

St. Cronan Advent

Reflections from
the
St. Cronan Community
2024



Advent 2024

Steadfast Love

As we enter this Advent season, we recall our moving out of the darkness of brokenness and desperation in our current world into the light of the coming of Christ. Each week brings new insights and reflections.

We offer some reflection questions to ponder as you anticipate the coming of Emmanuel.

Questions for Reflection

How does the culture make it difficult for us to enter into the spirit of Advent?
What is one thing you can do this Advent, to prepare your heart for Jesus' coming?

Week 1: We remember that we live in darkness without Jesus.

Questions for Reflection

What has been the darkest time in your life?
Did you have hope in the midst of that darkness?
How has having hope in times of darkness changed your experience of the darkness?

Week 2: We remember that we are called to repent – to turn from sin and toward God. The Church invites us to humbly and simply turn to God, confident in God's love and forgiveness.

Questions for Reflection

Do you struggle to believe in God's mercy for you?
What helps you trust in His forgiveness?
What do you need to turn away from this Advent?

Week 3: We remember that we wait for the One who will wipe away our tears and turn our desolation into consolation. God gives us seasons of waiting – opportunities to practice patience and learn to wait well. God does this for the whole Church during Advent, and God does this for each of us throughout our lives.

Questions for Reflection

How often do I struggle with patience? When do I struggle?
How has my inability to wait caused problems in my life?
What is one way I can practice waiting this Advent?

Week 4: Lastly, we remember that we cannot know true joy until we know Christ. Christ is the source of joy. Every experience of joy flows from Christ and points back to

Christ.

Questions for Reflection

Would you describe yourself as joyful? Why or why not?

Have you ever experienced joy alongside suffering? What made that possible?

What is one thing you can do to keep an encounter with Christ, the source of every joy, at the heart of your Christmas celebrations?

Life really is one long Advent. It is an anxious expectation for the God who loves us, who heals what is broken, and who will usher us into a life of love.

—St. Cronan Liturgy Committee



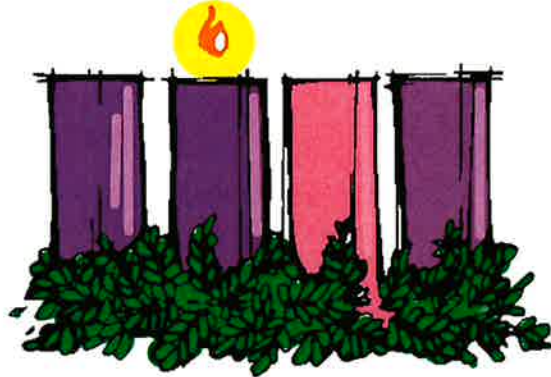
1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 1, 2024

*Jer 33:14-16, Ps 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14, 1 Thes 3:12—4:2
Lk 21:25-28, 34-36*

“God our justice.”

This season of Advent may challenge us more than previous ones. We probably find a gap between what is and what we wish were happening in our country and world. We may have felt desolation and fear over the past month and deep concern about the future for ourselves and our children.



Jeremiah and his community were facing a very frightening time. They had been conquered by Babylon, losing their Temple and their land. They were scrunched between Assyria and Egypt who threatened to further destroy them. Where was God and the promises God had made to them? Jeremiah responds with an Advent hope, a trust that God will be with them in the days that are coming. It wasn't a facile hope, an easy hope. It is the kind of hope we are called to live in Advent, a hope that goes all the way down to our toes. It is the kind of hope that births deep joy and that nurtures life.

We are being called to wait, to settle into the night, to embrace the dark depths where life is stirring. This is the creative time, the time of transition, the time of standing expectantly on the threshold waiting and wondering what comes next. How will we respond to the urgings, the conflicts, our own fears of the unknown that well up before us?

We are being called this Advent to find joy and hope in the waiting and uncertainty. Each week we will focus on a particular aspect. Week 1: living in the night, the time of anxious creative longings. Week 2: repenting, interpreted from the Hebrew word as turning back to something or someone from whom we have strayed or looked away, our turning back to God. Week 3: rejoicing in the waiting (more or less patiently!) and the promise of the light that will abide among us. Week 4: upending the established order (the Magnificat) and raising up those who are marginalized. The fullness of Advent – God comes into the world as a helpless baby calling us to care for him by caring for our

sisters and brothers who need us now.

At St. Cronan Church we walk our advent journey through a rich tradition of colors. Look around. We begin in deep, dark blue. The time is night, the creative time, the source of life and hope and joy. Slowly the night begins to fade into a lighter blue as we move towards the dawn. The third week we rejoice in the pinks of dawn that flow into the light of the day with its blue sky. Christmas is the birth of the Light of the World. We are called now to be light-bearers to the world. This is our time, and this is our place to shine. God our justice is with us, abides with us, and shows us the way to be Christ now.

In hope and joy each day we pray, “The steadfast love of our God never ceases. God’s mercies are made new every morning. So great is God’s faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23)

Breath of Heaven (Mary’s Song) https://youtu.be/L8_475FKJWQ

—*Sr. Lynne Schmidt, SSND*

MONDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT DECEMBER 2, 2024

*Is 2:1-5 Ps 122:1-2, 3-4b, 4cd-5, 6-7, 8-9
Mt 8:5-11*



The chapter of Isaiah is very interesting. I found myself reading the entire chapter because it tells all the pitfalls for humans to get away from a righteous life.

