



Advent and Christmas
2014

Holy Family

South Pasadena

www.holyfamily.org

Thanks

The Online Prayer book is a gift from the Holy Family Community and friends who contribute reflections, art, music, technical assistance, and proofreading skills.

Original Music for this Prayer Book is from our own Holy Family Parishioner and 5:30 Choir Music Director, Ben Coria

If you would like to participate in this wonderful book, please contact Dawn Ponnet at dponnet@holyfamily.org

November 30, 2014

[First Sunday of Advent](#)

Isaiah 63:16B-17, 19B; 64:2-7

Psalms 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

I Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:33-37

Summary

You, LORD, are our father, our redeemer you are named forever.

Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.

God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

What I say to you, I say to all: "Watch!"

Reflection

Today's readings urge us to reflect on the true "reason for the season". Advent is a season of joy, a time to be marked by faithful anticipation, by a yearning for the fulfillment of what has been promised: the return of Christ. It is also a time of profound spiritual reflection that leads to a personal transformation of faith...How will you live out this Advent season?

Watch!

Across the lush and arid landscapes of our lives, in the midst of every kind of abundance and scarcity, God is faithfully with us and keeping us "firm to the end". "Watch", Jesus says, urging his listeners and subsequent generations of believers to be ever watchful for his return. It is, after all, a fact of our faith: the beloved Master will indeed return and expect to be welcomed...Are we unwearingly anticipating and ready for his arrival? Or, are we distracted and preoccupied with the consumerism that envelops the Advent season?

Seek!

We live in a world that is incessantly pursuing, searching, seeking and ultimately... unfulfilled. The quest of worldly pursuits will only lead to a life that is famished and yearning; never quenching the thirst for more attainment. However, the quest of spiritual pursuits will lead to a more fulfilled and meaningful life; always quenching the thirst for living water. What are you seeking during this Advent season?

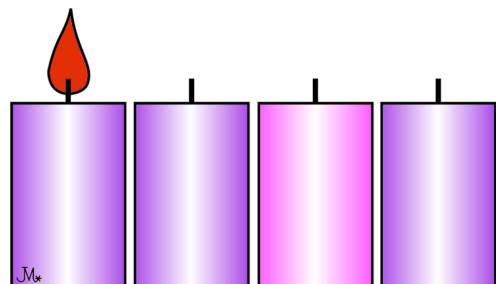
Restore!

In *Confessions*, Saint Augustine conveys the struggle for faithful identity and recalls those crucial life episodes and events in which he reflects and celebrates God's provident grace. Listen to St. Augustine's lament as he speaks from his heart and soul:

The house of my soul is too narrow for you to come in to me; let it be enlarged by you. It is in ruins; restore it. There is much about it which must offend your eyes; I confess and know it.

But who will cleanse it? Or, to whom shall I cry but to you?

Cleanse me from my secret faults, Lord...I believe, and therefore I speak.



Can you feel the words of St. Augustine in your heart? Is your heart moved by his words of reflection and confession? How will you be restored during this Advent season?

Transform!

During Mass as we come to the Eucharistic Table, we proclaim the Memorial Acclamation... our response to God's coming to dwell among us, particularly in the transformation of bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood. During this Advent season, let us be transformed and live out the Paschal Mystery:

*We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.
When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you
come again.*

Save us, Savior of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

Prayer

God of justice and peace,
from the heavens you rain down mercy and kindness,
that all on earth may stand in awe and wonder
before your marvelous deeds.
Raise our heads in expectation,
that we may yearn for the coming day of the Lord
and stand without blame before your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

Ramón B. Barreras, Ph.D.
Pastoral Council/
Education Formation
Commission/RCIA Team



December 1, 2014

Monday of the 1st week of Advent

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalms 122:1-2, 3-4B, 4CD-5, 6-7, 8-9

Matthew 8:5-11

Summary

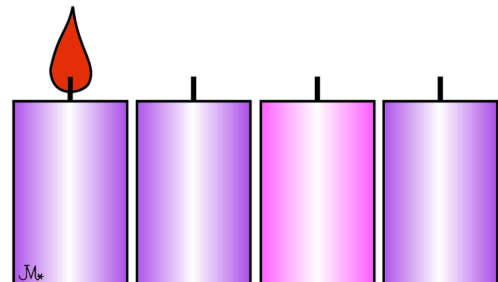
Isaiah visualizes a bright and shining future for God's people, which includes not only a holy place atop the mountains, but a change in the people's behavior. The Matthew reading is an affirmative example of how the people have, in fact, come to great humility and joy due to their faith in Jesus. Isaiah's almost mystical prophecies come to fruition in one of the most breathtaking reverberations of the bible. A man with the gift of seeing prepares the world to believe in not only a great God and a new Jerusalem, but also in a new son, Jesus, so that when it comes to pass – even centuries later – the truth about Father and Son will be fulfilled.

Reflection

Because the people have come so far and endured so much mayhem over the centuries, even those who are in Isaiah's time can rejoice to what the future will bring. It is a message to all that God perseveres. I have an inspirational book in which one of the pages describes a speech to England by Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill. The country was halfway into the grueling World War II, and the people were weary and disheartened. He told them: "We shall go forward together. The road upward is stony. There are upon our journey dark and dangerous valleys through which we have to make and fight our way. But it is certain that if we persevere – and we do persevere – we shall come through these dark and dangerous valleys into a sunlight broader and more genial and more lasting than mankind has ever known."



It's that kind of hope and faith that moves us to a wonderful future, no matter what the Lord has in store. We can also call out for help along the way, and we will receive it. The centurion in Matthew is an example of what really moves Jesus. The centurion had asked Je-



sus to help his sick servant. What moved Jesus was the commander's demeanor and superior behavior. The blending of the centurion's authority, his responsibility, and his care for ALL his men was touching to Jesus. "He was amazed," Matthew tells us Jesus said to his followers, and then Jesus told them: "Amen I say to you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith." If you want to know how to please the Lord, this is a good way to start.

Prayer

Father in Heaven,

You give us so much and we have so little to give without you. We want to please you, and so often forget to humble ourselves and become those empty vessels as we wait for your loving response.

Amen.

Patsy Hilbert,
parishioner, RCIA sponsor



December 2, 2014

Tuesday of the 1st week of Advent

Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalm 72:1-2,7-8,12-13,17

Luke 10:21-24

Summary

Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I give you praise, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will."

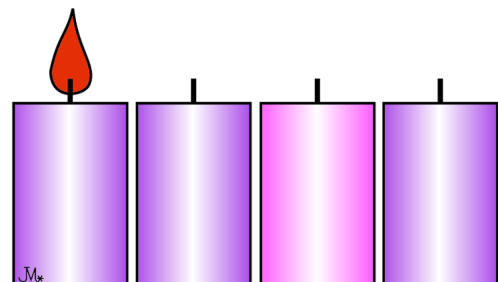
Many years ago I was in formation to become a catechist. At such a session one of the master catechists shared their story of faith. She talked of messages from God she received in dreams. I wanted to dream about God. I started a dream journal and would record my dreams each morning. Years passed, I stopped journaling, and I never remember dreaming about God, a message from Jesus, a prayer from Mary.

Years later I became the Confirmation Director at Holy Family and I discovered



a need to learn more about the Spirit. The teens who would be showered with the gifts of the Spirit needed to know just who the Spirit is, and what these gifts are all about. Therefore I needed to know the same. In the first reading the prophet Isaiah shares that the root of Jesse, Jesus, would have the gifts of the Spirit rest on him.

I learned and taught about the gifts of wisdom, understanding, reverence, courage, knowledge, right judgment, and wonder and awe. I asked many adults and teens to share what these gifts mean to them and how they attempt to use the gifts. I enjoyed a talk that included a clip from



the Wizard of Oz when the lion speaks of courage. I cried with a teen as she told about the gift of understanding when she listened to a friend who was depressed. I beamed as core member of youth ministry chose to do what is right rather than what is popular.

Although I always wanted to have a vision of from God, speaking to me in some celestial manner, I now know that he did! Although I thought it might be more Hollywood style, it was more homespun. The words of our God came in the voices of teen and adult volunteers. Homespun like an infant born in a humble cave where animals breathe kept the child warm. Where kings knelt down giving honor and praise.

Prayer

Emmanuel, that is, God is with us.

May we always see, hear and experience the presence of You in our sacraments and in the sacrament of ministry.

Prepare us O Lord for your coming again, and again.

I am this is your holy name.

Amen

Dawn Ponnet

Director Faith Formation



December 3, 2014

Memorial of St. Francis Xavier

Isaiah 25:6-10A

Psalm 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6

Matthew 15:29-37

Summary

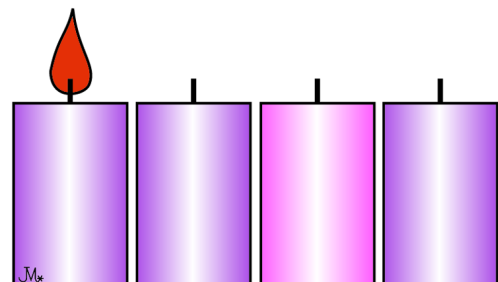
In the reading according to Isaiah, we are reminded that while the Lord provides richly for his people, he will also be responsible for destroying “the veil that veils all people”. In doing so, he will save us and bring eternal joy to our lives. The Responsorial Psalm assures us that, through our faith, the Lord will forever guide us through our challenges and lead us in courage ultimately to places of calm respite. And finally, in this reading of Matthew’s Gospel, we revel in the telling of two miracles! First, was the miracle of Christ’s healing of the physically sick... and then, desiring to feed his faithful followers who’d been doing so for several days without sustenance, Christ multiplied the 7 loaves and few fishes to feed the large crowd. The significance of 7 loaves of bread and 7 baskets full after feeding the crowd is important. Seven is the number of completeness and perfection in God’s creation of all things. Again, it is reaffirmed that our faith is a necessary component in believing that God will grant us salvation completely and perfectly as promised.



