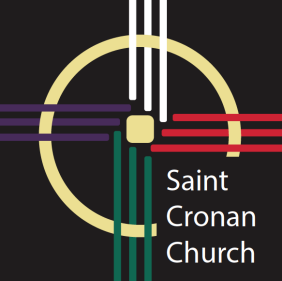


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1202 S Boyle Ave, St. Louis, MO 63110
(314) 289-9384

www.stcronan.org

Edited and compiled by Diane Gozdziński and Mary Ward

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St. Cronan Advent

Reflections from the St. Cronan Community 2023



O come • O come • Emmanuel

Advent 2023

*Not everyone can do great deeds,
but we can do small deeds with great love.*

Advent is a time of focusing on the coming of God's great gift to us. We wait, as if in a doorway, knowing that change is coming, anticipating the miracle that is to be, and rejoicing in the "Yes" that came from a young girl. We prepare ourselves as we wait, we fill ourselves with hope that Peace on Earth can manifest, even as we witness the destruction of the earth, the dehumanization of migrants and refugees and the devastation of war. We place our trust in God and in each other as we work toward that elusive peace, knowing that Christ's coming can give us the courage we need to do small deeds with great love. Our weekly themes will help us to focus on the anticipation of Jesus' coming. The themes are: Awesome Deeds, Grounding in Hope, Active Waiting, and Saying "YES" to God, as Mary did, and to the needs of the world.

As we journey through Advent together, let us contemplate God's great deeds that we witness in our own lives. We will ground ourselves in the hope that God's awesome deeds will encourage us to make changes in our world, however small. In this time of waiting, we will practice active waiting, consciously anticipating Christ's coming with small deeds that can lead to growing harmony and peace. Finally, we will be ready to answer God's call with a resounding YES, as Mary did when she was asked to fulfill God's plan for her.

As you entered Church today, you might have noticed the rather bare "night sky" hanging in the vestibule. On the table in front of the hanging, you will find white stars and angels and pens. We ask that each week, as you focus on the readings and consider the theme, you answer the questions presented in one or two words, or record what you have witnessed in your world that verifies the themes acting in your life. Place the angels and stars in the basket provided, and they will be added to the "night sky" each week to fill our sky with our small deeds.



Please join us for Christmas services:

Christmas Eve: Carols begin at 8:30pm

Mass begins at 9pm

Christmas Day: Masses at 8am and 10am

CHRISTMAS

DECEMBER 25, 2022

IS 7:10-14 PS 24:1-2, 3-4, 5-6 ROM 1:1-7 MT 1:18-24

Loving God in a Stone

A child asked a Rabbi
“How do I learn to love God?”

The Rabi responded
“First you must learn to love a stone. Then, you learn to love the earth & sky. Then, you learn to love an animal. Then, you learn to love a human being....Then, you may begin to know how to love God”.

A Manger

Wood, straw, dirt

Animals, shepherds, kings

Mother , father, child

Cold air swirls as warm bodies huddle

Creatures stir

Stars twinkle

Darkness yields to light

In an Infant

World transforms

Hatred to kindness
Harshness to tenderness
Grudges to forgiveness

Suffering to love

All being
God's presence

To us
for all time
From a barn.

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 3, 2023

Is 63:16B-17,19B; 64:2-7 Ps 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19 1 Cor 1:3-9 Mk 13:33-37

The literal meaning of the Latin word “advent” is arrival of a notable person, thing or event. In Christian theology advent means the arrival of God, breaking into human history once and for all, first as a babe born in a manger and later, in the end times, as the resurrected Christ. The first Sunday of Advent, launches the season preceding Christmas, heralding Christ’s coming. This coming marks the transformation of the meaning of humanity. Emmanuel means “God is with us.” We are here in this world for one reason... to have eternal fellowship with the One who made us, our Parent-Creator God.



In today’s first reading, Isaiah calls us to return from our sinful ways and make our way back to our parent-God, for “we are the clay” and God is the potter; we are all the work of our loving God’s hands.

In the second reading of Paul to the Corinthians, he urges Christians to remain faithful, as we “wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will keep us firm to the end, irreproachable on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” "The Day of the Lord" is a biblical term and theme used in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, as an apocalyptic vision: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible Day of the Lord comes" (Joel 2:31, cited in Acts 2:20). The phrase alludes to a judgment for eternal rewards in 2 Corinthians 1:14 where it says "we are your rejoicing, even as you also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus." The Book of Revelation describes the Day of the Lord as a time of God's wrath, which comes upon those who are deemed immoral, who have turned away from God:

“But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” 2 Peter 3:8–10

Lastly, today’s gospel quotes Jesus, who is referring to the Day of the Lord:

“Be watchful! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come.... you do not know

when the lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning. May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: ‘Watch!’”