Our reading today speaks of the downfall of the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is doomed to fail not because of competitive outside forces and tribes, but because the inhabitants have become self-indulgent and have resorted to lying, thievery, and bribery and ignoring those in need, like orphans and widows.

God took a look at the situations and threatened revenge against those who did not straighten up. God prepared to send a ruler who would make Jerusalem righteous again. Heady words for our current USA.

—*Anna Forder*

TUESDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 3, 2024

Is 11:1-10 Ps 72:1-2,7-8,12-13,17 Lk 10:21-24

Here we are in the first week of Advent with my favorite Advent Prophet, Isaiah. I confess that when these readings chose me, I was happy to see that the readings were not the doom and gloom that Isaiah sometimes gives us. I waited until after election day to write this reflection, hoping that I could reflect the joy that had been part of the campaign. Now my spirit reflects more of the doom and gloom that I was hoping to avoid.

So, where do I find hope? Isaiah prophesied in a time in Israel when the northern Kingdom had collapsed and even Jerusalem was under siege. Yet Isaiah could say:

“A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse,
And from his roots a bud shall blossom
The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him:
a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
A spirit of counsel and of strength,
A spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord.

He shall judge the poor with justice,
And decide aright for the land’s afflicted.



The Psalmist gives added words of encouragement and hope.

Justice shall flourish in his time
And fullness of peace forever.

All of this did not happen immediately. It would be years before the coming of the Messiah who would inaugurate the reign of God. Jesus continually said to his disciples: “The reign of God is here, it is already among you, do you not see it? “

I will admit that in these times, it is difficult to see or see in the near future the reign of God. I find hope in my sadness and despair from Jesus’ words:

. . . what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children.

May we, in this season of Advent, be able to open our eyes, our mind and our hearts to the Word alive in us and acting in our world so that the Word incarnate may say to each one of us:

“Blest are the eyes that see what you see. I tell you many prophets and kings wished to see what you see but did not see it, and hear what you hear and did not hear it.”

—*S. Janet Kuciejczyk CSJ*

WEDNESDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 4, 2024

Is 25:6-10A PS 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6 Mt 15:29-37

To begin, I admit, I have anxiety. I am a recovering alcoholic, but also have experienced generalized anxiety. Writing this prior to our elections, I find myself struggling at times with significant fear and anxiety.

But what I have come to learn as the best way to take care of my anxiety, is to remember: I am not alone in anything. Truly, “the Lord is my Shepard, there is nothing I shall want.”

When I read the passage from Isaiah, and then the Gospel from Mathew, I am reminded of the abundance that exists when I place my trust in God. Throughout my life, I would have short-changed myself regarding what I thought I wanted in my life. Plus, every time I thought I knew the path my life was going to take, God had other plans. And in each case, when I have allowed myself to trust, the results have ended up beyond what I would have wished for. That is not to say there have also not been setbacks and tragedies. I have had to bury many loved ones, and I have watched my wife and my children go through significant health crises. But even here, when I trusted, the resources I needed to find a way to walk through this pain or struggle have been present.

I am writing this as much as a reflection for St. Cronan as I write this to remind myself. God has me...God has us...regardless of what happens on 11/5, or any other date, I need to remember in this Advent season, all will be well when I place my trust in God’s loving abundance.

—*Kevin Doyle*

THURSDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 5, 2024

Is 26:1-6 Ps 118:1and8-9,19-21,25-27A Mt 7:21, 24-27

In today's gospel reading Jesus tells us that praising him alone will not gain eternal life. The person who only praises Jesus is like the fool who builds his house on sand. It is destroyed by the flood. Reading this I immediately thought of the flood victims in North Carolina and here in south St. Louis. But that's too easy. Jesus is not calling flood victims foolish, but rather those who build on a poor foundation.

Better to focus on the flood and how to withstand it. Aren't we all living with a constant flood of information and messages? From news sources, doctors' offices, creditors, airlines, election analysis, Amazon, and on and on. If you go out to dinner, get a car tire changed, get your teeth cleaned, you are asked an hour later to evaluate the dinner, the tire or your teeth. Don't think about making a political donation.

To withstand that flood we must have and maintain a solid foundation. It started with our baptism, our early education and especially with the example of our family, teachers, coaches, co-workers and neighbors. They built that strong foundation and we must continue to strengthen it. Let's do that this Advent season by shutting down our computers and devices--or at least limiting our use to a few minutes each day. During the quiet time pray, meditate or just enjoy the calm.

Thank God for the people who built your foundation and resolve to be a good, rock-like example for those around you. Continue your daily silences and merge them with the ultimate peace of Christmas Eve.



—Michael Forst

FRIDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 6, 2024

Is. 29:17-24 Psalm 27 Mt. 9:27-31

In these Advent readings, the Prophet Isaiah and Matthew's community are saying "Yes, to God." "The blind shall see and the poor rejoice...some shall get understanding and others instruction."

Charles Spurgeon wrote, "We are all unconscious prophets." We never think about being a prophet. But we are when we say "No" to everything that is not of God. We

have our eyes wide open and hearts full of fervor, trying to be good messengers of the Gospel. In today's readings Isaiah and Jesus are both acting in a prophetic role – wanting those who hear their words to live out their faith on the streets of the towns rather than just talk about it.



