearts so that when he comes, we are ready to receive him with joy.

## Living the Gospel

Advent is a time to bear fruit worthy of repentance. Take time this week to reflect on Galatians 5:22-23 and identify areas where love, joy, and peace are missing in your life. Consider going to confession or setting aside daily prayer time to refocus your heart on Christ's coming. Let your preparation be active, bearing fruit in words and deeds.

## Dive Deeper

Scan this code to watch:



Or go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEChoFhvAjQ>

## Ponder and Pray

“ **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.**  
– Matthew 3:11 ”

» The religious leaders believed their heritage as descendants of Abraham ensured their spiritual standing. Are there any titles, roles, or past spiritual achievements you rely on for your sense of righteousness? How can you shift your focus to daily faithfulness and ongoing spiritual growth?

» John’s location and lifestyle reflected his prophetic mission. How do your daily choices—your words, priorities, and actions—reflect your identity as a follower of Christ? Are there areas where your “outer” life contradicts your calling to bear witness to the Gospel?

» Preparing for Christ’s coming means turning away from what impedes spiritual growth. What specific distractions, unhealthy attachments, or patterns of sin are hindering you on your path toward Jesus? How can you actively replace these obstacles with virtues that lead to spiritual freedom?

## Make It Your Own

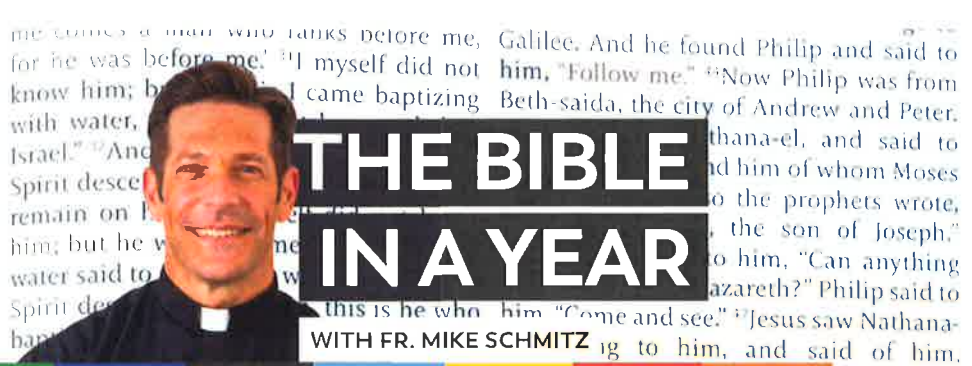
You and others in your household may use this space to write anything about today’s Mass. It might be your view of Jeff Cavins’ reflection, your priest’s homily, your answers to the questions on this page—anything to help you and your household get the most out of today’s Mass.

Jeff Cavins is the author of *The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation* and the creator of the video series *Sundays with Ascension*, from which his reflection was adapted.

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## Week Forty-Nine

Days 337–343



The Church Narrative: Acts 16–22 | Supplemental: 1 Corinthians 13–16; 2 Corinthians 1–11; Proverbs 28:13–29:7

## BRING GOD’S GRACES TO YOUR CENTER



*Paul and Silas Singing in Prison.*  
AI generated (Adobe Stock)

In the second half of the Acts of the Apostles, we read about many of St. Paul’s successes and trials. Though he founds and supports numerous churches over the years, he is also persecuted often and sometimes severely. Regardless of the situation, Paul teaches that the graces God gives us for salvation need to be at the center of our lives. These graces come from the work of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

- In Acts 16, Paul and Silas are recognized by a demon, who says in verse 17, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” The demon possesses a slave girl, and the family that “owns” her makes money from the demon’s prophecies. Because Paul exorcises the demon, he is beaten and imprisoned along with Silas.
- During their imprisonment, Paul and Silas sing hymns and praise the Lord. An earthquake strikes and the doors of the jail are opened, but they stay put, knowing that the jailer will pay the penalty if they escape. They proclaim the Gospel and end up baptizing the jailer and his family.
- These events conform to Paul’s teachings in his letters—namely, if we cause someone else to sin by our actions, we should stop it. Conversely, if our inaction causes others to sin, then we must act.
- Paul’s preaching in Athens in Acts 17 highlights the need to repent from sin. There, he also teaches that the core message of Christianity is found in Christ’s Resurrection and the bodily resurrection which we, too, will share in.
- This central message of bodily resurrection is found throughout Paul’s works, such as in 1 Corinthians 15:14, where he states, “If Christ has not been raised ... your faith is in vain.”
- The Corinthian community, a place where St. Paul spent at least a year and a half (Acts 18:11), had trouble living holy lives and remaining steadfast in Paul’s teachings. For this reason, Paul says he has used strong language in his letters out of love, so he can enjoy being with them when he visits rather than spending time correcting them.