Now, it is our turn to stay awake. Jesus calls us to watch and wait for his arrival. Don’t get side-tracked losing sight of the vision of Christ the Victor, spinning with despair down the rabbit hole of the gloom and doom in the world around us, nor get caught up in the materialism of the all-American Christmas.

God is with us. We need to stay awake, remain with God, and look with joy and longing for the arrival of the only one who can redeem us and our mortal world.

—Cathy Hartrich

MONDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 4, 2023

Is 2:1-5 Ps 122:1-2,3-4B,4CD-5,6-7,8-9 Mt 8:5-11



My nieces and I were in a Missouri vineyard in early October enjoying the lovely scenery. After a long moment of silence, my niece, Beth remarked, “I really need to take time each day with something beautiful.” Gently rolling hills and mountains are each beautiful. The Swiss Alps which I experienced in 1974 are breathtaking. Mountains, whether the Midwest Ozarks, or the Alps, or the Judean Mountains are rich in history and symbolism, inviting us to reflect, to focus, offering the promise of safety and strength, giving us the ability to see distances, foresight even. We are challenged to climb mountains, to be on top of things. We want to

test our strength.

Isaiah invites us to the mountain to receive insight and instruction, to walk the path of enlightenment as we hear and speak the talk to beat our swords into plowshares, our spears into pruning hooks, choosing not to train for war again. Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Through the story of a Roman centurion, Matthew highlights the inclusivity of Jesus and his message, a message especially noteworthy since Matthew wrote his Gospel for the

4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 24, 2023

2 Sm 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16 Ps 89:2-3, 2-4, 27, 29 Rom 16:25-27 Lk1:26-38



FOURTH SUNDAY
OF
Advent

The theme contained in the readings for this Sunday in Advent is one of relationship. David is God’s son; God is his father. David is chosen; he and God have entered into a Covenant.

This theme follows in the responsorial psalm as well. The psalmist prays to God, who is “my father, my God, the rock, my savior.”

When we turn to the Gospel, the Angel Gabriel tells Mary she has “found favor with God”— or is “full of grace” as we learned to say it in the Hail Mary. For those of us who look for gender equality the phrase daughter of God, might come to mind. Later in the passage we learn that the child to be born of Mary will be called “the son of God.”

These readings speak of the warmth of human relationship and hint of mysticism; divine relationship.

They are the culmination of the previous weeks’ words of promise. They lead us into incarnational mystery, the union of divinity and humanity.

They tell us that the promise is still within us. This “holy land” and the relationships associated with it are still a fulfillment of the promise made to a people who are God’s sons and daughters.

And yet the title to this land and the relationship that grants its inheritance is called into question today. Political strife and warring interests are designed to tear apart the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood that have come from this same Parental God. We are saddened by this even though we live oceans away from the conflict.

Let us resolve to give witness to Peace. Let us not cast aside what has been passed down to us for centuries. Let us embrace our Spiritual Legacy—Universal Covenant, Eternal Promise, Inclusive God, Expansive Love.

—Marge O’Gorman, FSM

the Spirit. In today's reading, he affirms at his newborn son's circumcision, "His name is John," which means "Yahweh is gracious." His heart has been changed. He has been accompanied by God during his 9 long months of silence.

May we be blessed with the the grace and trust to hope in our God, who each day shows us the path we are to follow. As the psalmist prays, "Your ways, O Lord, make known to [us]; teach [us] your paths."

—Martha Stegmaier



Jewish people and this message particularly for the Jewish leaders. Here is a clear reminder that all too often our thoughts are not God's thoughts, our ways are not God's. Are there OTHERS I avoid, disclaim, dishonor? Joe Wise has a musical prayer we could use to reflect upon our desire to find God's way to the mountains of truth and beauty:

"Lord, teach us to pray. It's been a long and cold December kind of day,
With our hearts and hands all busy in our private little wars.
We stand and watch each other now from separate shores.
Show us the way." Show us the way to peace.

—Sr. Pauline Lorch, OSU

TUESDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 5, 2023

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

Prophets foretold of Jesus's coming hundreds of years before his arrival. God tried the patience and faith of the Jewish people for centuries before Jesus finally appeared. Yet his arrival was under the humblest circumstances. He was hardly recognizable as the one to dispense wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, justice, and fairness, all gifts of the Holy Spirit. The apostles were privileged to see and know Jesus as a person. This privilege carried with it the duty to spread the Word of God to all.