That's what Joan Chittister, OSB calls "prophetic spirituality" – an active spirituality that demands heartfelt commitment and heartfelt concern. Joan says, "It's not an easy path. It can be tiring, soul-saddening and at the same time electrifying. It sends us into the world with one eye on the will of God to always do what we can just like the prophets did day after day. They chose to keep on sowing the message of God upon which the future

rested and the people depended."

Prophets today care about everything you and I care about: immigrants, the Earth, clericalism, violence, poverty and add your own cares...

Advent is not a time to stand there looking on...we want to make it what God intended it to be – immersion in the life of Jesus coming ...a season to open our eyes to see and speak truth.

—Donna Day, *SL*

SATURDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 7, 2024

THE MEMORIAL OF ST. AMBROSE

Is 30:19-21, 23-26 Ps 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 Mt 9:35-10:1, 5A, 6-8



AMBROSE

“Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give.” Here Christ makes reference to same thing: “as soon as He hears He will answer you”: we don’t earn His attention, though we must let our distress be known to receive it: “The Lord rebuilds Jerusalem... Healing the brokenhearted, and binding up their wounds.”

These are great readings for the Memorial of St. Ambrose, the man who was elected bishop of Milan before he had even been baptized, because he had fought for peace to elect the new bishop, after the previous bishop, an Arian who believed that the Son could not be the equal of the Father – that is, that there is a hierarchy of power even in the Trinity – had died. Like the God of Isaiah and Jesus in the Gospel reading, Ambrose was “accessible to all”; further, he did not believe in ranks of power. In fact, he told the emperor Valentinian that an emperor is of the church, not above it; he prevented the reemergence of a cult of the goddess Victory; he confronted the emperor Theodosius for slaughtering his enemies, and the emperor did penance for this.

We must aspire to do the good work without expecting recognition or payment, in whatever way we can: there are no victories or emperors among us: doing the work is its own reward, not because of what it will lead to in the future, but because of what it means to be here, now.

—Todd Dean

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 8, 2024

Bar 5:1-9 Phil 1:4-6, 8-11 Lk 3:1-6



Since November 5th, I've been in a bit of a funk, as many of us at St. Cronan's have been. I mean the times could almost not look darker with the second administration of a president who's been convicted 34 times as a felon for which he likely won't be held accountable. Things under the next 4 years look bleaker than ever for members of the LGBTQ community, for undocumented immigrants, for truth-speaking journalists, for protesters acting on their constitutional freedom of speech,

and for the ever-warming earth with the promise of "drill baby drill!". The long night is here. Where is the light?!

The second Sunday in Advent readings call us to radical hope. In particular, Luke launches us into some unquenchable optimism. This gospel focuses on John the Baptist, who suddenly emerges from the desert, a barren place of drought, physical deprivation and soul-crushing solitude. In spite of the incredibly dark times, under the tripartite oppressors, Caesar, Pilate and Herod accompanied by Israel's complicit and corrupt theocracy, led by Annas and Caiaphas, Luke shines a radiant light.

He quotes Isaiah's prophecy:

"A voice of one crying out in the desert:

'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.

Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be made low.

The winding roads shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

In spite of the growing darkness that seems to surround us at this moment, may we be jolted anew into an unquenchable optimism and radical hope that our God reigns,

Our God

"who has commanded that every lofty mountain be made low, and that the age-old depths and gorges be filled to level ground."

—Cathy Hartrich

Monday, 2nd week of Advent

December 9, 2024

Gn 3:9-15, 20 PS 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4 Eph 1:3-6, 11-12 Lk 1:26-38



The Immaculate Conception celebrates our faith belief that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was conceived without original sin. This doctrine, declared in 1854 by Pope Pius IX, is often misunderstood. Many people mistakenly confuse the Immaculate Conception with the Virgin Birth, which refers to the miraculous conception of Jesus in Mary's womb. However, the Immaculate Conception specifically refers to Mary's own conception in the womb of her mother, Saint Anne.

The readings associated with this feast emphasize God's grace and the preparation of Mary to bear the Savior of the world. In the Gospel of Luke, the Angel Gabriel greets Mary as "full of grace," a key phrase that underscores her special role in salvation history. The doctrine teaches that from the moment of her conception, Mary was preserved from original sin by God's grace, making her a pure vessel to bear Christ.

The confusion between the Immaculate Conception and the Virgin Birth likely stems from the shared focus on Mary as the central figure in both events. However, it is crucial to distinguish between the two: the Immaculate Conception concerns Mary's own purity, while the Virgin Birth refers to the divine nature of Jesus' conception.

Reflecting on the Immaculate Conception invites us to contemplate the significance of purity and grace in God's plan. Mary's sinlessness is not an end in itself, but a means to fulfill her role in salvation history, pointing ultimately to Christ's redemptive work. By recognizing the distinction, we deepen our understanding of both Mary's unique role and the mystery of Christ's incarnation. The Immaculate Conception is an invitation to reflect on Mary's purity, her "yes" to God's grace and will, her role as a model for all and her inspiration to live with a deep sense of devotion, humility, and commitment to God's plan.

—Amy Diemer

Tuesday, 2nd week of Advent

December 10, 2024

Is 40:1-11 Ps 96:1-2, 3 and 10ac, 11-12, 13 Mt 18:12-14

"Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God."