Reflection

I take solace in knowing that God conveys his genuinely caring for all of us in a multitude of ways...and respond by continuing to strengthen my faith daily. Our blessing is imbedded in the essence of these readings. Our beautiful Lord provides love, guidance, courage, peace, addresses our daily needs- both physical and spiritual... all affirming the

huge amount of devotion he has for each and every one of us. One would be hard pressed to not find a great deal of comfort in these readings...and, in turn, duly praise our amazing Creator.



Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

May we be ever mindful of the abundant love that you shower on us! We must embrace faith to feel the depth of that love and reap the wisdom and guidance that you provide...as long as we are willing recipients with eyes and ears wide open. The promise and ultimate realization of your suffering for our eternal salvation is the ultimate sign of your beautiful profuse love for all. May we be always aware and grateful for the breadth and beauty of your love, sacrifice and blessings.

We gratefully pray in Jesus' Name,
Amen.

Laura Ursitti

Grateful Holy Family Parishioner

Wife of Rick, Mother of Danny and Matthew



December 4, 2014

Thursday of the First Week of Advent

Isaiah 26:1-6

Psalms 118:1 & 8-9, 19-21, 25-27 A

Matthew 7:21, 24-27

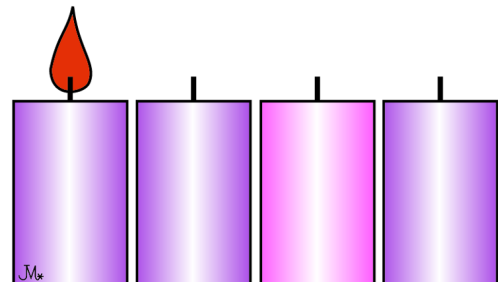
Summary

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

Reflection

In today’s gospel we are reminded to be intentional about the foundation upon which we are building our lives. Are we building a life that can withstand the many storms that will inevitably come our way? Or are we building a life that is accepted by others, feels good, or is just the path we are already on? Sometimes I find that it actually can be difficult to tell. What if my intentions are good but at times my foundation is shaky? Does that mean I am on the wrong path, paying attention to the wrong things? Perhaps the intention of my foundation is good, it just needs strengthening.

Jesus reminds us that it will not be enough to *listen* to God and to *say* the right things to show that we believe. Instead Jesus points out that we must *do* in order to build lives on a foundation of rock. And isn’t it true that we already know this to be true with all other things in life? As an engineer I am continually surprised at how much I thought I knew when I theoretically understood how something worked, but am proven very wrong when I go and built it, or test it myself. In this hands-on process I always realize that I didn’t fully understand until I attempted to put my knowledge into action. I have found this to be true in so many other areas of my life as well. Do we not learn the best when we are teaching a peer, a child, a nephew, a student, or a parent something ourselves? Do we not build a greater understanding of the concept or the idea by putting it into action?



Jesus reminds us today that this is also true with our faith. By living our faith through every part of our lives we give ourselves the opportunity to struggle with it, to embrace it, to build it into the foundation of who we are. Jesus encourages that by *doing* we strengthen our foundation. We prepare ourselves for the challenges and opportunities of life.

Prayer

Lord, may we build our lives upon your promise by living our faith in all aspects of our lives – at home, at work, with friends, at church. May we allow ourselves to be humbled by realizations and challenges that life will bring us so that we may more deeply and concretely follow you. Amen.

Joan Ervin
Holy Family Parishioner



December 5, 2014

Friday of the First Week of Advent

Isaiah 29:17-24

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

Matthew 9:27-31

Summary

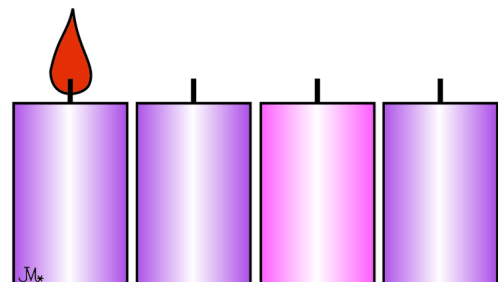
There is no need to be afraid, fear is a lack of trust in the Lord, as the response to the Psalm today says, "The Lord is my light and salvation". Do I believe this and, more importantly, live it? God is always present to us as he was to the two blind men.

Reflection

When I look at this gospel two things strike me, pity and faith. Jesus is walking by some blind men and they ask him to have pity on them. Pity is the feeling of sorrow and compassion caused by the suffering and misfortunes of another. I wonder if Jesus has pity all the time, with every person he met. It seems that almost everyone has something troubling in their lives. If it is not them personally it is the misfortunes of someone they love deeply. Recently I attended a retreat and one of the other retreatants was sharing her sorrow for her son who was being a prodigal. I could tell by her expression the pain was huge. Her face was screaming "Lord Jesus have pity on my son who has lost his way!"

Secondly there is the word faith. Perhaps faith can be described as a wondrous event or change we could never have imagined without the hand of God. The lowly may find comfort in faith, the poor rejoice because the impossible can happen with the slightest thought of our God. The blind men must have been waiting a life-time for sight. When Jesus showed compassion on the blind men, they must have been drawn into a relationship with Jesus. Can you imagine if someone gave you something you had hoped for all your life? I think I would be forever changed and forever grateful to that one who gave me this gift. Then it occurs to me...the thing I want most in life is to be loved unconditionally for who I am. I think when I experience that kind of love I am able to love others. Of course that is the promise of our God who loves us all so completely.

The words Jesus used when healing the blind men were, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." These words remind of us of the words Mary used when she agreed to be the mother of Jesus. Jesus also saw this kind of faith when he asked a few fishermen to aban-



don their nets and begin a new life as disciples. Jesus did not ask the blind men to do anything, he counted on their ability to believe. When he saw their belief, their sight was restored. He trusted the fishermen would say “yes” and follow.

Jesus’ words were not only for these blind men centuries ago. They are for us. They are for our children who follow us. “Do you believe...?” In my case do I believe that my God loves me so completely that I am willing to love others with that same kind of passion? My hope is that I do, and that I will. But I find it a daily concern, a daily practice, a daily experience, and it is not always easy. And so I ask, Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me, show me compassion and give me more faith!



Prayer

Jesus, healer of all.

I thank you for loving me and showing me compassion.

Help me to be more like you: compassionate and merciful.

I ask this in your holy name.

Amen.



December 6, 2014

Saturday of the First Week of Advent

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26

Psalm 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5A, 6-8

Summary

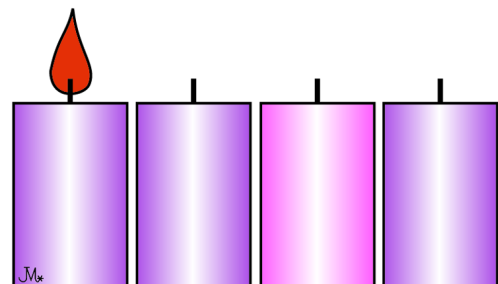
The season of Advent that began last Sunday is a time of preparation and promise. We are reminded that we know neither the time nor the place that we will encounter the Lord. Consequently, we need to be prepared. We are also reminded that the Lord our God has promised to provide for our every need. The first reading reminds us of the promises the Lord made through Isaiah: "The Lord will give you the bread you need and the water for which you thirst." The Lord God is the first giver of all gifts. In Matthew's gospel Jesus instructs the Twelve to go out to the community to also be givers of gifts – to the troubled and abandoned, to the sick and hurting.

Reflection

The preparations for Christmas have begun! For children, these weeks of Advent can seem like an eternity. They have prepared their lists and may have already visited Santa Claus in the mall to plead their case. Today, the feast of St. Nicholas, is an ideal time to share with our children – and to remind ourselves – of the story of St. Nick. The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas, who was born during the third century. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus' words to "sell what you own and give the money to the poor," Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. The gift he was given, he gave as a gift.

Giving without expecting anything in return is what our God is all about. Individuals like St. Nicholas – hence Santa Claus – provide an example for us to imitate. Isaiah tells us that the Lord God gives the gift of rain for the seed that we sow in the ground. That seed produces wheat that is rich and abundant. In other words, God gives us the gift enabling our effort to bear fruit, but we have the responsibility to put in the effort and do our part. God gives the rain, but we have to prepare the ground, sow the seed and cultivate what the seed will produce.

In the gospel we hear that Jesus was moved with pity at the sight of the crowds as he went



around the towns and villages because they seemed troubled and abandoned. How am I moved as I encounter the crowds while shopping or driving? Today and throughout these next few weeks of preparation, try to imitate the example of Jesus and St. Nicholas and assist the needy, the sick and the suffering.

Prayer



Good and gracious God, you have given me so many gifts. Strengthen my resolve to share with others all that you have given me. Enable me to become more patient and more present to all those I encounter. I make this prayer in the name of Jesus who lives with you and the Spirit as one God. Amen.

Bill Metzdorf
Parishioner



December 7, 2014

Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Psalm 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14

2 Peter 3:8-14

Mark 1:1-8

Summary

In each of these readings there are passages about preparing the way for the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ. First Reading "A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the Lord"; Psalm: "Justice shall walk before Him and prepare the way of His steps"; Second Reading: "...waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God";

Gospel: "Behold I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way".