Today's readings remind me of the patience, promise, and obligation we all have to live that Word and, by example, bring it to all. The readings together speak of the promise of peace and harmony, through justice and acceptance of the love of God. The challenge is to receive God's love with an open, accepting heart like that of a child.



In the first reading Isaiah writes of a blossom from Jesse's root, Jesus, who will bring wisdom, understanding, strength and knowledge to the people of God. Jesse was King David's father. David was much more famous than his humble father. Isaiah is cautioning us that the promised Savior may not be the celebrity one might expect. However, he will be a person with the roadmap to peace and justice. When this wise Savior comes, the world will be a place where nature is in harmony with all beings, "... the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb.... with a little child to guide

them.” Isaiah promises us that world will be realized when we embrace the message of Jesus.

The beautiful responsorial psalm makes it very clear that justice and peace go hand in hand. The idealized world Isaiah speaks of in the first reading is echoed in the psalm. The Lord is again portrayed as a just and caring ruler presiding over a world at peace.

In Luke’s gospel Jesus gives his disciples the key to understanding and obtaining this peaceful world—have the faith of a child. A child’s faith is pure and simple. It is the epitome of trust. Jesus observes that God has hidden the Word from “the wise and the learned” but has revealed it to the “childlike”. He assures the disciples that they are blessed for having heard the Word and believed.

Let us try to live life with a child’s faith!

—Gina Heagney

WEDNESDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 6, 2023

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

Christ Comes to Birth: What A Promise!

It is always Advent because Christ is continually coming to birth wherever and however we are. The vision of this whole chapter in Isaiah is a vision of promise: God will destroy death forever and wipe away all the tears from our eyes. We will all be changed and be made new. Jesus did that and does that everyday as we at St. Cronan’s pray together, provide food for the hungry, assist with housing, move furniture, and help to heal each other. Christ comes to birth in us too. What an Advent promise!

Jesus knew about Isaiah’s promise. He knew about God’s promise. We are all lucky because we are the recipients of that promise: out of the longings of our heart we have the gift of faith that has transformed our lives and made us believers.

What feeds the promise? Read today’s Gospel. Five loaves and a few fish will do it. Have unexpected visitors come to your house at meal time? Do you always have enough to welcome them to your table? Of course, you do. The common needs of the St. Cronan community, our



wanted to be in charge and not consider letting God use my disillusionment and vulnerability to bring about change. I view the violence, the lies, the lust for power, the inequality, the hatred and mistrust in our world today, and think what does my YES even matter? In those periods I often return to the Magnificat and to “Canticle of the Turning” to renew my hope and trust in our God who is faithful, the one to whom I can again say a halting YES until the day it becomes stronger and firmer, and I remember “who holds us fast.”

My heart shall sing of the day you bring.

Let the fires of your justice burn;

Wipe away all tears

For the dawn draws near,

And the world is about to turn!

—Sr. Lynne Schmidt, SSND

Saturday, 3rd week of Advent

December 23, 2023

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

Ever since I read the readings last night, these lines from the Psalm have played over and over in my mind, “You will show me the path of life.” (Actually the refrain from the John Foley song.) We know that Zachariah, in the passage before today’s gospel, has been visited by Gabriel who has told him the good news— that he and Elizabeth will have a son, whom they must name John. But Zachariah can’t believe the angel. His long-barren wife will conceive and give birth to a child! And then, this son will be “great in the sight of the Lord,” preparing for the Lord a people fit for him.” And further, that their son will turn the hearts of fathers toward their children”! What? So, Zachariah refused to believe — even though this is all tremendously GOOD NEWS!! And because of this, he is struck dumb for the whole of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. But perhaps this time of waiting, observing, reflecting prepares Zachariah to trust in God’s way.

But the Psalm assures us, we who are like Zachariah, that we have a guide on OUR life paths, a teacher. As we discern which way to go, asking “thy will be done,” we will be accompanied by the Spirit. We must trust that, through our experiences, we will be guided in God’s truth. And Zachariah, through his months of waiting, WAS guided by

Friday, 3rd week of Advent

December 22, 2023

1 Sm 1:24-28 1 Sm 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8ABCD Lk 1:46-56

*Though I am small, my God, my all
You work great things in me.*

These few words from “Canticle of the Turning” summarize the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures quite well. Mary, a young Jewish woman in a small village in an out-of-the-way part of the world, knew that God usually chose the least likely persons to bring salvation to the people. She had no idea what the future would bring, and she said, YES. She responded to the messenger of God, Gabriel, that she would bear this Child Jesus, the Savior of the world. YES to whatever would come.