Every evening - or most - I jot down moments of gratitude that have touched that day, usually simple encounters with unexpected smiles or an invitation for a cup of tea. There is ease in these moments, and they do keep me afloat. But the truth that calls me to stand up straight and pause is that being human is not easy. And Isaiah's first words are ones that nudge me all the time. "Give comfort." In my wilderness, the wilderness of so much global and local suffering - war, famine, natural disasters, hatred, and poverty - I struggle with taking it all in, then reaching out. "Give comfort." When? How? To whom? Overthinking can take over. But through it all, I know if I pause, I will find clarity. If I pause, I will hear and see and experience what I can do. Two of my signposts on the path to finding the answer are my baptismal vows and my bodhisattva vows. They are really the soil from which my actions arise. When I read them with mindfulness, they come alive, explain to me how to be fully who I am as a member of the Body of Christ. Recently, I've turned to the tenets of the Zen Peacemakers, to give me further support: Not Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Compassionate Action - more signposts, more holy ground. With the strength and loving kindness of beloved communities, I can see the truth of what comfort is, whether it be a touch, a poem, a prayer, or my presence. I trust that I will know what to do.



—Eileen Heidenheimer

Wednesday, 2nd week of Advent

December 11, 2024

Isaiah 40:25-31 Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10 Matthew 11:28-30

Isaiah 40:25-31

Background: The Jewish people are frustrated. They are in exile and questioning why God would let them suffer such a fate. They are questioning whether God really cares for them. It is at this point that Isaiah has to remind them, "Do you not know or have you not heard? The Lord is the eternal God...". God will take care of us, give us his/her strength, so we can persevere. Isaiah is reminding his people that God is there for them.

Psalms 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10

These verses from Psalm 103 are some of the most joyous and hopeful words of the bible, to me. God pardons, heals, redeems, and crowns us despite our failings. Who among us does not aspire to be patient (slow to anger) and generous (abounding in kindness) with those we know? Better still, God is challenging us to treat ourselves the same way. God is asking us to be as good to ourselves as we are to others.

Matthew 11:28-30

Jesus asks us to join him to find rest from our work and worries. He invites us to take on his yoke, his way of living, which is, in fact, easy and light, and not the burden we imagine. With a humble heart, we will find Jesus sharing our troubles and easing them.

What is the common thread that weaves these reading together? God understands life is tough, and we humans can get pretty tired of trying to live a good life. So, God proposes that living with God will make our lives better. I think God is inviting us to join him/her as we go about living. God is making a pact with us. If we walk with God, God will walk with us, picking us up when we stumble, encouraging us when we are down, and loving us for who we are always. God wants us to extend the same treatment to everyone, just as God does. There's the challenge!

—Gina Heagney

Thursday, 2nd week of Advent

December 12, 2024

THE FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab Judith 13:18bcde, 19 Lk 1:39-47

Today is the spirited Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and we have a choice of some marvelous readings. The Gospel choice is between the writer of Luke's text of the Annunciation and his text of the Visitation, so let's take the Visitation text and see what it tells us about this amazing woman we celebrate.

We have in this Gospel the spontaneous coming together of two pregnant women who are cousins. We have first, an unwed, pregnant teenager. Pious legend holds that Mary, keeping to herself the secret that came to her in some kind of religious experience for

which there were no witnesses, took to the hills to assist her elder cousin who was also pregnant, and for advice about what to do next. As women do, she went to a woman for the wisdom she needed and for that experience of wise old human hugging before facing what she knew would be a challenging future with judgments that would defy explanation.

Then we have Elizabeth, who came out of hiding to meet Mary, having taken to isolation from the blame, the gossip generated by her strange, now obvious post-menopausal pregnancy. “What was she thinking for God’s sake?” her neighbors must have been saying. Her pregnancy, too, she had been told, was the result of some kind of divine intervention. Each of these two women knew intuitively what had happened to the other.

Tears and fears would be as safe between them as the emerging joy each one felt. In the next three months, graced by God and each other, however their situations had arisen, two women would come to the fuller dimensions destined for them.

Who knew that God’s magnificent, cosmic revolution would be proclaimed on this day of visitation at ground zero in the bodies of these two women – a new kind of prophecy in a very different setting—not a man addressing a crowd at an assembly but two pregnant women having a conversation in the intimate setting of a house in the hills. THIS is where God chose to have this revelation happen, and it is indeed a revolution. The thoughts that Luke placed on Mary’s lips were about a woman being called blessed forever though she lived in a world where men rule. The mighty would be deposed from their thrones, and the poor and hungry would not just be satisfied, they would be heard and remembered.

Mary and Elizabeth invite us to change the way we think about prophecy, to understand that good news is revealed in settings where we least expect it. If it can happen in Bethlehem, if it can happen to Juan Diego on a rural hill side, it can happen to you and me.



—*Sister Chabanel Mathison, O.S.U.*

Friday, 2nd week of Advent

December 13, 2024

Is 48:17-19 PS 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6 Mt 11:16-19



December 13 is Saint Lucia's Day when we celebrate the life (and death) of St. Lucy. St. Lucy was not only known for her violent death, but she is known as a light in the darkness, because she fashioned a headdress of lit candles to light her way through the catacombs as she brought food and drink to the early Christians who were in hiding. During Advent we patiently await the coming of Jesus who also suffered a violent death and is a light in the darkness.

We read in Isaiah that the Lord directs us in the way to go, perhaps by lighting our way, and if we follow the Lord we will find peace “like a river” and well-being “like the waves of the sea”.

Today we are challenged in a world full of trials and tribulations, but if we follow the Light of Christ, our path will be lit like that of St. Lucy through the catacombs. We too can find our way out of the darkness to do good, to do Christ's work.