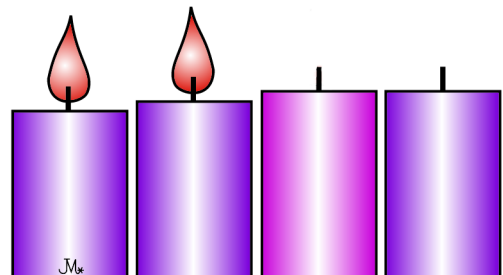
Reflection

I can remember as a child how I looked forward to many things in anticipation of the event that would bring me joy: looking forward to the end of the school term and the beginning of summer (this one went from grammar school all the way through college!); my 16th birthday, then my 18th birthday, and of course my 21st birthday; and the best one of all Christmas.

At first Christmas was so great because I got gifts from family and friends and everyone was so nice to each other. Big dinner with all the family: Mom & Dad, aunts and uncles, and friends and neighbors gathered around many tables with great stuff to eat and drinks and especially the deserts, all the joy of Christmas as seen through the eyes of children.

Now that Advent is upon us we have the opportunity to relive those good times but many of us are stressing about what gifts to buy or what to make for Christmas dinner or if you will make the journey to someone's home. But we need to find time to reflect on what Advent announces to us, that of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Don't wait until Christmas Eve Mass or Christmas Mass to stop to think about the coming of Our Lord. Hopefully you have an Advent calendar to help you reflect on the path to the birth of Jesus, or maybe you have some personal plan that helps you celebrate the coming of



Jesus. You might want to try to do something good for someone each day, something that you might do during Lent. Advent is a preparation for the birth of our Lord, and we should take part in this journey in preparing the way for his coming.

I pray that each of us finds a moment to reflect on our past anticipation and joy of Christmas and to also bring this anticipation and joy to our life as we live it today.

Prayer

Dear Baby Jesus fill my heart with the joy of your coming, help me to live this joy in my daily life. And help me bring the anticipation of your coming to all those I encounter.
Amen

Henry Provencio
Eucharistic Minister



December 8, 2014

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Genesis 3:9–15, 20

Psalm 98:1, 2–3AB, 3CD–4

Ephesians 1:3–6, 11–12

Luke 1:26–38

Summary

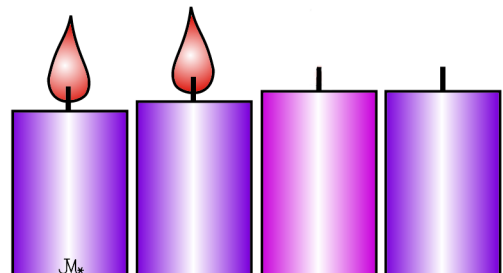
The readings begin with the classic story in Genesis of the discovery by God that Adam and Eve had eaten the apple in the Garden of Eden, after Eve is tempted by the serpent. They are banished from the Garden, and the serpent is punished. The second reading is Paul’s letter to Ephesians, where we are told we are blessed and chosen by God. The Gospel then lightens our celebration with the Annunciation, where Mary is visited by the archangel Gabriel, and she is told that she will bear the Savior of the World.

Reflection

A long time ago I used to help with the senior high school retreats called Kairos. There was one talk called the “Results of God’s Friendship.” I remember one of my colleagues starting this talk with, “There is nothing you can do to separate yourself from the love of God.” This concept is so liberating and yet so difficult to believe.

In today’s first reading Adam and Eve commit the “first sin” in the garden. When questioned by God both of them point the finger away from themselves blaming Eve or the serpent. How often have I blamed another for my mistakes and my sins? Hard to calculate.

In the second reading, from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, praise is given to God for giving us the greatest gift, Jesus. In this season of gifting, I am reminded that Jesus is the reason I give gifts. Once again, we are called to follow the example of our God. We don’t give gifts because we can, we give gifts because we want to be like our God, who so lovingly gave us Jesus and Jesus gave us himself in Eucharist, and his life on the cross. Am I worthy of such gifts?



Worthy? There in lies the difficulty for me. To believe I am worthy and that there is nothing I can do to stop God from loving me.

In the Gospel today we hear Luke's eloquent description of the annunciation. I am astounded how a very young girl had the courage necessary to say yes to an angel and more importantly become the mother of our God. This solemnity, often confusing, as we listen to the narrative about Jesus' incarnation when we are celebrating the immaculate nature of Mary.

To bring this rambling post to full circle, let me remind myself and all of you reading this, that there is nothing you can do to separate yourself from God. Adam and Eve tried, but God allowed them to move on and become our first parents. Paul lets us know that even when humanity had failed and missed the point, our God continued to the waiting partner in the dance of life, including offering his own son to be our dance partner, Jesus walked, talked, prayed, healed and showed us the way to live. And even though I never really feel worthy, God continues to say, "But I love you and want to always be with you.." Mary's yes, continues to be an inspiration. A young girl putting her life in the hands of God. I hope to honor that gesture by believing in the liberating qualities of knowing God's love and everyday attempting to live a life worthy of such enormous love.



Prayer

Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death.



December 9, 2014

Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalms 96:1-2, 3 & 10 AC, 11-12, 13

MT 18:12-14

Summary

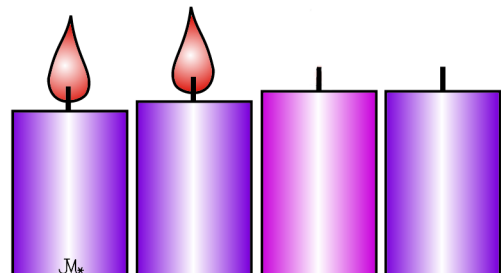
In the book of Isaiah we read the beginning lines from the first of a group of chapters sometimes called the Book of Consolation. They are words of hope; of God's promise of salvation. Then in Psalms we sing to the Lord and praise him. And finally in the book of Matthew we read the parable of the lost sheep and are reminded of our responsibility to go and bring them back to God if we can.

Reflection

This gospel reading happens to be one of my favorites, primarily for the reason of familiarity, but also for the many connections I have made from my life. As a kid, I don't remember envisioning anything other than "a sheep", the image of a small, lonely, lost sheep. Dozens of readings later and with deeper clarity I find this reading lined with a message of great hope for us all. We are reminded we have a God who will search for us even when we have wandered off the path.

One of the more personal connections I have made from this reading has to do with my Uncle John. On Thanksgiving we gathered at my mom's home for not only a meal but also a chance to catch up with relatives we don't see but once or twice a year. One of the regulars is my Uncle John from northern California. Years ago he strayed from the fold but today he wears a chain around his neck, with a new number each year (currently "37"), representing the number of years ago he was found. He is thankful for God above all and believes all things good come from Him. Uncle John found his calling to help others who strayed and has found peace and strength from this. I respect him for being Christ's hands and feet in ways I cannot.

No matter how we encounter those who are lost, we are called to let them see God in us. A smile...definitely, something more tangible...possibly, but above all God's grace should shine through us. This Advent season, I intend to be a good disciple and share God's love with those I encounter that need it most. Join me in herding lost sheep. What better way to prepare for Christmas?





Prayer

Oh gracious and merciful God
Light the way for those who are lost
So they may find their way home
Give me strength to be your hands and
Feet for those who need help as they
Journey back to the fold.
In Your name we pray.
Amen

Karla Stephen
Parishioner, Education Formation Commission



December 10, 2014

Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent

Isaiah 40:25-31

Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8 & 10

MT 11:28-30

Summary

All of the readings today reflect on the power and glory of the Lord and the grace of his son, Jesus. Each tells of how we are given strength and are blessed by their love.

Reflection

This gospel from Matthew is one that speaks to me and fills my heart every time I read it:

Jesus said to the crowds:

“Come to me, all you labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart;

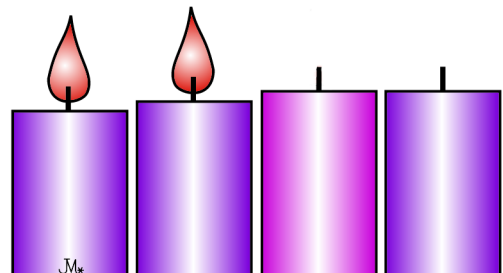
And you will find rest for yourselves.

For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

It is hope that fills my heart with this passage. The gift that Jesus gives us to be a comfort when times are difficult and we are weary. That weariness can come through illness, poverty, fear, etc or just the “burden” of everyday life, where sometimes it is difficult to juggle everything and keep moving forward. When that weariness creeps in on me, it is time for me to take a moment (or ten) to focus, to pray, to ask for help and to give thanks for Jesus in helping me through. It is in those acts that I find my rest in Jesus, when he takes that yoke from me.

And it is in the passage “..for I am meek and humble of heart” that I also find great comfort. It says to me that one does not have to be strong and powerful to find rest. That it is okay to be small and quiet. The comfort of Jesus – his easy yoke and light burden – is available to all of us.

That we can find him in our own still, calming breath as well as in the crashing cymbals of our life.



Prayer

Lord, thank you for giving me your gift of rest and comfort. On those days and nights that I am tossed upon the rough waves of my human existence, I call to you and you touch me with your grace. Your yoke is not a burden on my frail soul and together we make my burden light.

Linda Long

RCIA team member and Kindred Spirits coordinator



December 11, 2014

Thursday of the Second Week of Advent

Isaiah 41:13-20

Psalms 145:1 & 9, 10-11, 13-13AB

Matthew 11:11-15

Summary

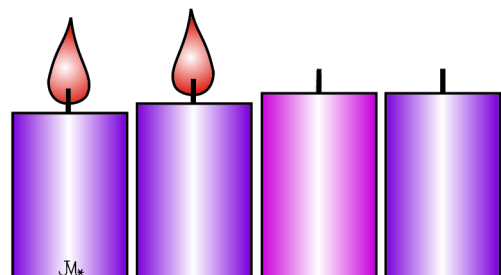
The gospel reading for this day is the words of Jesus to his followers. He focuses on John the Baptist, letting them know that John prophesizes what is to come in the days ahead, and that the Kingdom of Heaven awaits those who heed and act on his words.

