

## December 23

**Priest:** See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years. Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents, so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse. (Mal 3:1-4; 4:5-6)

## Reflection

**Lector:** Malachi prophesies the birth and mission of John the Baptist. Like a new Elijah, John will go before the Messiah and prepare the people for the Lord's coming. A spirit of joy and wonderment pervades today's prophecy, for the hand of God is active in Israel. The people wonder what it will all mean for their future. What does it mean for us today? The seventh "O antiphon" climaxes the series. The Messiah is addressed in human form. He is asked to remain with us as Emmanuel. May our hearts be ready to receive the Lord into our small, personal world, as he once came to the little town of Bethlehem. Emmanuel - God is with us! God, stay with us.

## Antiphon

**Priest:** O Emmanuel, our ruler and lawgiver, the expected of the nations and the Redeemer of all, come now to deliver us, O our Lord and our master. (cf. Is 7:14; Is 33:22; Gen 49:10; Zech 9:9; Jn 20:28)

## Magnificat

**All:** My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.  
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants forever. (Lk 1:46-55)

## Intercessions

**Priest:** King of kings, direct the minds and hearts of those who hold authority;

**All:** let justice and peace prevail and let goodwill reign forever.

**Priest:** Lord Jesus, through your saving grace and power,

**All:** may your Church continue to spread until it embraces every nation.

**Priest:** Jesus, prince of peace, you are meek and humble of heart;

**All:** teach us to be thankful for all the blessings you bestow upon us.

**Priest:** Jesus, source of light and growth, increase vocations in your Church, like a gentle rain falling upon the earth;

**All:** the harvest is great and your word must be announced through all the world until your kingdom comes.

### **Closing Prayer**

**Priest:** Christ goes before us. He is the Lamb without sin who will open to us the gates of heaven. He is the high priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech. He is the king of justice and his reign is eternal.

You who live and reign with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end.

**All:** Amen.

*The final Marian hymn on page 8.*