

CHRISTMASTIDE 2022

WEEK FIVE

# Hospitality:

GOD IS WITH US



# Hospitality is the heart of who we are as Catholic health care.



Over the last few Advent weeks, we have prepared our hearts and homes to receive God's coming to be with us through the person of Jesus. Now we celebrate Christmastide, a time to recall God's greatest gift of hospitality: Emmanuel, God with us.

In the days ahead, The Catholic Health Association encourages you to ponder the reality of Christ's coming as you faithfully offer hospitality to others in the tradition of our founders. God's presence dwells within every encounter. It is constant and abiding, it lights the darkest of circumstances, and it shows up

in unexpected and unpredictable ways — a subversive act of love unto us.

We are pleased to offer a concluding spiritual smorgasbord for this season that will encourage you to live with more intention into this radical practice — in your work, your community, your home, and in your own being with God. May you and your health care colleagues find nourishment and hope in the days ahead through our offering of prayers, scriptures and reflections, stories, recipes, podcast episodes, and music.

*Come, Lord Jesus, come.*

**“The Inaccessible comes down to us by love: the Son, the invisible image of God, makes himself visible through the Incarnation. To see God is to meet Christ in one's neighbour.”**

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**JOHN CHRYSOSTOM**

**“The Incomprehensibility of God”**

WEEK FIVE

# Hospitality: God Is With Us

In the Christmastide hymn “See Amid the Winter’s Snow” Edward Caswell’s lyrics resound: “Lo, within a manger lies He who built the lofty skies.” This is a lot for the human mind to fathom. Imagine the scene: the Creator of the stars of night chose to enter the world’s dimness while relying on the hospitality of ordinary people. It is this radical contrast that Christians proclaim at Christmas.

Matthew’s gospel invites us to see the hospitality of Joseph through the dimness that surrounded Jesus’ birth. Light Incarnate was coming to grace the earth!

Joseph was available to God even in his sleep. The news came by a dream in the middle of the night, in the middle of the dark. Yet Joseph allowed himself to be stirred by a heavenly messenger for a heavenly purpose -- even in his “off” hours. He had a role to play and he was receptive enough to be awakened for the mission.

Joseph made a deliberate choice to stay. When the word came that Mary was pregnant, it was likely not at all how Joseph planned to begin a life with his

bride-to-be, nor what was accepted by social norms. The text is clear; he wanted to divorce her, the mother of God, right from the start of the news. But in the murky mess Joseph decided to companion her. He was not going anywhere.

Joseph believed even when he could not see. In the haze, Joseph determined he would hold the ambiguity. He elected to believe; he decided to obey. Despite all the questions the held, his yes to God and his yes to Mary helped nurture the Light of the World into being.

While God may not have needed Joseph’s hospitality to be born into the world, God allowed it. In the dark, Joseph said yes. Perhaps his resolve might be an invitation to us. You see, the incarnation we celebrate at Christmas, God’s coming to dwell with us in the middle of the dimness, is exactly the point. How will we be hospitable to the One who built the lofty skies when we cannot see?

*Come, Lord Jesus, come.*

**This week, take some time to consider hospitality in your heart, your home, your workplace, and your community.**

- What ambiguities do you currently face that seem murky, hazy, or yet to be revealed? At work? At home? In your community? In your own heart?
- What aspect of Joseph’s hospitality is most encouraging to you?
- How might the reality of God with you offer light in a dim season?



## Scripture

"Now 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. He had no relations with her until she bore a son, and he named him Jesus. | **MT 1:18-25**



"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;'"



[READ THE FULL SCRIPTURE.](#)



[LISTEN TO OUR CHRISTMAS PLAYLIST.](#)

## An Invitation to Lectio Divina: Listening with the Ear of the Heart

Rooted in the Christian monastic tradition, Lectio Divina is a way of awakening our hearts and coming to an experiential awareness of God. Latin for "divine reading," it is the process of discerning a word of revelation from God through Scripture directly to the individual.