It could be very easy to get caught up in the gloominess of today's world. This Advent Season, we must now be the light in the darkness, the love in the hate, the calm in the storm. We must be like St. Lucy lighting a path through the catacombs.

From Psalm 1: “Blessed are those who do not walk with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take...but delight in the way of the Lord. They will be like a tree planted by a stream, they will yield much fruit”.

—Mary Ward

Saturday, 2nd week of Advent

December 14, 2024

Memorial of St. John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church

Sir 48:1-4, 9-11 Ps 80:2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19 Mt 17:9a, 10-13

The last line in the first reading is addressed to Elijah, “Blessed is the one who shall have seen you and who falls asleep in your friendship.” Wow! What an

image. We are encouraged to be grateful to those in our lives who, like Elijah and John the Baptist, help us repent. Who help us see what we have done, to change our ways, and try to make up for what we have done. The original Greek word for this process was metanoia, which means to change one's mindset, to see the world from a new perspective. To be transformed. The Psalm expresses our need for help: "O Lord, make us turn to you. Let us see your face and we shall be saved." Who in our life has helped us "turn back our hearts" towards our "children," i.e. what God most wants for us? Whom do we accompany as their hearts are changed?

Many years ago, I was on the brink of making what would have been a disastrous decision. My stomach was tied up in knots, I couldn't sleep. In my heart of hearts, I knew something was wrong, but was too frightened to take a stand. Or frozen. My boss at the time called me into her office and had me sit down across from her at her desk. I remember the way she looked at me, with eyes of understanding, of love, of compassion. The words I do remember her speaking — as if it was yesterday, were, "Martha. You know what to do; go, now go do it." Somehow, with her belief in me, of my soul's truth, I was able to call off the wedding. Sue was God's instrument that day, that moment. I had been too frightened to call upon God's name, to know what I needed. But she did.

May we be instruments of God's kindness, understanding, and love this Advent and always.

—By Martha Stegmaier

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

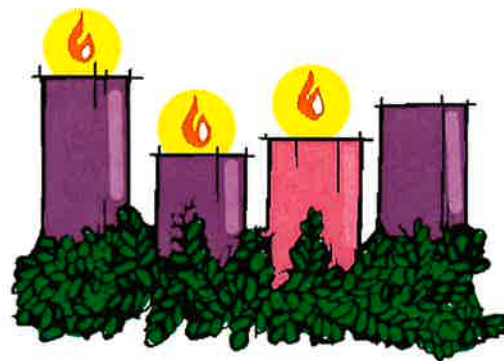
December 15, 2024

Gaudete Sunday

Zep 3:14-18a Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6 Phil 4:4-7 Lk 3:10-18

It is a curious choice to lift up the words of Zephaniah and John the Baptist in our celebration of Gaudete Sunday (literally "Rejoice! Sunday"). Most of what we hear elsewhere in Zephaniah and from John the Baptist would not strike us as messages of joy.

The bulk of Zephaniah's prophecy (today's



reading notwithstanding) is about the day of God's judgment and wrath. And in the verses just prior to today's reading from Luke, John is lambasting the people who have come to him for repentance as "a brood of vipers" fleeing God's coming wrath. If there is joy to be found here, we need to start by asking exactly whose ears would find their proclamations joyful.

Zephaniah exhaustively lists all those for whom his prophecy surely will NOT be experienced with joy: political leaders and the king's sons (1:8), the violent and deceitful (1:9), merchants (1:11) and the wealthy (1:13), Jerusalem's officials—judges (3:3) and prophets and priests (3:4), and proud braggarts (3:11). All these are promised God's wrath, while only a remnant, "a people humble and lowly" (3:12), will be left. But THESE are promised the rejoicing we hear in Zephaniah 3:14-18a – those he goes on to specify as the oppressed, "the lame" and "outcasts" (3:19).

In Luke's passage, who makes up the "crowds"—which John brands "a brood of vipers" fleeing God's wrath—and now asking what they can we do to avoid such a fate?" We know from today's passage that John assumes they have more than what they need (two tunics and extra food, 3:11); that some are tax collectors who cheat the general populace (3:12-13); and others are soldiers who extort the vulnerable with threats of false accusations to fatten their wallets. Note that there is a second group of people—not the aforementioned "crowds"—but others who are looking on and wondering if John could be the Messiah (3:15). John's damning message to "the crowds" who are coming to him for baptism is heard as good news to this second group, "the people," who bear a striking resemblance to Zephaniah's remnant: the oppressed, the outcasts and lame, the humble and lowly.

The good news of Jesus isn't good news for everybody. For those who have benefited because of their roles in systems that exploit and abuse, John and Zephaniah are bitter pills to swallow. But in turn, that same message IS good news that brings rejoicing for those who have been exploited and abused, oppressed, enslaved, violated, humiliated, impoverished, and dehumanized in every possible way, hearing God's prophet tell the wealthy to give up their extra clothes and food and tax collectors to stop cheating people and soldiers to stop extorting them! Good news absolutely to all those who toil and survive on the underside of history.

Whether John's proclamation is good news or not, or Zephaniah's promise causes rejoicing or despair—it's all dependent on whose ears are hearing it.

