

religions surrounding the birth and life of Jesus. However, candles on the tree today have been replaced by electrical lights and many think lights are just to brighten their Christmas decorations. Of the many bright Christmas symbols, the main light known to all is placed on the top of the tree, the star. However, not all families have the tradition of placing stars at the top of the tree. Instead, some households place an angel on top of the tree instead of a star. This symbolises the angel who announced Christ's birth.

Nativity Scene: In its present form the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to St. Francis of Assisi, who made the Christmas crèche or manger for Christmas Eve of 1223. The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time. When the manger is set up in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another family member.

-Bernard Kellett

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.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7 1-5, 8-12, 14-16

Responsorial Psalm: 88 Response: I will sing forever of your love, O Lord.

Second Reading: Romans 16: 25-27

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! I am the handmaid of the Lord: let what you have said be done to me. Alleluia!

Gospel: Luke 1: 26-38

Memorial Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

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

Advent is a journey towards Bethlehem. May we let ourselves be drawn by the light of God made man. -Pope Francis



Fourth Sunday of Advent, Cycle B, 2023 Weekly Reflection:

Christmas Symbols (1) Every year, we make sure Christmas symbols are in their perfect place. These symbols and ornaments have become part of our Christmas celebrations. They are more than likely, ornaments, wrapped presents, food, the Christmas tree, and more. Every year, meaningful Christmas symbols fill the Yuletide season. Through the years of celebrating this big occasion, however, we may have forgotten why we use these decorations. Each of these Christmas symbols has a Christian implication. It is important to recognise their meanings so we can look at these symbols in a greater context and more meaningful manner.

Gifts: One of the highlights of Christmas is giving and exchanging of gifts. This is shown in the story of the birth of Jesus in the New Testament. The Three Wise Men (**Matthew 2:1 – 12**) honoured the birth of Jesus by offering their precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. From this story, a meaningful tradition and Christmas symbol is born. Although the concept of giving was from this story, gifts will always remind us of the best and greatest gift that we have received, Jesus. His nativity is the ultimate gift to the world. From **John 3:16**, it tells us that God loved the world so much that He willingly and lovingly gave His Son that we may have eternal life. It is the symbol of God's unconditional love and compassion.

Candles And Christmas Lights: Before Christmas lights were used, candles were lit to be the light in Christmas trees. It symbolises the light of the world who is Jesus. He came down into the darkness that the people may find the light. In **John 8:12**, Jesus declared that He is the Light of the World, and whoever follows Him will never again walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Candles also represent the star of Bethlehem when Jesus was born. This bright light guided the three Wise men on their journey to find the child, Jesus. Born two thousand years ago, today we have the same Light who will guide us in our journey in this life. Also, lighting candles is a tradition in many