Her YES offered prophetic hope for generations to come. Her belief in God’s faithfulness and ability to work great things spills out in the Magnificat placed on her lips by Luke and his Christian community. The God she knew cared deeply for the poor, the hungry, the outcasts, the marginalized, and the forgotten ones.



YES. How difficult it was for her to see her Son misunderstood, hated, and condemned to death. She must have thought often of the baby she and Joseph held so tenderly even during those times they had trouble getting him to stop crying and the times he was sick and cranky. Was her YES a bit shaky sometimes?

I have certainly had times when my YES was shaky, and I was ready to quit. I have

family and friends, our neighbors, those we see on our streets take precedence over our separate concerns. God feeds us so that we can feed each other. And the promise is nourished.

Did the people who heard Isaiah preach about God wiping away tears know about the promise? What about the 5000 who got fed that day on the mountain – did they know? We hope so and what about us? Five loaves and a few fish guarantee the promise. Eat up, be filled with hope. This Advent think of all the ways you live the promise.

—Donna Day

THURSDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 7, 2023

St. Ambrose

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

Recently, I was discussing with friends the tension that many of us experience in our lives, the tension that arises when we face choices of when to stay in the modes of listening, reading, learning, and questioning and when to act. And even when we make the decision to act, what does that action look like? Is it based on anger and frustration, or on inner strength, compassion, and loving kindness? So often, I feel stuck in the moments and days and years of awareness, then more awareness...perhaps making awareness a shield, rather than an open gate. Am I holding fear of stepping out of my comfort zone too far, putting myself in danger of verbal attacks, getting it wrong?” These readings offer me the wisdom of Jesus’ simple yet profound words: ‘...everyone who listens to these words of mine, and acts on them will be like a sensible man who builds his house on rock.” Listen. Act. Build your foundation. A good foundation will help to develop equanimity, will give me courage to move forward, backward, or to pause. Psalm 118 offers us a phrase that I keep in my heart: ‘taking refuge.” In buddhist practices, we chant about taking refuge in the buddha, the dharma, and the sangha...those who teach, the teachings, the community...Jesus, his teachings, our spiritual communities. These are all components of my well constructed house. I have everything I need within me, connected to me. I can open the gate.

Eileen Heidenheimer



FRIDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 8, 2023

The Immaculate Conception

Gn 3:9-15,20 Ps 98:1, 2-3AB, 3CD-4 Eph 1:3-6, 11-12 Lk 1:26-38

Have you ever been asked to perform a task that you weren't ready to perform? Or perhaps you were unsure as to why you were the person that was asked in the first place and wondered, "Why me? How is this my purpose and task to fulfill? Couldn't there be someone else who could do this better than me?" As God's chosen people, we are given duties to fulfill every day of our lives, and sometimes we will be unsure as to why we are the ones who were chosen for that task. From Adam and Eve caring for the forbidden tree to Mary being asked to bear God's son, we have examples that show people throughout history have been tasked with some near impossible things. But we find our power to persevere through faith. This is the message the Immaculate Conception brings us: we are strong enough to be the chosen ones for God's purpose. "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you!"



Patrick Mooney

In today's gospel, a pregnant unwed Mary visits Elisabeth who is pregnant with John the Baptist. The gospel is truly extraordinary. There are no men mentioned or having speaking roles, only two strong women. The males are the powerless unborn John and Jesus totally dependent on their mothers.

Elisabeth was not critical of an unwed Mary. She did not ask questions. She was full of joy.

John leapt for joy in his mother's womb. I remember placing my hand on swollen pregnant bellies and feeling my children and grandchildren kicking and moving within the womb. Men can only get a tiny impression of the wonders of children within wombs. Each of these experiences was sharing in a leaping of joy.



The Gospel writer quotes Elisabeth as saying, "Most blessed are you among women, . . ." Why the limitation on being blessed among women? Is Mary also not very blessed among men?

Let us pray and reflect on the blessedness of the women in our lives.

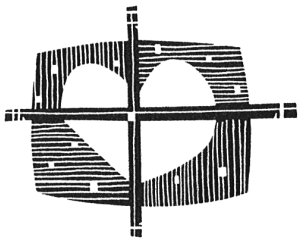
May we strive to support pregnant women and their children as supported by the work of Good Shepherd a Catholic Charities agency that works with pregnant and nursing teen mothers.

Mary was a refugee who would leave her home to save the life of her son Jesus. May we support refugee mothers who have left their homes to protect the lives of their children;

Let us strive to empower strong gentle women to take leadership roles in our families, Church and world.

—Barry Buchek

idols or make false promises. This does not seem to be talking about the average Jewish citizen. Then who does it mean? Is this telling us of the arrival of such holy people? If so, who are they and why are they important? Is it perhaps one person who will make a difference?