—Johnny Zokovitch

Monday, 3rd week of Advent

December 16, 2024

Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a Ps 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9 Mt 21:23-27



“Where was John’s baptism from? Was it of heavenly or of human origin?” They discussed this among themselves and said, “If we say ‘Of heavenly origin,’ he will say to us, ‘Then why did you not believe him?’ But if we say, ‘Of human origin,’ we fear the crowd, for they all regard John as a prophet.” So they said to Jesus in reply, “We do not know.” Matthew 21:25–27

We read this Gospel before the election and again after the election before we wrote this reflection, and we’re glad we did. In a way, it feels like Christ is guiding us as we walk through this time of sadness and uncertainty.

The Catholic Commentary said in this Gospel passage we are shown a perfect example of how not to live our life. But sadly, it is too often the way many in authority do. The Pharisees in the Gospel were acting as what we may term “religious politicians”. A religious politician is one whose religious convictions are based on what they perceived would produce the best outcome at the moment. They chose to say “We do not know” where John’s baptism was from because they thought it was the answer that most safeguarded them from any criticism.

Sound familiar?

As followers of Christ, are we willing to live our convictions in an open way, even if it means criticism from the world, or maybe what hits closer to home – criticism from friends and family?

Make the choice not to follow the backwards approach of the Pharisees, choosing instead the unwavering convictions we are called to embrace by our faith. What questions are being asked of you today? In which ways are you being tested by others? What is your approach to those tests? Do you speak more like a “religious politician?” Or do you speak with a clarity flowing from your faith?

God of all truth, give us the grace to stand firm as we proclaim this faith to all whom we encounter so that we can be an instrument of Your love, peace and mercy to the world.

—Helen Heilich & Sandy McKinney

Tuesday, 3rd week of Advent

December 17, 2024

Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25A Ps 71:3-4A, 5-6AB, 16-17 Lk 1:5-25

My great grandmother and I share the same first, middle, and last name. I like to think my great grandma Beatrice would be excited to know that she has a great granddaughter with her name. As a kid, I would ask my dad questions about her— what was she like? How did she live her life? Even more importantly, I wondered if she and I were similar. Maybe the fact that we shared a name meant we shared other qualities, too. Did we laugh the same way? Did we like the same foods? Was she kind? My dad was only a year old when she passed away, so many of these questions were lost to time. What was it like to be Beatrice in the early 1900's? I wish I knew.

It's a gift to be able to look back and know the names and lives of our ancestors. Lots of people don't have that privilege. In the first sentences of the Book of Matthew, we read the long list of names of Jesus' ancestors. I wonder if Jesus knew some of these names. Maybe he grew up with stories of his great grandfather Matthan or heard tales of his ancestor Jeconiah's life after Babylon. Maybe Mary held Jesus at night and told him stories about his fearless grandmothers Ruth and Rahab who carried their families through hard times. I wonder if Jesus had his grandfather Uzziah's cunningness or his grandmother Tamar's warmth. Maybe Hezekiah and Jesus had the same deep laugh. I wonder if Jesus' smile reminded Joseph of his father, Jacob.

When I first saw the diary, I was elated – maybe I'd find a key to Beatrice's life and story in its pages. Beatrice's days that year were filled with card game with friends, the birth of a new grandchild (my dad), and lots of family birthdays. There was nothing particularly juicy in the diary, but one entry stood out to me. On Saturday, February 7, Beatrice wrote a single sentence: "Just a restful, easy day." It made me smile. My great grandma Beatrice had had an easy day that February. It might sound silly, but I could feel her humanness – her realness – in that simple sentence. It drove home the fact that Beatrice was a woman just like me, with good days and bad days and even the occasional "restful, easy day." I am so thankful to know her in this small way.

—Beatrice Connaghan



Wednesday, 3rd week of Advent

Jer 23:5-8 Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19

December 18, 2024

Mt 1:18-25



The amazing promise in these readings is that God cares for the poor and will lead the whole world to a flourishing of justice and peace. Yet, if the world were full of righteous rulers and justice for the poor—no such prophecies would have been given then, nor be needed now. Over three thousand years, including the coming of Christ and still the poor cry out and the world is

ruled by the corrupt and wealthy. How can we still hope? What do we intend to celebrate this Christmas?

The great mystery of Christmas is that ‘God became Flesh’. The mystery of Easter is that suffering for the sake of love leads to Resurrection. The mystery of Pentecost is the fulfilment of the promise given as Jesus’ name: “God is with us”. Finally, the Eucharist we celebrate each week is the mystery that WE are now the body of Christ, God is with us because God is within us!

This leads me to the most awe inspiring mystery of all... the Leader who is to bring justice to the whole world is me... is us. By the grace of God’s union with us we can and must act in small and great ways to bring about a just and merciful society. We know that, like our Savior, we must endure suffering willingly for the sake of justice. We are the ones who are faithful to the promise; to be the righteous shoot, to be faithful to the promises. We must not hesitate to do the next right thing, because we know that evil and suffering will never have the last word.

—Michelle Salois, RSM

Thursday, 3rd week of Advent

December 19, 2024

Jer 23:5-8 Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19 Mt 1:18-25

Today's readings recall 2 times when an angel of the Lord appeared to announce that a "barren" woman would be giving birth to a son who would be a chosen child of God. The first thing that struck me was that the angel appeared to men, not the women who would be carrying these sons. Elizabeth's response states that her disgrace has been taken away. How sad it makes me to hear a woman imply that being incapable of having a child is disgraceful. Having experienced infertility myself, I had innumerable emotional responses but never felt disgrace. I pray that all of God's children can acknowledge their worth in his eyes as well as their value in this world.

