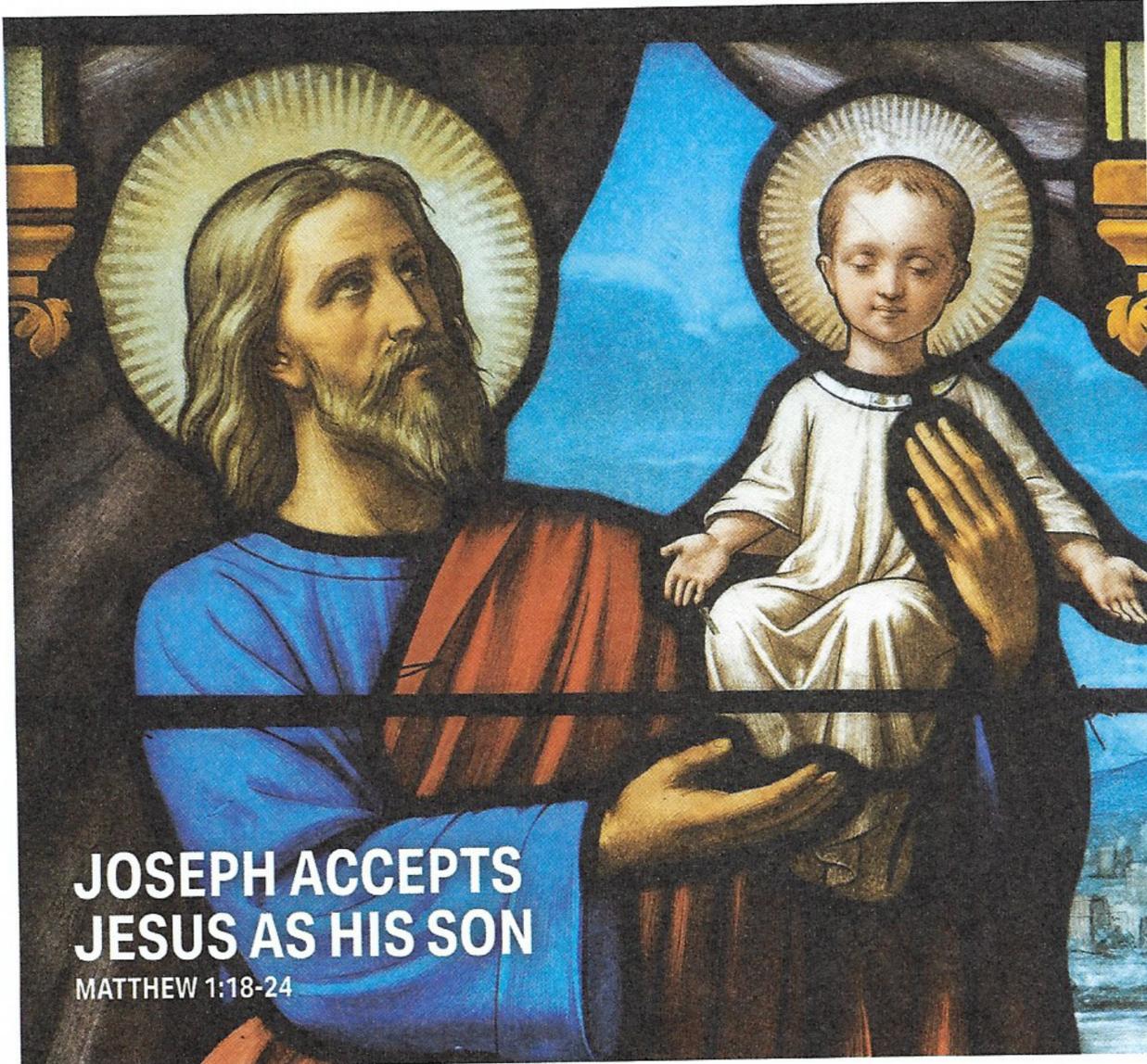


Sunday Message

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE WORD

Year A • 21 December 2025 • Psalter Week 4



JOSEPH ACCEPTS JESUS AS HIS SON

MATTHEW 1:18-24

This passage presents the quiet yet profound role of Joseph in the unfolding of salvation history. Unlike Luke's Gospel, which focuses on Mary's "yes," Matthew offers Joseph's perspective – a man caught in a dilemma between righteousness and mercy. Betrothed to Mary and discovering she is pregnant, Joseph initially plans to divorce her quietly, choosing not to expose her to shame.

