**December 20, 2020**

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16

Rom 16:25-27

Lk 1:26-38

**GROW:** During Advent, we await the One who is perfect grace, light, and joy. The Christ Child’s arrival during a time when darkness has been increasing each day, and our anticipation of that arrival, emphasize his salvific role. For if even the smallest light is a glimmer of hope in the night, how much more is Christ’s perfect and all-consuming light a life-saving flare in the darkness of sin and death. As we hear the angel Gabriel say of Christ, in his visitation to Mary: “He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High … and of his kingdom there will be no end.” Emmanuel, God with us, is the reason for our hope, and the reason for our joy.

**GO:** I don’t know about you, but despite my best intentions, I have been known to get a little swallowed up in the commercialism of Christmas. But this last week of Advent feels like a chance to reorder my mind and heart. One way to do this is by focusing on the “O Antiphons,” prayed during the Church’s evening prayer from December 17-23. Each antiphon begins with the word “O,” and is followed by a title for the Messiah, found in Scripture, and a petition for him to come and save his people. Although this may sound overly complicated, you most likely know of these without realizing it: they have been transposed into the verses of the hymn, *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. Today’s first reading speaks of David, who thought he could build a place for God to dwell, but he can't. Instead, for *us*, whom God created and fashioned in his own image, God created a dwelling for his Son, so that he might enter into our human history as one of us; and in doing so, dwell among us and within us forever. Come, Lord Jesus.

**INVITE:** When lighting the final candle on your Advent wreath, invite your family to help you make the prayer interactive. Focus on the lesser-known verses of *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, such as the one below – it is an ancient prayer still very relevant today.

*O King of the Nations*

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of humankind;
O bid our sad divisions cease,
And be for us our King of Peace.

*Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to you, O Israel.*