Reflection

Oh, good. More waiting. Often, it seems like life is just waiting in line after line after line. You wait at the grocery store, the shoe section, the dry cleaners, the movies. You wait for your kids to be dismissed from school, wait for them to get out of the sports practice, wait for your mother at the doctor “Enjoy your day” says the barista at Starbucks (after you have waited, again, in line). “It’s the journey!” everyone says. **WHAT** journey? I’m not **GETTING ANYWHERE!**

And yes, these minor waits do add up to the accomplishment of living our daily lives; that is indeed important, especially for the child that depends on you, the mother whose care matters to you, and the clerk at the store whose job depends on your dollars (and thus his own set of “waits”.) But what a relief it can be, to hear the words of Jesus, who celebrates what John has to say to us. That this wait, this delicious, important anticipation of what John himself is heralding, will ultimately bring us to the Kingdom of Heaven. If only “whoever has ears ought to hear”. Do you have ears? Have you heard? Or are you so irritated with waiting that you just want to get on with it? Does going to church on Sunday just mean one more hour of waiting?

When I used to moan about going to church, my father would say to me “Are you not able to spare one hour a week to thank God for the life that you have?” He was right, of course, but I was nine. There was too much to **DO**. And being in church was just more **WAITING**. I think some days, when I am too busy “living”, I am still that nine year old. And I forget that to



wait, and to open my ears, to hear the things that John has to say, that the pastor might say, that the music might say, will ultimately bring me to the Kingdom of Heaven. And that is four hours a month, 52 hours a year, that the wait is finally, really, really WORTH it.

Erin Keating, Parishioner
Mother to Court and Aidan Blake



December 12, 2014

[Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe](#)

Zechariah 2:14-17 or Revelation 11:19A;12:1-6A,10AB

Judith 13:18BCDE,19

Luke 1:26-38 or 1:39-47

Summary

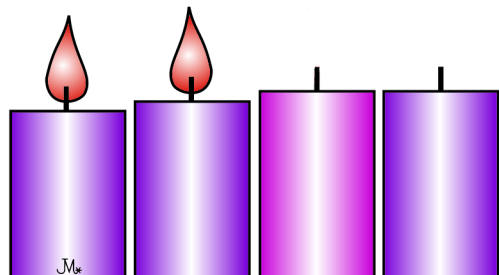
While the Gospel includes the beginning of the very beautiful Magnificat, “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord...,” it is the first reading from Zechariah that, to me, proclaims the essence of this feast day, “Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! See, I am coming to dwell among you, says the LORD. Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD on that day, and they shall be his people, and he will dwell among you, and you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.”

Reflection



It is a curiosity for many first-time visitors to our home to find images of Our Lady of Guadalupe. (After all, our roots are Italian and Irish.) The images were gifts from people whose friendships we hold dear, and my favorite is displayed prominently by the fireplace in our living room. For me, this simple plaster garden statue is a reminder of the message of the Virgin of Guadalupe that has resonated with me since I first learned her story 25 years ago. That message has little to do with bishops or roses or basilicas although I respect those whose faith is enriched by these aspects of the story. For me, it is about the young Aztec princess wearing a symbol of her pregnancy who spoke to Juan Diego in his native language, Nahuatl, forbidden

by the Spanish conquerors. She said to him, “I am your mother.” Clearly, this was the mother of Jesus, but instead of the young Middle Eastern Jewish girl from Nazareth, she was an Aztec.



“They shall be his people and he will dwell among you...,” as the Prophet Zechariah says. For me, the important message of that December day in 1531 is the reality that Jesus is Emmanuel --“God With Us” -- God with All of Us! The Aztec princess on that Hill of Tepeyac is the same Mother of God who no doubt comforted my ancestors as they endured starvation during the Irish Famine, the same Mother of God who is Mother of the African people facing the Ebola virus tragedy, the Mother who holds close to her those of all races and ethnicities who daily experience the horrors of war and injustice. She and her Son are one with all people in an intimacy we find hard to understand, and all of us are invited to be one with those of all races, ethnicities and creeds and to care for one another with the knowledge that we are all truly children of the brown-skinned Aztec princess we honor today.

Prayer

Loving God, may this Advent season be enriched as we honor Our Lady of Guadalupe today and reflect upon the truths she spoke on the hill of Tepeyac. May we deepen our relationship with your Son and hers, Emmanuel – God With Us. May we reach out in loving kindness and care to all of your children. Amen.

Jane O’Brien Argento
Parishioner



December 13, 2014

Memorial of St. Lucy, Virgin and Martyr

Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11

Psalms 80:2AC & 3B, 15-16, 18-19

Matthew 17:9A, 10-13

Summary

Elijah the prophet appears at a time when the Hebrew people had turned from



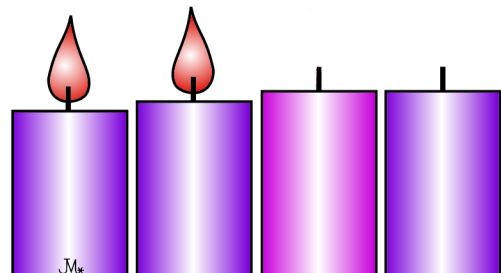
God to worship other gods. Fire is used as the cleansing metaphor and there is a belief that Elijah will return before the end times to cleanse the people and reestablish the tribes of Jacob. The theme of cleansing and healing is furthered in the Psalm where we appeal to God to help us return to Him. In the Gospel, Jesus reaffirms Scripture about Elijah and compares Elijah's time to His when Jesus' exhortations to repent and return to God are largely ignored and the Son of Man will suffer at the hands of the people.

Reflection

St. Lucy is the patroness of the blind as her name means "light". One legend of her martyrdom says that she was blinded as part of her torture. Before the Gregorian calendar, December 13th was the shortest day of the year, the darkest day, a day when people celebrated light. St. Lucy (Lucia) feast day brings many different types of celebrations in various countries.

When the caveman discovered fire, the world was irreversibly changed. Fire dispelled the darkness of night. Through the millennium, man has used fire for light and to cleanse. Fire can heal; fire can kill. We continue to be fascinated by fire, its beauty, its power. We enjoy a cozy fire in the winter as the days get shorter and colder. However; we are terrified by flames roaring through a forest. It is hard to imagine Elijah's fiery chariot and its meaning to people of the time.

But we can focus on our need to be cleansed from our sins, to bring light to our "blindness".. Advent gives us an opportunity to redirect our attention inwardly and examine our lives. Do we need to be cleansed and strengthened, perhaps by the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Do



we need to bring light into our darkness? Where is our blindness?
Let us ask St. Lucy to bring light into our lives and inspire us to begin again as children of the light.

Prayer

Dear ever-faithful and loving God,
You never give up on us even when we are at our worst.
When we are in our darkest moments, You are there with us to bring light and hope into our lives. .
Please help us to feel Your hope in our burdened hearts;
Please help us to feel the warmth of Your light when we are in darkness.
Thank You, God, for giving us chance after chance after chance as we struggle to become our best selves.
We praise You, we bless You, we thank You. Amen

Lydia and Joseph Banales
Parishioners for 50 years



December 14, 2014

Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 61:1-2A, 10-11

Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Summary

In the first reading Isaiah shares with us the proclamation of the year of favor with God. The second reading Saint Paul in his letter to the Thessalonians reminds us of how to live as Christians. Lastly in the Gospel of John, John the Baptist gives testimony of Jesus' coming.

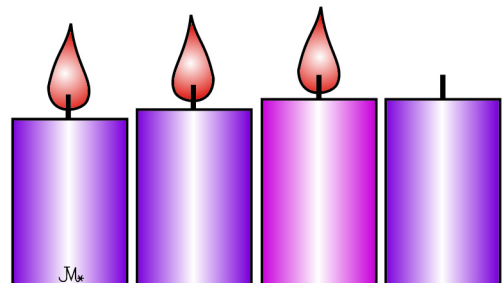
Reflection

The theme that runs through all three readings is to keep your eyes on Jesus. He is sent to us from God to redeem us and set us free.

In the first reading from Isaiah, Isaiah is proclaiming that this year will be the year of favor with the Lord; the Jubilee Year. During Isaiah's time, the year of the favor of the Lord was a time when all debts were forgiven, glad tidings for the poor, and all captives were set free. No doubt this is wonderful and joyous time, and Isaiah praises God for it.

The Gospel of John provides John the Baptist's testimony to the priests and Levites that he is making way for the coming of Jesus; although, they don't understand his message. What does that mean to us? Jesus is sent to us from our Heavenly Father to forgive our debts, bring glad tidings to the poor, and set the captives free. So if Jesus was sent to Earth to bring this about, then I would say that it is time to celebrate and rejoice just as the Jewish people did in Isaiah for the Jubilee Year.

In the second reading, Saint Paul writes the Thessalonian Christians giving them a gentle reminder of how we Christians should live in accordance to God's will. That is to be joyful, rejoicing always, praying unceasingly, and always giving thanks to God for everything. He also reminds the early Christians to refrain from every evil. He tells them and us to do all these things to make ourselves ready, to be perfectly holy and blameless for our Lord Jesus Christ. In reality, it IS the way we



should live..... constantly in gratitude and awe for what God through His Son, Jesus Christ has done for us!