But God intervenes through a dream. The angel reassures Joseph: "Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." Joseph's response is immediate and obedient. Without protest or delay, he does what the angel commands. In doing so, he becomes the earthly guardian of Jesus and the protector of Mary.

Matthew's Gospel highlights that this moment fulfils the prophecy from Isaiah: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel" – which means "God is with us." That name is central to Christian faith. In Jesus, God is no longer distant or hidden – He is present in our humanity, born into our world.

This passage teaches that God often works through ordinary people, quiet decisions, and faithful obedience. Joseph reminds us that trust in God sometimes means letting go of our own plans and stepping into mystery with faith. ■

LEARN

Pope St John Paul II emphasised in *Redemptoris Custos* ("Guardian of the Redeemer") that Joseph's faithful obedience shows us the dignity of human cooperation with God's plan. Joseph's "yes" reminds us that holiness often grows quietly through daily faithfulness and trusting surrender to God's will.

SAY

Lord, give me the strength to trust your plan,
The courage to follow your will,
And a heart willing to serve each day. Amen.

REFLECT

The story of Joseph in today's Gospel is a quiet, powerful example of faith and obedience. Imagine the confusion and worry Joseph must have felt when he discovered Mary was pregnant. In his time, this would have been a scandal. But Joseph is described as a "righteous man" – someone who seeks to do what is right, even when it's difficult.

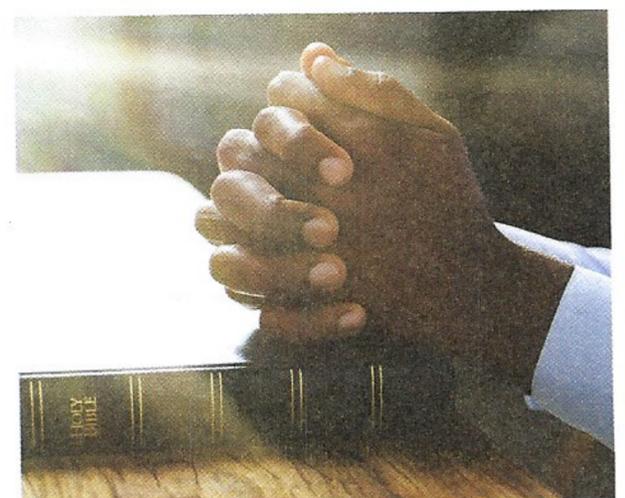
When God sends an angel to speak to Joseph in a dream, the message is clear: don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife. This reassurance helps Joseph to trust in a plan he cannot fully understand. Instead of reacting with anger or rejection, he chooses to believe and to act in faith.

Joseph's decision shows us that faith often requires courage. It means trusting God's promises, even when the path ahead is unclear or challenging. His obedience makes him a guardian not only of Mary but of Jesus Himself.

As we prepare for Christmas, Joseph's example invites us to trust God's plan in our own lives. Sometimes God calls us to step into uncertainty, to let go of control, and to follow Him with open hearts. May we, like Joseph, listen for God's voice and respond with courage and love. The God who comes to us is Emmanuel – God with us, always. ■

DO

Spend a few moments each day in quiet prayer, asking God to help you trust His plan – even when it feels uncertain. Like Joseph, try to be open to God's guidance in your life, and take one small step of obedience or kindness in response.



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*Drop down dew from above, you heavens,
and let the clouds rain down the Just One;
let the earth be opened and bring forth a Saviour.*

COLLECT

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of an Angel,
may by his Passion and Cross
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Isaiah 7:10-14

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

In those days: The LORD spoke to Ahaz:
'Ask a sign of the LORD your God;
let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.'
But Ahaz said,
'I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.'
And Isaiah said,
'Hear then, O house of David!
Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?
Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.
Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and shall call his name Emmanuel.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 24(23):1-2.3-4b.5-6.R. cf. 7c.10b

R: *Let the LORD enter; he is the king of glory.*

1. The LORD's is the earth and its fullness,
the world, and those who dwell in it.
It is he who set it on the seas;
on the rivers he made it firm. **R.**
2. Who shall climb the mountain of the LORD?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The clean of hands and pure of heart,
whose soul is not set on vain things. **R.**
3. Blessings from the LORD shall he receive,
and right reward from the God who saves him.
Such are the people who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. **R.**

SECOND READING Romans 1:1-7

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an Apostle, set apart
for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through
his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was
descended from David according to the flesh and was declared
to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness
by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord, through

whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the
obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations,
including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be
saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL Matthew 1:23

R: *Alleluia, Alleluia.*

Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Emmanuel –
which means, God with us.