The book of Isaiah deals with the kingdom of Judah ruled by King Ahaz who has to deal with war caused by the invasion of Judah by the kingdoms of Syria and Israel.

The Lord sent a message to Ahaz telling him to ask the Lord to give him a sign. Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign from the Lord because he does not want to test the Lord.

Isaiah tells Ahaz the Lord will give you a sign: a young

woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him Immanuel. (The name means God is with us.) Isaiah is giving us the wonderful news and prophesying about Mary giving birth to Jesus.

Moving forward to the gospel of Luke, we read about Elizabeth who is in her sixth month of pregnancy. God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Mary: "Peace be with you. The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you." As we can easily imagine, Mary was deeply troubled by the angel's message. Gabriel comforted Mary telling her not to be afraid because God has been gracious to her. He told Mary she would become pregnant and give birth to a son whom she would name Jesus. Gabriel told Mary: Jesus will be great and will be called the son of the Most High God; his kingdom will never end." Mary's easily understandable reaction to Gabriel's words was asking how this could happen since she was a virgin. Gabriel further advised Mary, "the holy spirit will come on you, and God's power will rest upon you." To help Mary fully understand and accept what she had been told, the angel Gabriel told her about her cousin Elizabeth who was six months pregnant even though she was of advanced age. Mary's beautiful response to the angel Gabriel's message was simply, "I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me as you have said."

What a great lesson in trust and acceptance for us to emulate as we look forward to celebrating once again the birth of Jesus Christ.

—Bill Blow

Thursday, 3rd week of Advent

December 21, 2023

Sg 2:8-14; OR Zep 3:14-18a Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21 Lk 1:30-45

SATURDAY, 1ST WEEK OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 9, 2023

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

"Christ's heart was moved to compassion for them, because they were troubled and abandoned"

Christ's compassion was so great, that the disciples (not just the Apostles) were Divinely chosen, authorized, and sent forth to continue the Divine mission of Compassion. The disciples immediately began to go forth, extending Christ's compassion to all of God's suffering children, especially those burdened by extensive laws (today's doctrines).

Each of us disciples is similarly called today to perform the same Divine ministry of compassion. The question is which of our charisms (gifts of the Holy Spirit to build up the Church) are we called to use to extend Christ's compassion to the anawim?

Are we called to extend our "com passio", or "suffering with" to a particular segment of God's suffering children, i.e. the queer community, BIPOC people, war survivors, immigrants, etc? Are we called to extend our compassio in specific ministries, i.e. protesting for BLM, answering Vincent de Paul hotline calls, advocating for 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, centering prayer for those in need, etc?

Advent, the time of waiting in the silent stillness of Holy Darkness, is a time to pause and listen to the voice of the indwelt Holy Spirit to help us discern where, to whom, and for what ministry of compassion Christ is calling us to co-create. We wait with open hearts in this time of new birth, to hear where we are called to new spaces and developing charisms as yet unfolded, to offer Christ's compassion, "for the troubled and abandoned", broken as bread for the world. Let the Church say, "so be it".



Donna Zuroweste

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 10, 2023

Is 40:1-5, 9-11 Ps 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14 2Pt 3:8-14 Mk 1:1-8

A herald's voice in the desert crying,
Make ready the way of the Lord
Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!
Every valley shall be filled in,
Every mountain and hill shall be made low;
The rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country a
broad valley.

As I prayed over these words of Isaiah, the images of Gaza
keep appearing in my mind- the streets filled with the debris
of bombed buildings. Crews desperately trying to free those men, women, and children
trapped in the rubble. The children lifted out of the remains of their homes. The
clogged streets where ambulances cannot get through to hospitals. This is far from the
scene that Isaiah and John would have us see. How have we come to this state of
affairs that even a "time out" or "cease fire" for humanitarian needs is a matter of debate
and intense negotiation?

I feel so helpless in the face of all of this suffering and death, fear and hatred. Are my
prayers for justice and peace of any use at all?

Yet, Isaiah tells us:

Fear not to cry out and say to the cities of Judah:

Here is your God! Here comes with power the Lord God!

Here is his reward with him, his recompense before him.

His power is shown not. in the latest weaponry, or in the most devastating bomb.

He comes "Like a shepherd he feeds his flock: (all of them)

In his arms he gathers the lambs, Carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with
care.