Prayer

Lord, we pray that you grant us the grace to heed John the Baptist's testimony and Saint Paul's advice to prepare ourselves to be worthy to stand in Your presence one day. You are truly merciful and faithful. Help us to be joyful and rejoice in Your love for us. Help us to remain in constant gratitude and prayer for we are nothing without You. We ask this through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Natalie Duran

Embracing the Beginning of Life member
Education & Formation Commission member
Eucharistic Minister



December 15, 2014

Monday of the Third Week of Advent

Numbers Chapter 24:2-7,15-17A

Psalm 25:4-5AB,6 & 7BC,8-9

MT 21:23-27

Summary

Though initially called upon by the king of a rival kingdom to curse Israel, Balam, experiences a conversion of heart, and in this passage sees Israel not only as then blessed by God, but also as the place from which a future star and staff would advance. The Psalmist prays to know God's ways, seeing that humility opens him to God's truth. In Matthew, Jesus deflects a challenge to his authority made by the chief priests and elders.

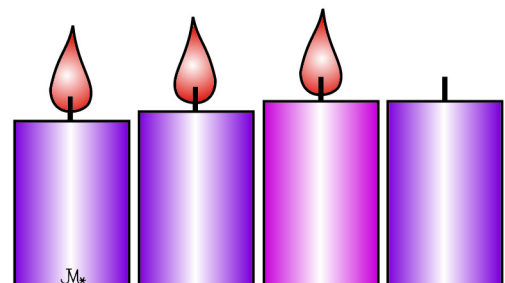
Reflection

In Advent, we are waiting in ritual for the birth of the Messiah; we are also waiting for the Second Coming of Christ. In this passage from Matthew, Jesus deflects the question of authority, waiting to declare who he is in accordance with the Father's providential timing.



The chief priests and elders, religious authorities of Judaism, ask him by what authority he cleansed the temple and healed persons and did other things. To borrow Jesus' words from his counter-question to them, if Jesus says his authority is "heavenly," they catch him in what they consider blasphemy, the penalty for which is death. If he says merely "human," Jesus denies the truth that his authority is from his heavenly Father. So, consistent with rabbinical practice, Jesus says he will tell them by what authority he did these things if they will answer one question. He asks them whether John the Baptist's authority was heavenly or human. From fear of the crowd, which saw John as a prophet, they say, "We do not know."

Jesus does not an-



swer at that time. Instead, Jesus waits until he is “under oath before the living God” (Matt. 26: 63) at his trial before the Sanhedrin. He then speaks the answer they needed to justify his execution. Jesus in effect identifies himself as the “the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power” in such a way that “the high priest” tears his robes” and declares, “He has blasphemed!” (Matt. 26: 64- 65.)

Why did Jesus’ wait until that trial to declare formally that he is the Messiah (Mk. 14: 61-62)? From Gospel references to and statements by Jesus such as “My hour has not yet come” (Jn. 2:4) and “The hour has come...” (Jn. 12:23), I believe Jesus, prompted by the Spirit, sensed there was a time to deflect, a time to wait, and a time to answer. Jesus’ sensed that waiting was necessary to conform his will to that of his Father’s divine providential timing to which Jesus then submitted in dying and rising. Jesus Christ is waiting, in submission to the Father’s will, until he comes a second time on “a day and an hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” (Matt: 24:36.) Jesus makes sacred the waiting until the right time, the time that carries out the will of the Father.

Prayer

Father, your son, who is present to us at Mass in the Minister, the Word, the Eucharist, and the Assembly, waits with us and in us for his Second Coming, We are blessed in our holy waiting with Jesus Christ, as Our Lady of Guadalupe was blessed by the child within her and for whom she was waiting, and we pray in his name for discernment of your heavenly will and for courage as disciples of the one with whom and for whom we wait in joyful hope.

Phil Argento
Parishioner



December 16, 2014

Tuesday of the Third Week of Advent

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13

Psalms 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19 & 23

Matthew 21:28-32

Summary

In the first reading, we hear God chastising Jerusalem for her wicked and rebellious ways; however, God will punish and destroy the nations and restore Jerusalem, leaving a humble and lowly people who will praise God.

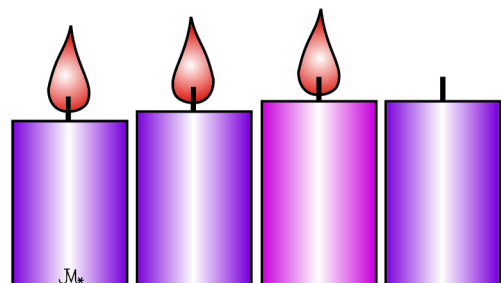
Reflection

In the Gospel, Jesus tells the story of two sons to the priests and elders. The father instructed the first son to go out to work the vineyard; the son replied that he would not go, but later changed his mind and went to work. The father also instructed the second son to go out to work in the vineyard; the son replied that yes, he would go. He then did not go. Jesus then asked his listeners which son did as his father had willed and they answered “the first.” Jesus then told them that prostitutes and tax collectors would enter the Kingdom of God before they, the priests and elders, ever would.

What is the most difficult thing about change? Taking action – making a decision – making a decision to take action. In the first reading, the city was wicked and needed to change in order to be embraced by God. In the parable above, the first son was moved to change. He decided that he would do as his father asked and he took action. The second son did not take action – he remained at rest, in his inert state, and ignored his father’s wishes.

Change IS difficult and routine is comfortable – whether that means our daily commute, our morning cup of coffee, the kids’ evening bedtime process, that weekly choir commitment, the monthly volunteer pledge at the food bank, daily prayers, date night with your spouse or dinner with an elderly parent. While some of these may not always be pleasant (the coffee got spilled, the kids refused their baths, you had a tiff with the spouse), they are routine and comfortable. We fall into that routine (good or bad) and we become inured to change.

We need to make changes in our lives from time to time – especially in view of our spiritual self and our relationship with God. We need to shake things up – to be uncomfortable. To do the Father’s will, we must make a *conscious decision* to take action, to discover God in new places and in new ways. Perhaps that move to change is to get



involved in a particular ministry; perhaps that move to change is to commit to a daily devotional that allows you to become more spiritually aware and God-centric.

Change is difficult and the decision to take action may be challenging, but during this Advent season, let's dare to step out of our routine and move ourselves to change spiritually - to do our Father's will and become closer to Him.

Sherie Carroll
Parishioner



December 17, 2014

Wednesday of the Third Week of Advent

Genesis 49:2, 8-10

Psalm 72:1-2, 3-4AB, 7-8, 17

Matthl:1-17

Summary

Today's Responsorial Psalm is "Justice shall flourish in His time, and fullness of peace for ever." Matthew's Gospel shows the generational connection between Abraham to David, David to Babylonian exile, and Babylonian exile to Jesus – each removed by fourteen generations.

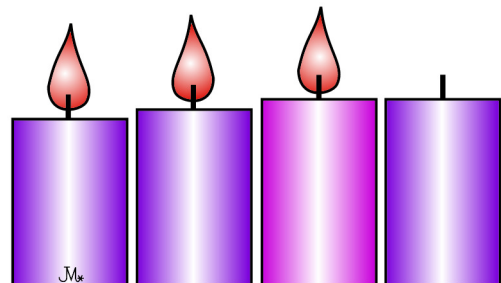
Reflection

Throughout Advent, we remind ourselves that Advent is a time of waiting with hope – readying ourselves for Jesus' birth. We prepare mangers in our nativity scenes, and we are reminded of His very humble beginnings. The Gospel sets out this generational link of prophecies fulfilled, but one would never know it if you only knew He was a poor boy, no crib for a bed, born in a stable. Three wise men came to honor him, but so did shepherds – shepherds who likely were unlearned, without great power or influence, and likely poor. But the shepherds and the wise men were equals here. Both came to honor His birth.

Recently a group of North American Catholic Moral Theologians published and endorsed a statement authored by Tobias Winwright, a former law enforcement officer, "Catholic Theologians for Police Reform and Racial Justice." The introduction to the statement begins "Advent is a season of waiting and of hoping. In the face of conflict, distrust, and division – in the wilderness – we are called to cry out for a different way." Here is the website address, if you wish to read it in its entirety. catholic-moraltheology.com/statement-of-catholic-theologians-on-racial-justice/

"Justice shall flourish in His time, and fullness in peace for ever." We are living in a time where people, myself included, are disillusioned and disappointed. Where is the justice? We want justice to flourish now! However, even the very definition of justice is difficult to agree on. Often, when we speak of justice, it is in the context of crime or wrongdoing – especially, when we speak of it about current events. Retributive justice (punishing for wrongdoing), utilitarian justice (punishment for deterrence, rehabilitation, and security), restorative justice (focusing on needs of both victims and offenders) – the list goes on. And on.

I asked my eight year old, and she said justice is "fairness between everyone." I think she hit the nail on the head. A simple and pure definition. As Christians, we are called to serve God. And



actively seeking fairness between everyone is part of that call.

Poverty, war, religious persecution, racism, all of them, unjust. Sometimes it is all overwhelming, and figuring out what we can do to help seems a daunting task. Sometimes we don't know how we can take action, or what we can do to help, but prayer and honest discussion are always the best places to begin.

Prayer (by Anne Hartley, inspired by Prayer of St. Francis)

Dear God,
Heal all that is broken in our hearts, in our streets, and in our world.
Give us eyes to see your image in every human being. Help us interrupt the patterns of injustice, and get in the way of everything that destroys life.



Give us imagination -- not to accept the world as it is but to dream of the world as it could be.

Free us from the systems that keep us down and hold us hostage. Help us name the sins in our lives and in our world so that we can truly be free to love. Set us free from hatred and fear -- liberate the oppressed and the oppressors. And give us the faith to believe that no one is beyond redemption.

Make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us bring love;
Where there is injury, let us bring healing;
Where there is deception, let us bring truth;
Where there is doubt, let us bring faith;
Where there is despair, let us bring hope;
Where there is darkness, let us bring light;
Where there is sadness, let us bring joy.

And where there is apathy, let us bring revolution.

