

## Prayer Gathering for Fourth Week of Advent

SIGN OF THE CROSS +

OPENING PRAYER

**Father of Jesus... Maker of Us All...  
by sending your Son to walk among us  
you put on our flesh... our pain and sorrow... our joy and hope... our whole lives.  
Help us to be as committed to you as you are to us  
and to share with others the wonders you have worked in our lives.  
We ask this in the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ, our Lord. AMEN.**

READING

MOMENT FOR SILENCE

GOSPEL PASSAGE

SHARING QUESTIONS

*“The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying: ‘Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God; let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky!’”*

**When have you (or has someone close to you) ever asked God for a sign?  
What happened? What is your view of ‘signs from God’?**

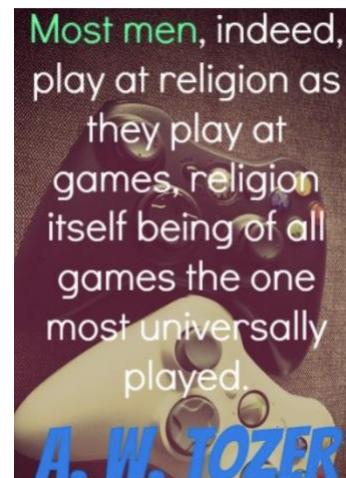
*“The Lord himself will give you this sign:  
The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall name him Emmanuel.”*

**What does the coming of Jesus to Earth tell you about God?  
What does Christmas mean to you spiritually?**

POSTED RECENTLY

When it comes to Christ, you've got to do the same.  
Call him crazy, or crown him as king. Dismiss him as a  
fraud, or declare him to be God. Walk away from him,  
or bow before him, but don't play games with him.

Max Lucado



DISCUSSION

*Ahaz: “I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!”*

*Isaiah: “Listen, O house of David! Is it not enough for you to weary people, must you also weary my God?”*

**Isaiah is accusing Ahaz of pretending to be too religious, too pious, to do the very thing God is asking of him. This “playing games with God” is a very subtle, but common form of spiritual abuse. It’s unusual to be able to detect it in oneself, but can you see traces of it in you? When have you played games with God?**

## LITANY

I say "I want to let go of my anger," but I am compelled to get in the last word...

**...Help me never to weary you, Lord...**

I say "I'm only trying to help," but others can see the strings that are attached...

**...Help me never to weary you, Lord...**

I say "I'm doing it for God," but the benefits all seem to go to me...

**...Help me never to weary you, Lord...**

I say "I believe in truth," but if a fib can get me unstuck, then a fib it will be...

**...Help me never to weary you, Lord...**

I say "The rules are the rules," but often secretly give myself a pass...

**...Help me never to weary you, Lord...**

I say "I want what's best for you"... but only after I have what's best for me...

**...Help me never to weary you, Lord...**

I often say "That's too risky," so I don't have to use or test my faith...

**...Help me never to weary you, Lord...**

I often say "I'm committed to this," when, in truth, I'll walk away when the going gets tough...

**...Help me never to weary you, Lord...**

I say "I'll do anything for God"... but then again... I won't do that... or that... or that...

**...Help me never to weary you, Lord...**

## OUR FATHER

[OPTIONAL] PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL COMMUNION (St. Alphonsus Ligouri)

**My Jesus, I believe that you are present in the most Blessed Sacrament.**

**I love You above all things and I desire to receive You into my soul.**

**Since I cannot now receive You sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart.**

**I embrace You as if You were already here, and unite myself wholly to You.**

**Never permit me to be separated from You. AMEN.**

## CLOSING PRAYER

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.**

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. AMEN.**

## SIGN OF THE CROSS +

## READING 1

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah

The LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying:

*Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God;  
let it be deep as the netherworld, or high as the sky!*

But Ahaz answered,

*"I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!"*

Then Isaiah said:

*Listen, O house of David!  
Is it not enough for you to weary people,  
must you also weary my God?*

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign:  
The virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,  
and shall name him Emmanuel.*

The word of the Lord

*Thanks be to God*

## READING 2

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

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."*

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,  
which means "God is with us."*

When Joseph awoke,  
he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him  
and took his wife into his home.

The Gospel of the Lord

*Praise to You, Lord, Jesus Christ*

*Matthew, chapter 1*