Spirituality
Scripture for Life
Columns
Spirituality



People work on a garden at Sacred Heart Parish Mission in the Diocese of Joliet, Ill. The food grown is distributed to people in need of food assistance in the community. (CNS/Courtesy of Joliet Diocese)



by Mary M. McGlone

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

December 13, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Christmas lights are shining all over the world. Whether in the Southern Hemisphere's summer, the northern winter or the eternal spring of equatorial places, we set up luminarias, burn candles and put lights on trees, creating an atmosphere of cheer wherever we look. Yet no matter the display, compared to what Scripture tells us about the time of Emmanuel, even our most lavish decor seems paltry.

Isaiah tells us that with God's coming, deserts will sparkle and the land itself will seem to sing. In "*Laudato Si*', on Care for Our Common Home," Pope Francis said something similar: "The destiny of all creation is bound up with the mystery of Christ. ... The creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end ... The very flowers of the field and the birds ... are now imbued with his radiant presence."

Francis calls all of creation a sacrament of Emmanuel, God with us. And God keeps saying, "I am doing something new! Do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:19).

What are we to perceive? That was John the Baptist's question about Jesus. Just imagine, he was in prison and wondering if his work had been in vain. Jesus was not throwing tyrants from their thrones, or overwhelming people with the fear of God. He preached far more mildly — and with more humor — than John.

Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025

Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10
Psalm 146
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

So, John sent his disciples to ask, "Are you really the one? Is this how it will be after all that I said?" When we face what seems to be indomitable evil, we ask the same.

What do we expect when we pray, "Lord, come and save us?" Today's psalm proclaims that the Lord keeps faith and secures justice for the oppressed. We look at tyranny, wars and starvation and ask, "When? Where?"

It's a beautiful thing to repeat Francis' words that the Risen One is directing all toward fullness in God. These days we enjoy Christmas trees, foods and gifts. We chant, inviting Emmanuel to be with us. We sing "Joy to the World," and savor the gentle harmonies of "O Holy Night," but what does all of this say to the six o'clock news?

Paul calls us to the patience of farmers. What we may not realize is that we need that patience with ourselves more than with God. What are we doing to make the necessary difference, to increase the realm of love in our world, to risk our comfort like prophets do? Do we have the patience to continue on when we don't see dramatic signs?

Today's Gospel suggests that, rather than look for Jesus in the crib or even the tabernacle, we should listen to what he told John's disciples. Where do we find Christ active today?

Certainly, in the work of physicians who remove cataracts, prescribe antibiotics, vaccines, reading glasses and implant cochlear implants for people who cannot hear. We see Christ's saving work where the people of Uganda have the means to purify their water, where World Central Kitchen is providing food in Gaza and Ukraine, where teachers sacrifice material gain to help others develop their potential. We see it where missionaries leave their homes and security to serve their neediest neighbors. We see it in peaceful protests for justice for immigrants and on behalf of democracy. We see it wherever one person reaches out to help or comfort another.

Advertisement

Each of these scenes depicts the ongoing nativity of Christ among us.

God has given birth to a creation capable of participating in divine life. Jesus gave a replicable witness to that truth. Like him, we need to pray without ceasing to open ourselves to grace. We need to consecrate time to pondering our Scriptures to better understand God's ways among us. We need to reflect and pray with others who hear the same call.

Then, with the boldness of the Word become flesh, we must speak out in truth and integrity and act with the audacity of Jesus and the prophets to continue the life-giving, risky work of Christ in our world — any and everywhere.

Francis taught that God is drawing the entire creation toward the fullness of all we can become. That fullness is dynamic, growing as we rejoice in our limitless and loving union with one another, God and all of creation. In this season, and always, we are called to be the lights that manifest the presence of Christ among us.

This story appears in the **Advent** feature series. View the full series.