May your Kingdom come on earth as it is in Heaven -- in Ferguson, in New York, in Kabul, in Gaza, in Jerusalem, in Baghdad, and all over the world. Amen.

Jennifer Rockenback,
Mother of Hartley and Jude,
Parishioner



December 18, 2014

Thursday of the Third Week of Advent

Jeremiah 23:5-8

Psalm 72:1-2,12-13,18-19

MT 1:18-25

Summary

Did you ever want to right a wrong, but then learn the way to right it goes against what you thought to be true?

The Gospel today is the Annunciation of Joseph. In this version of the Annunciation, Joseph gets a message in the form of a dream about his newly pregnant fiancée and must make decisions based on these messages.

Reflection

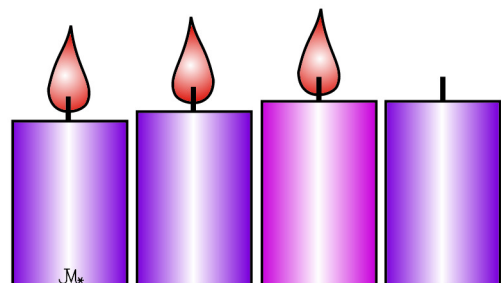
Today's reading is from Jeremiah and at its core are the prophetic teachings of the covenant between God and Israel. He promises them a new leader from the House of David, and restores the Israelites to their own land.

Reading about the history of the times of Jeremiah, we are aptly reminded of the horror that is happening today, not 200 miles from Jerusalem. Back in the day of Jeremiah, the Israelites were invaded and governed by the Egyptians, who were then overthrown by the Babylonians and further subjugated.

Jeremiah pointed out this double downfall was a product of the Jews turning away from God. His pronouncements were that a new covenant should be built between the people and their God, and if this happens, a new leader will come to reassert control over their lost lands. Invasion and subjugation seem to have happened for the last 2500 years. Let us pray for some peace in the coming year for the people of the Middle East.

The Annunciation of Joseph is not as well remembered, or as popular, as the Annunciation of Mary, in the Gospel of Luke. This passage comes after a genealogy that contains a number of scandalous doings that is mirrored in the discovery of the pregnancy before the marriage has been consummated. Joseph is introduced as a "just man" and does not want to find out about the pregnancy, enquired into as defined by law to find if it was forced or consensual, but rather terminate the marriage quietly.

Into this crisis comes the Annunciation. An angel through a dream tells Joseph three things. Firstly marry Mary. Secondly the preg-



nancy is through the agency of Holy Spirit. Thirdly that he should name him Jesus. The third point is the key here as naming a child has significance Jewish in law. The naming makes Joseph the legal father of Jesus, thus conferring the Davidic decent that Jeremiah foretold. Joseph did the right thing.



Prayer

Lord, when faced with adversity help us as you did Joseph. Fill us with the Holy Spirit for continued growth, grace, and faith. Amen

Paul & Krista Brennan (Parishioners)



December 19, 2014

Friday of the Third Week of Advent

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25A

Psalm 71:3-4A, 5-6AB, 16-17

Luke 1:5-25

Summary

All today's readings reflect on the intimacy and the power of the womb as the holy nurturing place for the rootstock of the world's salvation. The greatest heroes of Israel began in a special place thought to have been abandoned of even the possibility of new life until touched in a wondrous way by the love of God.

Reflection

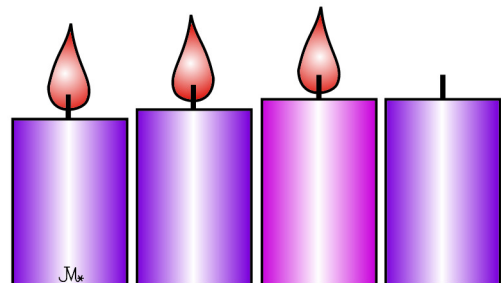
Elizabeth and Menoah's wife were both burdened with the stigma of "barrenness." What little procreation science was known in the day was often perilously interwoven with folk wisdom and produced a distorted explanation of things like conception--powerful realities which originated hidden from view. The prevailing wisdom of biblical times was that a woman's womb was akin to the fertile soil of the planting fields, which stood ready for bloom when planted with the male's "seed." Late in life, a married woman without children was viewed as a "barren" wasteland without God's blessing of fertility. This must have caused anguish and shame for those women, who would have been seen as passed over by God's favor by many of their family and neighbors. The "science" was effectively silent on the man's contribution to this curse, but all knew that that couple's share in the future of the tribe would be truncated and that their old age would be impoverished without the social security of children. Their future and the future of the community could only be assured by a steady and increasing birthrate to which that couple seemed destined not to contribute.

It's all the more remarkable that so many of the great redeemers of Israel's recurring enslavement's came from wombs or households that had hitherto been seen as abandoned of new life. Starting with Sarah and Abraham at the very advent of Hebrew history, continuing with Moses being rescued and raised by Bithiah, the then childless sister of Pharaoh, moving on in today's story of Samson's blessed gestation, and ending with the beginning of the next era in the miraculous birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and Zachariah. Jewish and Christian history is literally borne on the backs and at the breasts of "childless" women. Since Abraham is the father of Islam as well, we might do well to add those folks into the gathering with the rest of us.

Although scripture is no modern science textbook, it's amazing how prescient the authors were by restricting the consumption of alcohol and encouraging stricter nutritional health during pregnancy--especially if that child, as every child should be regarded, is going to be responsible for bringing about the rescue of the broader community later in life!

The sense of barrenness, whether in childbirth or in life's journey, is a dreadful feeling that can sap us of enthusiasm. These readings point out how often those are the times when Divine presence can be most magnified. There, the Spirit has its fertile ground, free of distractions. An abundance of grace explodes from seemingly nowhere and we can be recharged with a sense of blessing that overwhelms the negative darkness within. That's a miracle!

We don't have to wait for stones to turn into loaves of bread; we merely take the next step forward. Life is reborn, the world is ready for change. With God, all things, even



the heavens themselves in Genesis, begin as barren until the will of God bring them to life with an utterance, "Let there be..." which is always new, always evolving. Jesus himself models that perfect mystery: eternally present, yet always rising in new life, forever positively transformed in relationship with the Father and the Spirit.



People who are facing the loss of a loved one or even of their own life can be deluged with storms of emotions. Some are sad, some are warm, most are caring and pretty intense. At times the landscape may seem bleak and forbidding, but, as in this season of solstice, the light, though fading, never completely goes away. Something around the corner, a grasp of eternity and a sense of their part in an ongoing history allows them to view the approaching doorway with new vision. Few run toward it, but most, sooner or later, come to see it as an ancient portal inevitably leading wherever it is this wondrous experience we call life, and its memories, proceed.

I have a very dear friend who is walking down that path now. Although still very strong, he, his family, and friends are coming to grips with the unpleasant prognosis associated with his cancer. He faces each moment bemused by a heightened awareness of each moment's truism, "Might this be the last time I...?" Surrounded by a confusing mix of love, sadness, and helplessness in others, he has made one general request in his presence with them. He is not a conventionally pious man, but since presence is the central characteristic of prayer, I share it with you as a prayer, each to the other. The photo above was taken by his wife and him during a journey in November. They regard it as a metaphor for their recent experiences.

Prayer

"... holding me in the life I am living, however it is, rather than in the fear of suffering and death, is probably what I would cherish most. Not that I shy away from that darker part of this journey; actually, I want to embrace it, to be able to share those moments when they arise for me or for others. I just don't want that to be the whole story, which is so rich right now!"

Don Milici

Parishioner



December 20, 2014

Saturday of the Third Week of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-14

Psalm 24:1-2, 3-4AB, 5-6

Luke 1:26-38

Summary

In the first reading we are given the prophecy that a sign will be given to us in the form of a baby boy born of a virgin. In the Gospel reading we hear the story of the annunciation, when Mary is visited by the angel Gabriel and asked to be the mother of Jesus.

Reflection

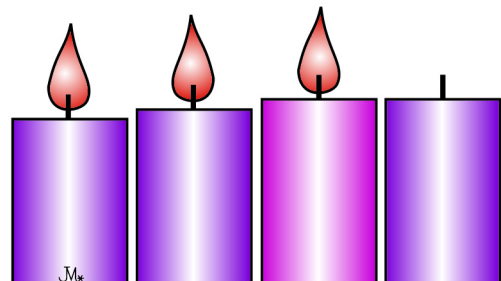
In this story, we hear a skeptical Mary. When the angel Gabriel comes to her and promises a child, Mary at first is uncertain, even incredulous, and reminiscent of Sarah who came before her. Like everyone else of her time, she knew there was only one way to become pregnant. But the angel reminds her, "Nothing will be impossible for God."

We are now only five days from Christmas and we are moving to a period of holy impatience. Christmas is a time of wonder and mystery. It is a time of great joy, excitement and exultation. Jesus came, Jesus is coming, Jesus is here!

But for many, it can be a time of cynicism and disbelief as the stark contrast between those with abundance and those with little is heightened. This year Americans will spend \$450 billion in the month of December. The global water crisis could be solved with \$20 billion, or 5% of what we spend. When Gabriel speaks to Mary he is presenting her with a reality, where things that seemed impossible (like her elderly cousin becoming pregnant) are possible. In response, Mary gives a resounding yes that changed the world forever. G-d invites us to change the world, too. Our Lord invites us to be partners, co-creators, co-builders of the kingdom, a place where abundance is normative for all people. What could we achieve if we gave that same resounding yes to the world changing that G-d invites us to?

Prayer

Generous Lord, let us always remember that we are your hands and feet in this world. Let us be grateful for our abundance, generous in our giving, and ever mindful that with you all things are possible.



