



## The Splendor of God

**"H**ere is your God!" Who wouldn't run to see this marvel? Isaiah 35 tells us what to look for: nature will explode with excitement and splendor, and the hardships of life will no longer hold us captive. Is this really possible, or is it merely hopeful poetry? Jesus tells the disciples of John the Baptist that it's possible. In fact he, Jesus, is the one who has ushered in the kingdom of heaven. Since that is true, why don't you and I see it?

The reading from James sheds light on this. There is something truly wondrous about earth bringing forth "precious fruit" (James 5:7). Our understanding of how the development and emergence of fruits occur does not make the fact of natural growth any less wondrous. Farmers know this well. They also know that such growth will occur only when human labor cooperates with the laws of nature designed by God. In other words, the farmer provides the labor while God provides the life-giving sun and rain.

If our world does not resemble Isaiah's astonishing portrait or the healing that Jesus was able to accomplish, might it be that we have not done what we can to remedy the hardships of life that hold so many captive? When God enters our lives, he provides us with the power we need to change our world, but we must be willing to allow that power to work through us. If we are open to God in our midst, our world will be rich with life and healing, and everyone will know that God is really here.

—Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA



*Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God,  
he comes with vindication;  
With divine recompense he comes to save you.*

ISAIAH 35:4



### FOR *Reflection*

- ✦ *On what ways might you enrich the life of another?*
- ✦ *What can you do to heal broken relationships in your life?*

# Dear Padre,

**The Church is steeped in symbolism, tradition, and “living metaphors,” but it sometimes forgets common sense. Why smell up the church with incense? Why gussy up the Mass with horns, flutes, and guitars, at times turning holy Mass into a pseudohootenanny?**

**T**he Mass is our high point of worship. All other sacred actions and activities of the Christian life “are bound up with it, flow from it, and are ordered to it” (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 16). The dignity and importance of worshiping the Father in and through Christ at Mass is expressed in communion with fellow believers, and ideally through a full sensory experience with all our heart, mind, and soul. In short, if something is worth doing, it’s worth doing well—especially if “doing” opens us to the mystery of God’s presence through what we see, hear, smell, touch, and taste. “In the liturgy the sanctification of women and men is given expression in symbols perceptible by the senses and is carried out in ways appropriate to each of them” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy [Sacrosanctum Concilium]*, 7).

Not all Mass occasions call for “smells, bells, toots, and flutes,” but the visual beauty of the sacred surroundings, the sounds of sacred music, and the sacred words and actions that connect us to our traditions and to Christ’s memorial institution, are intended to elevate us in our collective prayer to God. At times, such a sublime experience of the transcendent may be inhibited by sheer practicality, efficiency, and mundanity!



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—Fr. Byron Miller, CSSR  
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## Calendar

### Monday

DECEMBER 16  
Advent Weekday  
Nm 24:2–7, 15–17a  
Mt 21:23–27

### Tuesday

DECEMBER 17  
Advent Weekday  
Gn 49:2, 8–10  
Mt 1:1–17

### Wednesday

DECEMBER 18  
Advent Weekday  
Jer 23:5–8  
Mt 1:18–25

### Thursday

DECEMBER 19  
Advent Weekday  
Jgs 13:2–7, 24–25a  
Lk 1:5–25

### Friday

DECEMBER 20  
Advent Weekday  
Is 7:10–14  
Lk 1:26–38

### Saturday

DECEMBER 21  
Advent Weekday  
Sg 2:8–14 or  
Zep 3:14–18a  
Lk 1:39–45

### Sunday

DECEMBER 22  
Fourth Sunday  
of Advent  
Is 7:10–14  
Rom 1:1–7  
Mt 1:18–24



## A WORD FROM *Pope Francis*

**Your music and your song are a true instrument of evangelization insofar as you witness to the profoundness of the Word of God that touches the hearts of people, and allows a celebration of the sacraments, especially of the Holy Eucharist, which makes one sense the beauty of paradise.**

—INTERNATIONAL MEETING OF CHOIRS, NOVEMBER 24, 2018