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20 Saturday  
DECEMBER

SATURDAY, 20<sup>th</sup>

Isaiah 7: 10-14

Ps 23: 1-6

Luke 1: 26-38

“A shoot will spring from Jesse’s stock, and all mankind will see the saving power of God”: the Entrance Antiphon for this day’s Eucharistic celebration. The shoot from Jesse’s family tree is the ‘Emmanuel’ that Isaiah’s prophecy tells us about, the son that Mary is told to name “Jesus” (the one who saves), and who will be called Son of the Most High, and will occupy David’s throne and rule over the House of Jacob. The familiar readings today give us just a few of the names and titles that have been applied to Jesus, especially in this Advent-Christmas season. A Dutch researcher last century compiled a list of thousands of names given to Jesus over the course of centuries, in scriptures, legends, prayers, visions, poems and stories. Nowadays, we only use a limited number, like ‘Good Shepherd’ or ‘Sacred Heart’. Devotion to the “Holy Name” of Jesus was a popular devotion in the past couple of hundred years: a newly popular one now is the “Divine Mercy”. In these Advent days, can I pick out a name for Jesus that could be a kind of ‘mantra’ for my Christmastime prayer, a name to be repeated quietly over and over in my mind and heart, or repeated to the rhythm of my breathing or walking? “Emmanuel” perhaps: or “Child born for us”; or “Messiah”. Some of the better carols, both old and new, may suggest more images and names: the Rose, the Lamb, the Apple-tree. May I find ‘God-with-us’ not only in my prayer but in the many different customs and activities of this season. Alleluia: Emmanuel our king and lawgiver, come and save us, Lord our God, Alleluia.

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