Angelina Duell,
Middle School Ministry Coordinator



Image
The Annunciation
By John Collier



December 21, 2014

Fourth Sunday of Advent

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16

Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

Summary

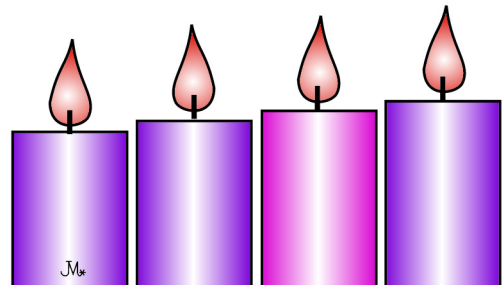
Mary is visited by the angel Gabriel and willingly accepts to be the mother of Jesus.

Reflection

Sometimes God whispers in his call, and sometimes there has to be something more drastic. We called from the moments of our births to be the hands and feet of Jesus. When Gabriel visited Mary it was to tell her that she was chosen, even when she doubted her own ability to do what God was asking, her faith in God washed that doubt away. Mary accepted her role as mother and protector, even when the path that was in front of her was not something she had ever done before. Her faith in knowing that God would journey with her, that each step might not be smooth, that the unknown test her, but never giving up.

We are all called to go forward and do God's work. We are called to be Children of God, whether it be as wife, parent, single, sister, brother, aunt, uncle, deacon, priest, Nun or Brother. God calls us all to Vocation, to be the light for our families, community, city, state, country, World. We are called to make our world a better place, our time, treasure and talent are freely given by our Creator to help our families, our community, those who are on the margins see the light of our Savior in all of us.

Mary questioned if she was truly called to be the vessel and mother of Jesus, not knowing if she could fulfill the task. We all doubt, is this the right time to get married, to have children, to commit to a religious order, donate time, our limited time, to the betterment of our fellow persons, if God was truly calling me. Like Mary, we must listen to what God is asking us to do, we may not be visited by an Angel, or perhaps we are, by those who are involved in our lives and see that good and strength that already resides within us. It is through faith, like the faith and love Mary had for God that we say yes when





asked to do something difficult, not knowing the results, trust that God who has brought us to it will also bring us through it.

O Lord, help each one of us to hear and accept your call within our lives. May we accept it as Mary did and not to question the reason that we have been asked. Bless us, with your presence as we journey, each to be Thy will, seeing the gifts which you give us so freely, to take those gifts, being

the hands and feet of Jesus, to see the light of Jesus in all we meet. As we journey, let us be open to the call to vocation, to answer your call and bring peace and grace of your love to all.

We ask this in the name of your loving son, Jesus. Amen.

Candy & Jay Krueger

Candidacy Year 2, Diaconate Formation,
Holy Family Church, South Pasadena, CA



December 22, 2014

Monday of the Fourth Week of Advent

1 Samuel 1:24-28

1 Samuel 2:1, 4-5, 6-7, 8 ABCD

Luke 1:46-56

Summary

In the first reading, Hannah the mother of Samuel, dedicates the new life of her child to the Lord. This offering is in thanksgiving for the gift of her son and a sign of her indebtedness to the Lord.

The responsorial psalm, also from this same book, is an exultant declaration of the Lord's victory in all the Lord's actions and doings. "He raises the needy from the dust; from the dung heap he lifts up the poor....".

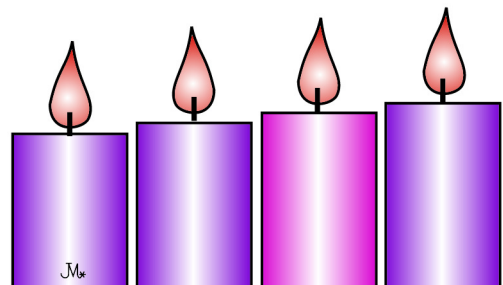
In the Gospel, Mary sings of the glory of the Lord in a resounding statement of hope and praise. "...the Almighty has done great things for me, and holy is his Name."

Reflection

All of the readings are resounding statements of accomplished fact, of gratitude, and of hope. And two of them are made by women. There's something extraordinary going on here.

These women are life-bearers. They sing of the new lives they've been given, lives that are critically important to our Salvation Story. Their gratitude is the heart of their prayer.

Is it not so that we all, men and women both, are life bearers of God's Word? Is it not so that one of our truest prayers flows from thanksgiving? I keep remembering the healing of the ten by Jesus, and that only one turned around to give him thanks and praise. Only one realized



the truth of the gift he had received.

We are to "turn around", come back to our Lord, and thank Him for all that He has given us. That is at the heart of our lives, and of our relationship with the Lord.

Prayer

Oh Lord, how many times I've taken your gifts for granted;
and how many times I have not even noticed what goodness you have
done for me!

Lord, give me the gift of thanksgiving,
that I may always be praising you!

Amen

David Lyman
Parishioner



December 23, 2014

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Advent

Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24

Psalms 25:4-5AB, 8-9, 10 & 14

Luke 1:57-66

Summary

Writing more than 400 years before the birth of John the Baptist, the Prophet Malachi presages the messenger, whom he calls Elija, to “prepare the way before,” the Lord himself comes. The Psalmist prays to the Lord his savior to teach him the Lord’s paths and truths so that sinners may be shown the way to keep the Lord’s covenant and his decrees. Luke declares baby John, son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, cousin of Mary, mother of the yet unborn Jesus, to be a child whose life would surely be accompanied by the hand of the Lord. He will go forth in the spirit and power of Elija. (Luke 1: 17)

Reflection

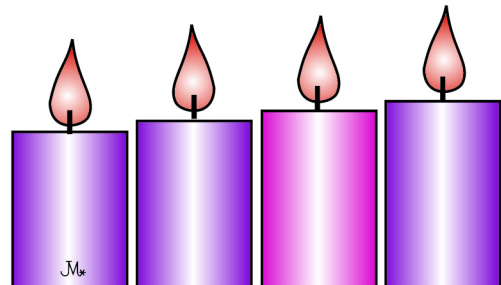
When John was born, Jews would name a boy after his grandfather or sometimes his father. Indeed, neighbors and relatives who gathered for the circumcision were going to call the baby “Zechariah,” after his father.

“No. He will be called John” his mother Elizabeth tells those who gathered. But, they say: “There is no one among your relatives who has this name.” Challenging the old woman’s break from tradition, they turn to the old man, the priest, the authority, speechless for months, and ask what he wished the child to be called. Zechariah wrote “John is his name.” “Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. And all were amazed.”

I ask: Would not “Zechariah the Baptist” go forth in the same spirit and power of Elijah as “John the Baptist”? As Shakespeare wrote, what’s in a name? Is not a rose by any other name just as sweet? So why “John”? To me, Luke here uses names as signs to others and as gifts to the named whose ultimate meaning is in God.

“Zechariah” in Hebrew means “God has remembered.” Indeed, God remembered Zechariah’s prayer, for the angel Gabriel told him, “[Y]our prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call him John.” (Luke 1: 13.)

“Elizabeth” means “God’s promise” or “My God is generous.” God kept His promise, one generous beyond all likelihood because the couple was old and Elizabeth barren. “John” means “God has been gracious.” God was gracious in giving them a son who would surely be accompanied by “the hand of the Lord.” Their names tell us about God’s in these people. The name “John” is a special gift:



it announces God's graciousness to those who hear it, and it summons John to be gracious for his namesake.

Zechariah amazingly recovers his speech in affirming Elizabeth, while naming the baby as God willed. He then sings, "And you, child will be called prophet of the Most High, for you go before the Lord to prepare his ways." (Luke 1: 76.)

The Lord for whom John prepared the way is "Jesus," a name which means "God saves." "Jesus" -- to say the name is to pray for God's most gracious promise of salvation from sin by repentance, as preached by John, but accomplished through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Prayer

O God, names were given to us by those who loved us before we were born, who said "yes" to your gift of new life. To you and to them we are grateful. In reflecting upon our names and remembering those who gave them, we pray for deeper insight into how our very names may be summoning us to do your will on earth. Named after my grandfathers, I, Phillip James Argento, pray to discern in "Phillip" -- "horse lover" in Greek (no Hebrew equivalent) and in "James" -- "follower" in Hebrew, new insight into what God is calling me to do.



Phil Argento
Eucharistic Minister



December 24, 2014

Vigil of the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

Isaiah 62:1-5

Psalm 89:4-5,16-17,27,29

Acts 13:16-17,22-25

Matthew 1:1-25

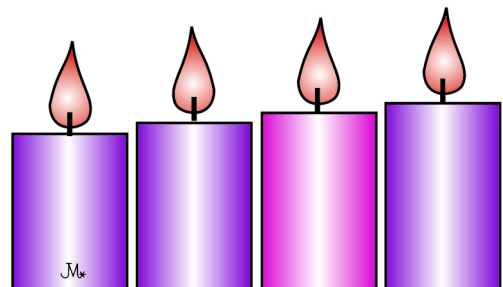
Summary

In the Hebrew Scripture reading from today, G-d recounts what he has done for Israel. G-d then promises King David, through the words of the prophet Nathan, that his kingdom will endure forever. In the Gospel reading, we hear the Cantic of Zechariah, further proclaiming the goodness of G-d and G-d's action in the world.

Reflection

In the Gospel reading today, Zechariah states that light will "break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace." This is a beautiful, profound image for the day before Christmas. Many of us will gather this evening to attend Christmas Eve services. Many of us are looking with excitement and anticipation for all that Christmas day promises: time spent with loved ones, delicious food, gifts, warmth, joy and laughter. But there are those among us, in our parish and in our global community, who are dwelling in darkness. Mothers are without their sons today. There is unrest in our country and the pain and suffering of the world continues to be an ever present reality. In these fraught times what are we to make of the promises of today's readings?