—Carolyn Coyne

Friday, 3rd week of Advent

December 20, 2024

Is 7:10-14 Ps 24:1-2, 3-4ab, 5-6 Lk 1:26-38

God works in mysterious ways. Growing up, my mother always said that "everything happens for a reason, even if we don't know what the reason is quite yet." When the Lord speaks to Ahaz in the first reading today, he does not understand what the Lord is planning, and instead wants to be surprised by whatever sign He is planning. Fast forward to the famous gospel of Luke, where the sign foretold occurs; Gabriel visits Mary and tells her she will bear a son. Even then, Mary does not truly understand the reasoning behind it, and essentially responds, "Why me?" And that therein lies the lesson. Why any of us? Why are we chosen for our callings in life, and when do we choose to act upon them. As we creep ever so much more closely to



Christmas, think about what God wants us to do with our lives, especially in times of uncertainty and waiting. How can we answer God's call? And when God calls, what can we do to embrace the uncertainty of a future that has yet to exist? Mary says, "May it be done to me according to your word." Let us be like Mary and trust where God guides us in who we are and what we are called to do.

—Patrick J. Mooney

Saturday, 3rd week of Advent

December 21, 2024

Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a Ps 33:2-3, 22-12, 20-21 Lk 1:39-45

In myth and sacred story, the deeds of the hero or one favored by God reflect that person's sacred stature. As their early stories develop over time, the birth of the hero takes on an epic or divine meaning. In the infant narratives of Jesus, we see this unfold in stories of his virginal conception and birth.



The Visitation story of today's reading, speaks to us by pointing out the contrasts between Elizabeth and Mary: one pregnancy in old age, one in youth. One arising from sterility, the other from a miraculous fertility. Mary's pregnancy echoing the Song of Hannah from the first book of Samuel and Elizabeth's mimicking David's dance before the Ark of the Covenant.

The story before us prepares us for the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. It prefigures how their adult lives will unfold. It is a story of joy. How fitting for the Season of Advent as it transitions to Christmastime.

What can we learn from this to apply to our world today—one in

which fertility and pregnancy can be the focus of controversy. Perhaps we can look to the joy of these two women. They embrace one another and offer support and meaning to their impending motherhood.

From their example, we can consider our stance as a community. How can we embrace the mother and unborn child with welcome and respect? How can we be of help if this period of time is difficult? Or even when the choices surrounding it challenge everyone? When women are being criticized or condemned for their sterility or their fertility? The story is first and foremost about being embraced by community. May we always extend open arms to our sisters in need.

—Marge O’Gorman, FSM

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 22, 2024

Mi 5:1-4a Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19. Heb 10:5-10 Lk 1:39-45

As we draw ever near to the Feast of the Incarnation we first encounter the Visitation of Mary. She came to visit her cousin Elizabeth who was pregnant with John the Baptist. It's a joyful meeting of expectant Mothers and the Season of Advent is one of "expectant joy". So often expectations are filled with an undercurrent of cheerfulness or gladness of heart. It's like "something good is going to happen". That experience occurs because of faith i.e. I trust in God's abundant love.



Elizabeth says: "At the moment the sound of your greeting reached my ears the infant in my womb leaped for joy." One of the ways that grace is communicated is through "joyful leaps". St. Theresa of Lisieux defined prayer as "a leap of the heart or a glance towards heaven". God is trying to give us those moments of "leaping", those times when a baby smiles, a bird chirps, a hug excites, a sun sets, an idea creates a vision, a word opens a heart etc. Advent urges us to prepare to "leap", to be excited about life.

May your Advent have many "leaping" moments that just bring a deep sense of joy to your heart. Just think of the wonder of two pregnant women coming together to celebrate life - Mary and Elizabeth!

—Fr. Jack Schuler

"A liturgical dance reflection on the Visitation at St. Cronan Catholic Church, to the song I'll Go Tell Elizabeth by Ken Medema, danced by Colleen Segbers (RIP) and Janet Kuciejczyk, CSJ (with cameo appearance of the angel Fr. Jim Krings), conceived by Madonna Kuciejczyk, Advent 1994" <https://youtu.be/NJypXyNKSCE>

MONDAY, 4TH WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 23, 2024

Mal 3:1-4, 23-24 Ps 25:4-5ab, 8-9, 10 and 14 Lk 1:57-66

Wait! Just as we are on the edge of celebrating the birth of Jesus, the Gospel for today reminds us that John prepared the way for Jesus. John called the people to repent. The Jewish term teshuvah is translated as a turning back to something or someone we have strayed from or looked away from. This is especially appropriate near the eve of Christmas when so many plans are being finalized for family gatherings, gifts, and foods that will be served. We can be anxious about so many things. Luke's Gospel reminds us to look again toward God who sent Jesus into the world to sanctify all creation and infuse it with God's love.



In Luke's account the relatives and neighbors decided the child would be named Zachariah after his father. They are surprised when Elizabeth states the child will be named John, a traditional name in their culture that means "God is gracious." It exudes strength, responsibility, and kindness. This choice disturbs the group because it is not a family name. They turn to Zachariah who affirms the decision to name the child John. Zachariah is freed of his disability and "blesses God." The awesome question is asked, "What then will this child be? The hand of God is surely with him."