R: *Alleluia.*

GOSPEL Matthew 1:18-24

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his
mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came
together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. And
her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to
shame, resolved to send her away quietly. But as he considered
these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a
dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as
your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.
She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will
save his people from their sins.'

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the
prophet:

'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall
call his name Emmanuel' – which means, God with us.

When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord
commanded him: he took his wife.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May the Holy Spirit, O Lord,
sanctify these gifts laid upon your altar,
just as he filled with his power
the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son;
and his name will be called Emmanuel.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having received this pledge of eternal redemption,
we pray, almighty God,
that, as the feast day of our salvation draws ever nearer,
so we may press forward all the more eagerly
to the worthy celebration of the mystery of your Son's Nativity.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Catholic Church of St Peter & St Paul Lincoln

999: If you need to call the Emergency Services to attend the Church or Parish Centre, *(please use what3words – VOTE FUNNY CRIED)*
 Evacuation: Should we need to evacuate the buildings, please assemble in front of 2a by the garage and fencing and not in the car park in front of the church doors or by the gates. Please keep the front of the car park clear for emergency service vehicles to access the site.

Parish Priest: V. Rev Canon Geoffrey Hunton KHS STB BA
 2a Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln LN6 7RB Tel: 01522 696838 Email geoffrey.hunton@dioceseofnottingham.uk
Website: www.sspp-church.org.uk NRC DT – A Registered Charity number 1134449
Parish Administrator: Tina McCarthy 2a Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln LN6 7RB 01522 682278 Email: tinasspp@btconnect.com
Social Media: www.facebook.com/ssppchurchlincs/ www.youtube.com/channel/UCZyr7ASmSKFu2EKdfoU_ITw twitter@ssppchurchlincs
Safeguarding Representative: Ted Coatsworth Mobile: 07513 725461 Email: Terence.CoatsworthPSR@dioceseofNottingham.uk
Missio Red Box Co-Ordinators: James and Kathryn Clarkson Email contact: jaclarkson@icloud.com
A LIVE SIMPLY, SUSTAINABLY AND IN SOLIDARITY AWARD RECIPIENT
Schools: St Hugh's Catholic Primary School Headteacher: **Mr Gregory Hughes** Tel: 01522 501137
 St Peter and St Paul Catholic Voluntary Academy Headteacher: **Mrs Caroline Hewardine** Tel: 01522 871400

PLEASE SEE NOTICES IN CHURCH AND THE PARISH CENTRE INDICATING THE DEFIBRILLATOR LOCATION: LINK WALL BY THE FIRE DOOR

Fourth Week of Advent - Psalter Week 4	INTENTIONS / LITURGIES / OTHER
Saturday 20th December 5.15pm 6pm	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT Confessions Elizabeth "Betty" Norris RIP (2 nd Anniversary)
Sunday 21st December 9am 11am	FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT Day of Special Prayer for Expectant Mothers People of the Parish Norah Gaughan RIP (Birthday Remembrance)
Monday 22nd December 7pm	Advent Feria Confessions
Tuesday 23rd December 2pm Mass at HMP Morton Hall 7pm	Advent Feria Staff, Inmates and their Families Elizabeth "Betty" Norris RIP (2 nd Anniversary)
Wednesday 24th December 11am-12 Noon 5.30pm 6pm THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD 9.30pm 10pm MIDNIGHT MASS	Advent Feria Confessions Carols Katie and Mick McCoy RIP (Loved and Missed Always, Christmas Blessings) Carols and Readings Edna O'Leary RIP (4 th Anniversary)
Thursday 25th December 10am	THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD – CHRISTMAS DAY (SOLEMNITY) People of the Parish
Friday 26th December 12 Noon	FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN Peggy and Bill (Wedding Anniversary Remembrance)
Saturday 27th December 11am 2.30pm Syro Malabar Mass - Malayalam 5.15pm 6pm	FEAST OF SAINT JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST Confessions - FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY Confessions Jimmy, Seamus and Philomena Williams RIP
Sunday 28th December 9am 11am	FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY Sister Bernadette McGovern (Birthday Mass) People of the Parish