If the movement of a butterfly's wings can effect a change in the universe, and my
positive thoughts can change the shape of water crystals, then my prayer and the



Tuesday, 3rd week of Advent

December 19, 2023

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

Both the first reading and the gospel talk about marriages that did not result in children.
The Bible says the women were barren, in other words infertile but who knows - at the
time it was easy to blame the women. But that's not the point. In both stories, in old age
the couples actually had a baby son. For both, the pregnancy came after an
announcement from an angel of God. In the first story the angel appears to the nameless
wife. For the second story the angel appears to Zechariah, Elizabeth's husband. For
both the sons were instructed to do
something specific, one should not
cut his hair the other should not
drink. Both were prophesied to do
great things. Pregnancies are not
easy. More and more of my friends
are having kids these days and
often pregnancies come with
difficulties, discomfort, anxiety
and sometimes with unexpected
outcomes. My friend recently lost
her baby girl. In fact, 10-20 % of
pregnancies end in miscarriages.
But it also comes with so much joy
and hope for the future of these
little humans. At Christmas we
celebrate the birth of baby Jesus
but maybe we should take a
moment to think about the
pregnancies of Mary, Elizabeth
and the nameless women in the first reading. Because of their commitment even at an
old age did their baby boys get to become the man that would do great things.



—Melanie Ernst

Wednesday, 3rd week of Advent

December 20, 2023

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

The 24th Psalm makes it clear that the world and all who live in it belong to the Lord. It
asks the very important question: who has the right to enter his holy temple? The very
compelling answer is simply those who are pure in act and thought, who do not worship

Monday, 3rd week of Advent

December 18, 2023

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

Today's readings are full of anticipation and hope. God will raise a king who "shall reign and govern wisely." And "he shall have pity for the lonely and the poor." Peace and justice will flourish.

Then we get to Matthew's gospel and the tense changes from future to present. He says succinctly, "This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about." Prior to their living together Joseph learns that Mary is pregnant. Being a "righteous man" and not wanting to embarrass her, Joseph decides to quietly divorce her. But God intervenes and sends an angel to Joseph who tells him in a dream that Mary's pregnancy is due to the Holy Spirit. The angel echoes the hope of the earlier readings and says her son shall save the people. Joseph changes his mind and takes Mary into his home.

How many times have we, like Joseph, thought we had everything right? Our observations, our facts, our conclusions were well established and we could move forward. And then we find out we were wrong. Our teenager is not a selfish whiner. She has too much to do and too many people to please. Our mom doesn't call too often. She's lonely. Our neighbor is not a crab. He just got a bad diagnosis. Our spouse occasionally empties the dishwasher. But he's got a lot going on at work.

As we approach a new life with the infant Jesus, as we approach a new year, let's slow down and hear God's voice. We may hear it when we first wake up. Or while we're walking the dog. Or doing the dishes. God may not send an angel to talk to us. But God's voice is always there. Listen.



—Mike Forst

positive relationships that I have with others then the “glory of the Lord can be revealed” and we can “Make ready the way of the Lord and clear him a straight path.”

Janet Kuciejczyk, CSJ

Monday, 2nd week of Advent

December 11, 2023

Is 35:1-10 Ps 85:9AB and 10, 11-12, 13-14 Lk 5:17-26

The readings today are filled with harmony, hope and happiness. God’s promises that are never ending and always fulfilling. They are promises of new life and renewal and even physical healing.

Oh Mystery where are you in my real life, right now in the fall of 2023?

The tragedies that continue to unfold in the world and particularly in the community in which these tomes were written is almost incomprehensible. From a historical perspective I have to remember that the people of Israel have always understood they would need to fight for their existence. Nonetheless the ruthlessness that is presently occurring is too much to take in.

In our own country the numerous mass shootings, individual hate crimes and all the evil that happens that we don’t even know about, is discouraging.

Each of our own lives has numerous heartaches and stories that cause me to look for hope and renewal in these promises. I am recently grieving with a dear friend whose grandchild died suddenly. Not only is there the loss of the little one but there is the deep sadness of the parents who have loved this little one so deeply and completely. Where do I go? To whom do I go? And Jesus says, “I have the words of eternal life.”

In Luke the observers of the healing of the man confined to a cot say, “We have seen incredible things today.” I have to ask where have I seen or experienced incredible things. We are so used to the amazing things that occur in our everyday lives that sometimes we forget to pause, look, touch and express gratitude. I am recovering from a rather long episode of covid and pneumonia. First of all I am grateful today that I have enough energy to write this. During this extended episode I experienced multiple times the incredible generosity of people in my community even to my neighbor taking out my trash. Isaiah says the wilderness will rejoice and bloom like the crocus it shall bloom abundantly and rejoice with joyful song. There is a purple crocus blooming in my front yard. I am rejoicing and encouraged to watch for incredible things.