Using the scripture above, follow the four-fold movement listed below. Pause and listen deeply to what God might be saying to you this Advent. Begin by recognizing the presence of God. Settle, and intentionally release the chatter of your mind to God.

### **Lectio** | Listening

Read the passage slowly and prayerfully, listening for a word or phrase that catches your attention — God's word for you today.

### **Meditatio** | Reflecting

Hear the passage a second time. This time notice any thought or reflection that emerges — listening for something that perhaps touched you a bit deeper.

### **Oratio** | Responding

Listen a third time to the passage. Become aware of any prayer that rises up as you respond to the movement of God's Spirit in your heart or mind.

### **Contemplatio** | Resting

One final time, hear the passage again. Allow yourself to rest in sacred stillness with God, the One who simply loves being with you.





# Christmas Prayer

Lord God,  
in the deepest night  
there rises the star of morning,  
of birth,  
the herald of a new day you are making,  
a day of great joy dawning  
in yet faint shafts of light and love.

I hear whispers of peace in the stillness,  
fresh breezes of promise  
stirring,  
winter sparrows  
chirping of life,  
a baby's cry  
of need  
and hope —  
Christmas!

In the darkness I see the light  
and find in it comfort,  
confidence,  
cause for celebration,  
for the darkness cannot overcome it;  
and I rejoice to nourish it  
in myself,  
in other people,  
in the world  
for the sake of him  
in whom it was born  
and shines forever,  
even Jesus the Christ.

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**TED LODER**

From "Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle"

# Hospitality and Heritage



What sights, sounds, smells and feelings evoke precious memories of simpler times, cherished loved ones and hospitality? For Sister Mary Haddad, RSM, CHA's President and CEO, time spent in her Italian grandmother's kitchen as a child brings forth warm memories. Her family demonstrated hospitality through good food, conversation and a sense that all were welcomed at the table.

While preparing a meal together, Sister Mary's grandmother would share stories of what it was like growing up in Italy. The kitchen's warmth, the sauce's smells and the food's colors are still a vivid part of her childhood memories. Lasagna has been one of Sister's favorite dishes for as long as she can remember. To hear Sr. Mary recount the hospitality in her family kitchen and discuss her lasagna preparation, [join us for this week's Advent Conversation.](#)



**SR. MARY HADDAD**

President and CEO, Catholic Health Association



# Lasagna Recipe

 **SERVES 4-5 PEOPLE**

 **COOK TIME: 1 HOUR**

## Instructions:

1. Make your favorite lasagna recipe.
2. Use fresh ingredients.
3. Pour a glass of red wine in preparation. (Optional)

Even the most advanced lasagna recipe calls for the same simple ingredients: pasta, sauce, and cheese. But when ordinary flavors bake together, incredible goodness emerges. The aroma, texture, and flavor are an absolute delight to the senses. So too it is with hospitality.

Over the last few weeks you have been invited to consider how God uses simple acts of love to revolutionize hospitality, transforming ordinary gifts for extraordinary purposes. As you assemble your favorite lasagna recipe to share with others, remain open to God's presence. How might you be willing to be a guest or a host outside your own comfort zone, beyond your own expectations where God's faithful presence might birth impossibility into being? May the words of St. Teresa of Avila inspire your preparation: "Know that even when you are in the kitchen, our Lord moves amidst the pots and pans." Bon appetit and Merry Christmas!

For those looking for a written lasagna recipe, we recommend the [New York Times](#) or [Food Network](#) for a vegetarian option.

**"The problem is solved. Now go and utterly enjoy all remaining days. Not only is it 'Always Advent,' but every day can now be Christmas because the one we thought we were just waiting for has come once and for all."**

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**RICHARD ROHR**

**"Preparing for Christmas"**





**ST. LOUIS OFFICE**

4455 Woodson Road  
St. Louis, MO 63134  
(314) 427-2500

**WASHINGTON OFFICE**

1625 Eye Street NW, Suite 550  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 296-3993

**CHAUSA.ORG**