Readers	This	6pm – S Collingham	9am – J Clarkson	11am – J Mitchell
	Next	6pm – L Wright	9am – J May / I May	11am – J Geary
Weekend Coffee	This	9am and 11am – Zawieizeri Maryji		
	Next	9am - 11am –		
Wednesday Coffee	This	-		
	Next	Chris and Jo		
Weekend Welcomers	This	6pm - Y Musson, T Buckley	9am – M Hardy, M York, M Thompson	11am – T Silva, L Roberts, Shay
	Next	6pm - Y Musson, T Buckley	9am – J May, M York, M Thompson	11am – T Silva, L Roberts, Shay

WEEKLY INCOME W/E 14/12/2025	POPE'S PRAYER INTENTION FOR DECEMBER	PLEASE CONSIDER LEAVING YOUR PARISH A LEGACY IN YOUR WILL
Standing Orders £ 579.53 Envelopes £ 75.00 Loose Plate £ 513.23 TOTAL £1167.76	For Christians in areas of conflict Let us pray that Christians living in areas of war or conflict, especially in the Middle East, might be seeds of peace, reconciliation and hope.	THANK YOU
Second Collection £ 211.75 P&NP Christmas Flowers £209.98 Weds Coffee £14.35 Sunday Coffee £375 Donations £5 Repository £37 Mass Stipends £70 Funeral Fees - Hall Fees £40 Newsletters £8.05 Debt £178,889.10 Paying £500 p/m	IN MEMORIAM BOOK Should you wish to see your loved one's name in the anniversary book, insertion details are below the cabinet.	PLEASE PARK CONSIDERATELY IN THE CHURCH CAR PARK THANK YOU PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE HYMN BOOKS IN THE LADY CHAPEL RETURN THEM TO THE SHELVES AT THE REAR OF THE CHURCH THANK YOU
	SSPP Parish Draw Please consider joining. Cost - monthly £5, quarterly £15, yearly £60. 14/12/2025 £100 Ian Green No 196	

Parish Administrator: Office Closed. Warm Spaces and Craft and Chat: Closed for Christmas, returns on Wednesday 7th January 2026
Prayer Group: Returns on Tuesday 6th January at 7.30pm in the Parish Centre.

Christmas & New Year Masses & Confessions

Confessions:

Monday 22nd December 7.00pm

Wednesday 24th December: 11.00am – 12.00 Noon

Christmas Eve: Wednesday 24th December

5.30pm: Carols followed by 6.00pm Vigil Mass

9.30pm: Carols & Readings

Midnight Mass: 10.00pm

Thursday 25th December:

10.00am: Mass

Friday 26th December (Boxing Day) Feast of St Stephen

12.00 Noon: Mass

Saturday Sunday 27th/28th December Feast of The Holy Family and Institution of Altar Servers and presentation of Bronze, Silver and Gold Medals

Saturday: 6.00pm and Sunday: 9.00am and 11.00am

1st January 2026 Solemnity of Mary Mother of God 12 Noon

Please note there are no Masses on 29th, 30th and 31st December

Christmas Offerings: The collections on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day go to the Parish. However, should you wish to make a personal offering to Canon Geoffrey for Christmas, please place it in an envelope marked for his attention and place in the Offertory Basket as usual.
Thank you.

Christmas Greeting

As we enter the final days of Advent and approach the Nativity of Our Lord. May I extend to you all my sincere good wishes and blessings for this Holy Season to you and your families. These few days leading up to and over the Christmas Season are an opportunity for us all to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas and its implications for us as individuals and as a community here at SS Peter and Paul's. Jesus' birth is an occasion to wonder at the gift God gave us by becoming Man not only for our salvation but also to bring us closer to him by imitating Him and following Him in how we live our lives. Let us all rejoice at this reality of our faith and strive evermore to become true disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ.
Sincerely, Canon Geoffrey.

Christmas Fayre/Raffle: Please see the noticeboards for updated figures raised. Please will the following collect their raffle prize from Canon Geoffrey before it is redistributed. Thank you.

1677 Tony Gaughan 0577 Breda Shaw 0084 Paula Upton

Christmastide Wreaths will again be hung from the Consecration Candle Holders. Should you wish to sponsor one with the name of a loved one, please put an envelope through the Parish Office door with your donation, contact details and the dedication to be displayed in church. There are 11 available, suggested donation £10. Thank you.