Kathy Stock

Tuesday, 2nd week of Advent

December 12, 2023

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Rv11:19A, 12:1-6A, 10AB Judith 13: 18 BCDE, 1 Lk 1:26-38

“Your deed of hope will never be forgotten by those who tell the might of God.” –
Judith 13:19

The celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe has been my favorite feast day since I first learned her story in my early 20’s. In 1531, The Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego, a widowed farmer, and spoke to him in his indigenous language, wearing Aztec clothing. When she sent Juan Diego to the Bishop of Mexico to build a chapel, it took witnessing a miracle bestowed on Juan Diego by the Virgin for the bishop to believe his story. The appearance of Our Lady of Guadalupe to a poor, indigenous man exemplifies God’s preferential option for the poor and oppressed. The Virgin could have chosen to appear to a cleric. Juan Diego even asked The Virgin to choose a more “honored” man to take her message to the Bishop. Instead, she chose to communicate through the people, not the power, of the Church.

God similarly chooses someone on the margins of society to bring His son into the world. Today’s gospel recounts the angel Gabriel’s visit to Mary to inform her that she is pregnant with Jesus. I can only imagine the sure panic I would feel if visited by the angel Gabriel or the Virgin Mary. Yet both Juan Diego and Mary seem calm—humbled but confident in what is being asked of them. That clarity, to be assured of one’s purpose and truth in the face of others’ doubt, is aspirational, especially in a time dominated by misinformation and myriad distractions. May we have that same conviction in our calling and follow the legacy of Our Lady of Guadalupe through our presence to those our institutions try to silence.

—Mariah Byrne Sullivan



3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 17, 2023

Is 61:1-2A, 10-11 Lk 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54 1 Thes 5:16-24

Jn 1:6-8, 19-28

*“Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.
In all circumstances give thanks,
for this is the will of God for you in Christ
Jesus.” – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18*

Happy Gaudete Sunday! Rejoice and be glad!

We are meant to be people of joy. Reflecting God’s goodness can be a struggle. Focusing on the positive is the Christian response. As Christians, we are Easter people. We know how the story ends. We are people of joy.

Joy can be a tough emotion to find and an even tougher emotion to keep. The good news is that joy is our calling. We are instructed to look for that which brings you joy and to purge from our lives the things that do not. Marie Kondo is an organizational guru that teaches to only hold on to the things that really fill our lives with meaning.

As we approach the winter solstice, the days grow shorter and the nights longer. The darkness can be a metaphor for many challenges that we all face in our lives, and as Christians, light is our beacon to find the love of God in ourselves and in others around us. God created us to be reflections of God’s self to everyone we meet. We must seek the light in order to share it with others. Also, we must recognize the light in ourselves in order to be the light of God to the world. Reflecting on our own goodness can feel awkward at first, but filling up our lamp with oil to keep our light burning is exactly what God calls us.

When you need to remember to rejoice, re-read this. “I am the light on the hill. I am goodness and grace. I am the *imago Dei*. I am beauty and peace. I am God’s Body of Christ for the world to see. I AM. Rejoice and be glad.”

—Margaret Govero



Saturday, 2nd week of Advent

December 16, 2023

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

Before Jesus, there had to be John – Elijah; “like a fire there appeared the prophet Elijah whose words were as a flaming furnace.” according to book of Sirach. Fire can be destructive, but in this context, fire is meant to purify.

Elijah and then John called their audience to look within themselves to see the aspects of their lives which separate them from being the people God has called them to be. As we prepare for the coming of Christ into our world during Advent today, we are called again to explore within ourselves those behaviors which separate from intimacy with God.

While we are emphasizing Advent practices, this exploration is one which is good to practices regularly. As humans we are all imperfect, we all “fall short.” But each moment is an opportunity, when we stay aware, to stop, reflect, make the changes we need to make, and grow closer to God.

In my life, I make many mistakes, and for me, most of them are rooted in fear. When afraid, I have the tendency to forget: God has this, focus on what it mine to do and trust God to manage the rest. I can find myself anxious about world events, my financial futures, issues with my children, and then snapping at my family, overeating, procrastinating on tasks, watching too much TV...etc. The impurities I need to burn off, or the crooked roads I need straightened, are those behaviors – sins – which I engage in when I lose sight of trust. For me, when I hear Elijah’s or John’s call to be aware and repent, I then can experience God’s protective Love more clearly and more intimately. Then, I am open to the arrival of Christ in any moment in my life. I turn to God, and I know I am safe.

—Kevin Doyle



Wednesday, 2nd week of Advent

December 13, 2023

Memorial of St Lucy

Is 40:25-31 Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 and 10 Mt 11:28-30

When I look at the state of the world, both the wider world and my own little one, it’s not unusual that I feel “faint and weary,” and I’m asking God, “Where are you?” So I certainly need Isaiah’s reminder that *God* never grows faint and weary and is always there to give me/us strength and vigor.