We know the answer to that. John prepares the way for Jesus by calling people to repent, teshuvah, to look again toward God and what God has done for them and for all of us. **We are called to wait, to pause, and to focus again on the celebration of Jesus' birth in our lives today.**

—Sr. Lynne Schmidt, SSND and Yvonne DeHart

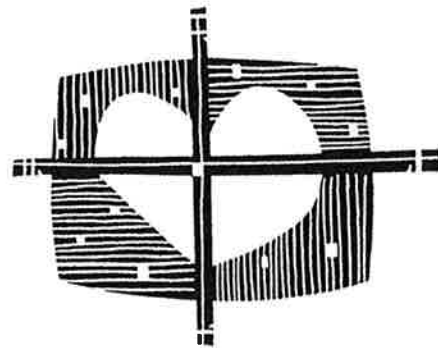
TUESDAY, 3RD WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 24, 2024

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29 Lk 1:67-79

These passages from the Old and New Testaments collectively highlight God's covenantal faithfulness and the promise of salvation fulfilled through Jesus Christ. In 2 Samuel, God speaks to David through the prophet Nathan, promising that David's throne will be established forever and that one of David's descendants will build a house for God. This covenant establishes not only a dynasty but also a legacy of divine relationship with the people of Israel. It underscores God's commitment to work through David's lineage, ensuring that his line would ultimately lead to a king who brings peace, justice, and eternal blessings to all nations.

Psalm 89 echoes this promise with poetic praise, emphasizing God's steadfast love and faithfulness to David. The psalmist celebrates God's unbreakable promise to maintain David's dynasty, affirming that God will treat David's descendants as God's own, marking them with favor. This everlasting covenant serves as a beacon of hope, as it symbolizes God's unchanging love and reliability despite human frailty. Psalm 89 connects God's promises to David with the broader theme of divine kingship and protection, reminding believers of God's enduring love and intention to bring ultimate peace and justice through the chosen One.



In the Gospel of Luke, Zechariah's prophetic song, often called the Benedictus, connects these Old Testament promises with the coming of Jesus. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Zechariah proclaims that God has remembered the covenant, providing salvation through Jesus, the promised descendant of David. Zechariah's words reveal Jesus as the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, the "horn of salvation" raised up to redeem humanity. This fulfillment completes the line from David's house and establishes a kingdom characterized by mercy, freedom, and peace. Together, these passages weave a rich narrative of God's faithfulness across generations, inviting believers to see Jesus as the ultimate realization of God's promise to David and the culmination of a divine plan for salvation.

—*Elisabeth Byrne*

CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 25, 2024

Is 9:1-6 Ps 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13. Ti 2:11-14 Lk 2:1-14



LK 2: 1-7

Now it happened that at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be made of the whole inhabited world. This census -- the first -- took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee for Judaea, to David's town called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. Now it happened that, while they were there, the time came for her to

have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the Inn.

When I think of Mary traveling to Bethlehem astride a donkey in her ninth month of pregnancy, I cannot help but compare her discomfort to the pain and suffering many migrants endure as they flee their homes in search of asylum. Some migrants give birth in the desert with no water or food to sustain them. Others are shipped from our southern border to the north with a false promise of work or housing only to learn they are but pawns in a sick game of politics.

Perhaps those fleeing persecution or death see the statue of Liberty as their “beacon of hope” or America as the “shining city upon a hill” until, like Mary and Joseph; they are turned away with the claim “there is no room....”

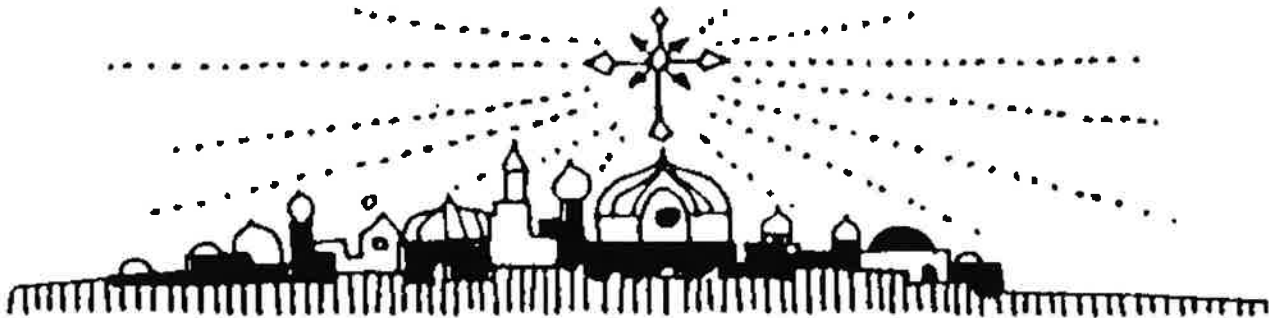
Didn't we promise to give the tired, poor, huddled masses yearning to breathe free a chance to fulfill their dreams? To deny this is to contradict not only the promise of our nation but of God's edict as well:

*Galatians 5:14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command:
“Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

Hebrews 13:1-2 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

As we gather with family and friends this Christmas to give thanks for the birth of the Christ child and the blessings bestowed upon us, may we offer a solemn prayer to “have heart” and continue to fight for those who have less. For in the words of President Kennedy: “...here on Earth God's work must truly be our own.”

—Nancy Buck



*Thank you to all who submitted reflections for our
Advent booklet this year.*





Please join us for Christmas services:

Christmas Eve: Carols begin at 8:30pm

Mass begins at 9pm

Christmas Day: Masses at 8am and 10am



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