- Our call as Christians is to say unpopular things out of love for others. But we must always act and speak out of love.
- A number of Jewish leaders are angry at Paul's return to Jerusalem. After stirring up a mob against him, he is arrested, though his Roman citizenship spares him some of their intended punishments.

## Dive Deeper

If the goal of the Christian life is to be like Christ, not just be "nice," how can you imitate him today? In prayer today, ask the Lord how you can be more generous and more like him in your own life.

## Bible Answers

### What does the word "saint" mean in the New Testament?

Traditionally, the Church is described as existing in three places: on earth ("the Church Militant"), in purgatory ("the Church Suffering"), and in heaven ("the Church Triumphant"). Anyone in heaven can be called a saint, no matter whether he or she has been canonized.

In the New Testament, believers of Christ on earth are sometimes referred to as saints ("holy ones") or as "members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). For example, Paul refers to the Christians in Rome as those who are "called to be saints" (Romans 1:7). With this understanding, everyone in the Church is called to be a saint—that is, called to be holy. In typical use, the word "Saint" (capital S) refers to those individuals whom the Church has determined, by the process of canonization, to have lived a life of heroic virtue and to be in heaven. These "official" saints in heaven are models for us and intercessors to pray to for assistance in the struggles of life.

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Scan the QR code to listen to the *Bible in a Year* podcast on the Ascension app, to get exclusive content, and to access transcripts for every episode. Download the reading plan at <https://media.ascensionpress.com/category/ascension-podcasts/bibleinayear/>.

*The Bible in a Year* is a daily podcast, produced by Ascension and hosted by Fr. Mike Schmitz, where we read the whole Bible following *The Great Adventure* Bible study program created by Jeff Cavins. This bulletin was adapted from *The Bible in a Year Companion* books that complement the podcast.



## Week 49

Paragraphs 2623–2682



# THE CATECHISM IN A YEAR

WITH FR. MIKE SCHMITZ

## How We Pray PART FOUR: CHRISTIAN PRAYER

### IN WHAT WAYS CAN WE PRAY?

**P**rayer always begins with God initiating the encounter; we respond. Our prayer honors God because it acknowledges that God is our Father and provider. We can bring anything to prayer, and we can pray in a variety of ways, including through the sacraments, Scripture, and by asking for the intercession of the saints and Mary. While we can learn from how others have prayed, we must ultimately pray authentically on our own, in personal conversation with God.

#### Keep in Mind

- “The prayer of blessing is man’s response to God’s gifts” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2626).
- We owe God adoration, whether in song, verbal prayer, or silence before the tabernacle or the Eucharist.
- In a “prayer of petition,” we ask for the things we need (CCC 2629).
- “Prayers of lamentation” appear in the Old Testament but rarely in the New Testament (CCC 2630).
- Hope characterizes Christian prayer.
- Intercession (praying for others) imitates Jesus.
- The saints in heaven also intercede for us.
- The Eucharist is a prayer of thanksgiving that participates in the Son’s sacrifice to the Father.
- A “prayer of praise” speaks God’s titles and glorious attributes to him.
- When we pray, we unite with the saints who are praising God in heaven and interceding for us.
- We should offer prayers of praise daily to deepen our faith and relationship with God.
- We should not simply read Scripture but also pray it as a conversation with God.



*The Annunciation*  
by Fra Angelico (circa 1425)

#### Dive Deeper

The angel Gabriel’s words form part of the Hail Mary, by which we ask for Mary’s intercession (CCC 2676–2677).

The Church’s heritage shines with the Communion of Saints, who inspire and intercede for us. Choose a saint to read about today. Ask this saint to intercede in your life.





# PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE PRINCE OF PEACE



Isaiah 11:1–10 • Romans 15:4–9 • Matthew 3:1–12

## Family Car Talk

Today's Second Reading says, *"Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God."* Talk with your family on the way home from Mass today about how you can put this verse into practice.



**During this Advent season, what are some specific ways we can be welcoming to others?**



**Who in our community needs welcoming?**



**How can we, through our everyday example, invite those around us to experience the peace of Christ?**



## CRACK THE CODE FOR JOHN THE BAPTIST

**Instructions:** In today's Gospel, John the Baptist tells us to do something very important, something we have to do during Advent to get ready for Jesus' coming. Crack the code to see what it is!

A:	B:	C:	D:	E:	F:	G:	H:	I:
J:	K:	L:	M:	N:	O:	P:	Q:	R:
S:	T:	U:	V:	W:	X:	Y:	Z:	

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## LET THERE BE PEACE

**Instructions:** Today, Psalm 72 talks about peace, the theme for the Second Sunday of Advent. Find the word “peace” on the Advent wreath and color it in. Then color three candles purple and one unlit candle pink. The pink candle is for Gaudete (“Rejoice”) Sunday next week.