In the Gospel, Jesus seems to be speaking to the same kind of people Isaiah addresses: the weak, the weary, the ones who feel they cannot go on. But when I’m ready for those “eagle’s wings” of strength and vigor, Jesus surprisingly says “Take my yoke upon you.” “What?” I complain, “another burden? Your yoke is the cross! Why would I ask for that?”



Yet he continues desiring that we learn from him, meek and humble. And, unbelievably, if we take on *his* yoke, we will find rest, because, as he says, his yoke is easy; his burden light.

What *is* his yoke? Am I burdened by the Law, as expounded by the Pharisees? Sometimes, but not by Jesus. In place of the yoke of the law, complicated by scribal interpretation and the need for certainty, Jesus invites us to take the yoke of obedience to his word, under which we will find rest.

Looking at “obedience to God’s word” as something just as burdensome, I complain again. And the responsorial psalm responds: He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills, redeems your life from destruction, crowns you with kindness and compassion.

Jesus, open me to those “eagle’s wings,” and let me soar, sharing the compassion and kindness you give us.

—Barbara Schlatter

Thursday, 2nd week of Advent

December 14, 2023

St. John of the Cross

Is: 41:13-20 Ps 145: 1 and 9, 10-11, 12-13AB Mt 11:11-15

In today's reading from Isaiah, we are reminded of our place in the great cosmic ecosystem.

Isaiah speaks to his people living in exile - alienated from their land, cast out from the sacred desert and olive trees which their ancestors called home:

"Fear not, O worm Jacob...I will help you, says the Holy One"

Are the people of God really likened to a *worm*? I don't believe this means that God's people are worthless. The Hebrew word for worm here is "tola" - it is the *coccus ilicis*, also translated "scarlet worm." It is a species of worm that completes its life cycle by dying to provide nourishment to her offspring. In dying, the worm bleeds out a scarlet ink upon the bark of a tree. The bodies of these worms were used in ancient times to dye holy fabrics, like the cloth of the tabernacle.

As human beings living in the midst of a climate crisis, it's good news to remember that we can be like the scarlet worm. We are but one small part of the vast ecosystems in which we live. Humility invites us to learn from our Creator. How can we play our part in this web of Life in a good way - in a way that sustains all of Life on this planet?

God's justice is a restoration of biodiversity: "I will open up rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the broad valleys...I will plant in the desert the cedar, acacia, myrtle, and olive."

Our Creator is the One who restores Life to the rivers, the desert, and the trees. Just as Isaiah calls his exiled people to hope, we are dared to *hope*. What hope does your heart long for this Advent?

—Annie Girresch



Friday, 2nd week of Advent

December 15, 2023

Is 48:17-19

PS 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6

Mt 11:16-19

It is like children shouting in the market place :

We played the pipes for you and you wouldn't dance; we sang dirges and you would not be mourners.

Jesus is saying, "What description can I find for the present generation." The people are a bit like Goldilocks judging spiritual lifestyles. John the Baptist's way was "too hard", and Jesus's way was "too soft." They had not found their "just right" so they refused to join in whatever it was that God's messengers were offering. They chose rather to be critical in order to avoid any commitment to living a challenging lifestyle. Then Jesus speaks a powerful truth to those who have ears to hear. "Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds," in Matthew as we have it today, or in Luke "by her children," those who *do* those deeds. True wisdom is proven by what a person does with his/her life, not ideas, opinions, twitter threads or TikTok videos, not Instagram or Facebook comments. Are we among those who join in whatever it is that God is doing or do we sit out and curmudgeonly criticize.

And in the very next verses, Jesus says that this wisdom is given not to the learned but to the children, to the simple, rather than to those presumed "wise and intelligent," whose lead we sometimes choose to follow blindly without discretion, especially in this political climate. Yet these simple folk are the ones who are often beaten down when they question the path we seem at times to be taking. We are surrounded by stories and real-life experiences of men and women who struggle to challenge these directions and bear the hardship of not being accepted and supported in the very space created for that purpose, the Church. Like Jesus and John the Baptist, they can't win; the goal posts of acceptability keep moving.

Yet it is also these people who are invited by Jesus in a very comforting verse just a little farther on in the Scriptures, "Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." May we be among the people who are not afraid to challenge the situation when the choices we make are moving us in a direction contrary to where God leads us. May we be among the simple faithful to whom this welcome invitation of Jesus is offered.

—Sister Chabanel Mathison, O.S.U.