NOMAD: We will be decorating the Altar tree with sponsored baubles again this year. For a suggested donation of £5 you can collect a tag to write a message on which will be hung alongside a bauble on the tree. Tags are available after Masses and at the coffee mornings. Thank you.

Thank you to St Peter and St Paul's staff and students for the lovely midday festivities on Friday 12th December. We were a very small band of Parishioners but were looked after and entertained wonderfully well. Food, singing from the choir, craft and quizzes. Hopefully it will happen again next year and more of our Parishioners will be able to enjoy.

A HUGE Thank You from Crafty Crafters! Thank you to everyone who supported our stall at the Christmas bazaar! It was good fun and a productive way to help raise much needed funds for the parish. It was a real boost to see our hard work appreciated and the quality of the items we made so well-received. Your support means a lot to us.

Join Us! We are always looking for new members: We meet every Wednesday from 1:30-3:30pm in the Parish Centre Social area, alternatively, you can join our WhatsApp group to keep in touch and take part in our projects virtually. To join, simply provide your mobile number to any current member of the group.

We look forward to crafting with you! Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 7th January 2026.

The Fundraising Circle of Friends: Building on the success of your very generous donations last year, we will be collecting for the LAT Charity in January to support their work with the resettlement of prisoners upon their release from Lincoln Prison. Your donations last year made a huge difference. There is a list of items for donation, along with a display about the work of the resettlement charity in the narthex. Thank you for your never-ending generosity.

Stand up for religious freedom! Consider signing Aid to the Church in Needs' petition supporting persecuted Christians globally. Your voice matters. Help urge world leaders to act on behalf of those who suffer for practicing their faith acnuk.org/article-18-petition-religious-freedom-human-right-not-privilege

Admissions Catholic Primary Academies (Reception Year) Children born between 01/09/2021 and 31/08/2022: The deadline for applications for school place is 15th January 2026. Application forms are available on your 'home' Local Authority website. For every Catholic school you should also complete a supplementary information form and return the form to the school by the deadline. You must also include a baptism certificate (photocopies are acceptable; contact the parish of baptism if you do not have a copy); failure to supply the required supporting evidence will mean your child is ranked in a lower criterion which may affect your chance of a place.

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Multi-Academy Trust is consulting regarding the proposed closure of the **Sixth Form at St Peter & St Paul Catholic School in Lincoln**. This consultation will run between 8th December 2025 and 16th January 2026. Please visit www.ololcatholicmat.co.uk for further information including: the rationale for the proposal, future planning, considerations and next steps and a link to the stakeholder response form.

White Flower Appeal: The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) Annual Appeal - at all Masses over the weekend 17th/18th January.

Fr Michael O'Kane, of the Commissariat of the Holy Land, has written to thank Bishop Patrick for the generosity of parishioners earlier this year when the Collection for Holy Places in the Holy Land was taken on Good Friday. Across the Diocese more than £20,000 was given to support the Christian communities in this war-torn part of the world, where Jesus himself lived and ministered. The Franciscans keep our Diocese and parishioners in their thankful prayers.

Diamond Jubilee of the Laying of the Foundation Stone of SSPP: 2026 sees the 60th anniversary of the Laying of the Foundation an important event in the life of our Parish. A suggestion has been made that we should record memories of that day 60 years ago. If any of you would be willing to write an article or provide photographs of the event, please contact Canon Geoffrey. Also, I would appreciate other ideas of how we may commemorate this event, likewise, please contact Canon Geoffrey.

First Holy Communions 2026: We will celebrate First Holy Communion here at SSPP on Saturday 13th June. Further information and Application Forms will be made available early in 2026.

Confirmations 2026: The Sacrament of Confirmation will be celebrated at St Hugh's next year on 2nd July. For further information contact St Hugh's.

Peace Prayer for Ukraine & the Middle East

Gracious God, we pray for all persons suffering from war. May they be held in your loving care and protection and given the strength to endure great suffering and hardship. Transform the hearts and minds of all those who perpetuate violence and oppression. Grant wisdom to world leaders in advancing efforts toward world peace; may they not be compromised by self-interest and blind indifference. We ask all this through the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes and in the name of your Son Jesus and The Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen.



Fourth Sunday in Advent