

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

As we arrive at the fourth Sunday of Advent, we are invited into a deeper awareness of God’s nearness—especially within the complex realities of family life affected by addiction. The holidays can reopen old wounds, stir unmet expectations, or heighten tension. Yet Advent reminds us that God enters these very places with tenderness, clarity, and peace.

This Sunday’s second reading reminds us that God calls each of us—especially those carrying the weight of a loved one’s addiction—into deeper belonging and purpose (Romans 1:5-6):

*Through him we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles, among whom are you also, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.*

For family members and friends, this line—“*you are called to belong to Jesus Christ*”—is particularly meaningful. Addiction often creates emotional instability, over-responsibility, and confusion about identity and worth. Recovery invites us to re-anchor our identity in God, not in the chaos of our loved one’s behavior. We learn boundaries, compassion, and a healthy detachment rooted in love rather than fear.

The gospel for this Sunday gives us Joseph’s experience of fear, uncertainty, and God’s gentle reassurance in the midst of family turmoil (Matthew 1:18-24):

*This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” ... When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.*

Joseph models the complexity of family life: love mixed with fear, confusion mixed with responsibility, compassion mixed with uncertainty. But God meets him in the tension and invites him to move forward with courage and trust.

Family recovery mirrors Joseph’s journey. We learn to surrender what we cannot control. We seek God’s guidance in difficult decisions. We take small, faithful steps toward peace instead of reacting from fear or pressure. God gently invites us to trust Him with our families as they are—not as we wish they were.

As Christmas approaches, you may feel drawn to create harmony, fix problems, or manage outcomes. But Advent encourages a different posture: to trust, to breathe, to listen, and to let God lead. Christ comes into imperfect families with perfect love, offering healing that does not depend on circumstances.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How does Joseph’s experience speak to your role within your family?
- What expectations is God inviting you to release this Christmas?
- What does the “next right step” look like as you seek peace in your relationships?

## MASS READINGS

**FIRST READING** Isaiah 7:10-14

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

**SECOND READING** Romans 1:1-7

**GOSPEL** Matthew 1:18-24