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., said, "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." Our readings today show that this hope has endured for thousands of years. The speakers in our readings can readily identify the ways in which G-d has acted in their lives and in their communities and remind us that G-d's promises are fulfilled. As Catholic Christians we see Jesus as our guide into way of peace. As we gather with our loved ones tonight, let us remember that G-d guides our feet, Jesus guides our heart, but it is we who must take the steps. As co-builders of the kingdom with our Lord, we are continually invited, today and throughout the year, to turn from the paths that lead to brokenness and instead walk onto the road of peace. G-d sent us a guide in living flesh, G-d incarnate, to show us the way. In this manner,



Jesus models that we must give flesh to our hopes for a better world for all people, that we must be willing to embody the work in our physical selves through our actions. Peace is not the destination; peace is the way. Peace is not a static reality but is embodied in our actions and attitudes towards all, particularly the least among us. As we walk into the mystery and joy of Christmas, let us engage in acts of discipleship and reconciliation. Let us enter into the way of peace.

Prayer

Generous G-d, you have done great things for your people throughout the ages. Today as we look with holy longing towards the coming of your son, Jesus, encourage us to join hands with you and walk the way of peace.

Angelina Duell

Edge, Middle School Coordinator



December 25, 2014

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord

Isaiah 9:1-6

Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14

Summary

We celebrate the extraordinary birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who comes to us as a little child, born into times of great turbulence. We celebrate the joy of his presence in our lives.

Reflection

After all the busyness of getting ready for Christmas, the long awaited day is finally here! If you are reading this reflection on Christmas Day, you may be taking a break from preparing a meal for family or friends. Or perhaps you are getting ready to visit friends or family. Perhaps you are spending a quiet day at home on your own. Christmas celebrations take on all forms.

As we reflect on this beautiful painting of the Nativity, you may be struck, as I am, by the way in which it captures the essence of what we think Christmas should be all about: peace, tranquility, quiet wonder and awe at the incarnation of the Prince of Peace among us. And yet, for many of us, Christmas will be anything but peaceful and tranquil, allowing little time for wonder and awe at the birth of the Son of God as a tiny human baby.

It's easy to forget that in fact Jesus' birth also took place in a context which was anything but peaceful and tranquil.



We don't know anything about the relationship between Joseph and Mary, but we can surmise that this newly married couple may have struggled to come to terms with the miraculous circumstances of Jesus' birth. We have 2000 years of tradition to turn to...but imagine what it must have been like for Joseph and Mary trying to understand what God was asking of them!

Imagine too how stressful it must have been to travel to Bethlehem for the census with Mary heavily pregnant. Add to that the further worry of having to find shelter for Mary to have her baby. And then, imagine the terror of the flight to Egypt to save the life of their infant son from the tyrant Herod. What traumatic and tragic times Jesus was born into!!!

Whatever Christmas Day holds for us, Jesus is there in our midst, loving, consoling, comforting. Joy and hope are born anew because he comes to us wherever we are: in homes that are full or empty, in hearts that are lonely or surrounded by love, in happiness or sadness. Wherever we are and in whatever state we find ourselves, we can rejoice because Jesus is with us.

Prayer

O Loving God, as we celebrate the coming of your Son, Jesus, rekindle in us the joy and hope that his birth brought to the world. Help us to turn our lives over to you, knowing that we are loved beyond measure and that our loneliness and pain will be transformed by your eternal love. We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Cambria Smith
Parish Life Director



December 26, 2014

Feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr

Acts of the Apostles 6:8-10; 7:54-59

Psalm 31:3CD-4, 6 & 8AB, 16BC & 17

Matthew 10:17-22

Summary

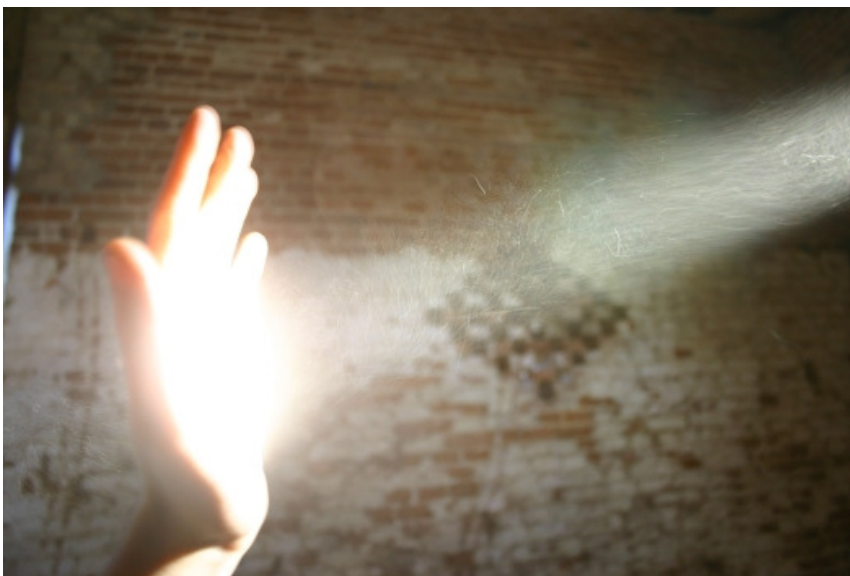
In the first reading we learn about St. Stephen and how he was filled with grace, power and was working great wonders and signs among the people. Many adversaries came forward and debated with Stephen, but they could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.

Jesus also tells us in the Gospel to not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Reflection

The interwoven nature of the Bible never ceases to amaze me. Many books written by many different authors spanning thousands of years and yet the message, the Word, is utterly consistent from Genesis through Revelation. In today's Gospel from Mathew Jesus tells his disciples:

“Do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”



And then we see God deliver on His promise through Saint Stephen in the Book of Acts: “Stephen, filled with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people.” Many adversaries “came forward and debated with Stephen, but they could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.”

We are repeatedly called to be filled by the Holy Spirit and to allow ourselves to be guided by Him. Saint Stephen understood this. In fact he is the first martyr of the Church. He understood clearly that we need to set our sights on Heaven regardless of the prevailing views of society and we are called to do the same.

The interwoven nature of the Bible never ceases to amaze me. Many books written by many different authors spanning thousands of years and yet the message, the Word, is utterly consistent from Genesis through Revelation. In today's Gospel from Mathew Jesus tells his disciples:

“Do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

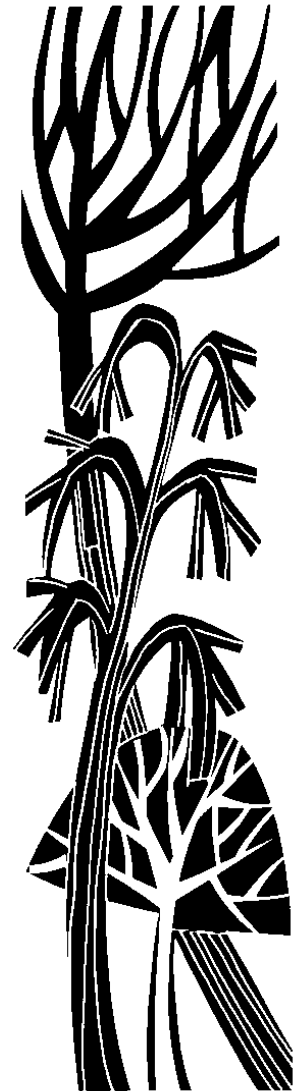
And then we see God deliver on His promise through Saint Stephen in the Book of Acts:

“Stephen, filled with grace and power, was working great wonders and signs among the people.” Many adversaries “came forward and debated with Stephen, but they could not withstand the wisdom and the spirit with which he spoke.”

We are repeatedly called to be filled by the Holy Spirit and to allow ourselves to be guided by Him. Saint Stephen understood this. In fact he is the first martyr of the Church. He understood clearly that we need to set our sights on Heaven regardless of the prevailing views of society and we are called to do the same.

Prayer

God of mercy and judgment, thank you for your love, which continually calls me to come closer to you. Help me to see you and serve you in all those I meet, especially those in need.



December 27, 2014

[Feast of St. John, Apostle and Evangelist](#)

1 John 1:1-4

Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12

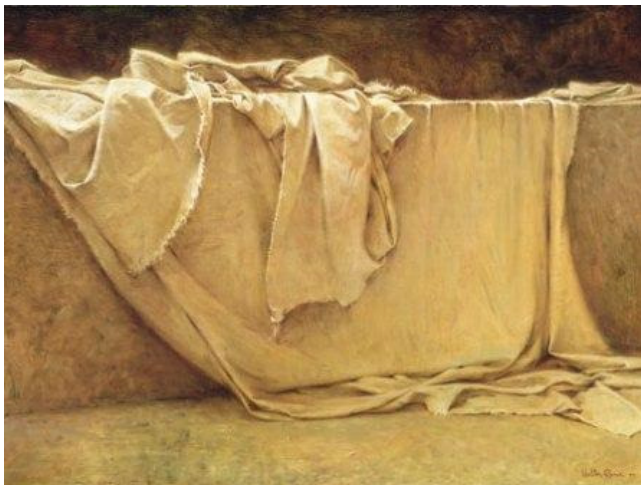
John 20:1A & 2-8

Summary

Mary Magdalene, after finding Jesus' tomb empty, runs in alarm to tell Simon Peter and "the other disciple whom Jesus loved". In turn, they then rush to the tomb. The "other" disciple gets there first, but waits for Simon Peter to arrive and allows him to enter the tomb first. Peter sees the burial cloths there, including the cloth that had covered Jesus' head, "not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place." The other disciple then enters, "the one who arrived there first" and upon seeing the burial cloths in just this arrangement, "believes".

Reflection

The first thing that struck me as I read today's gospel was, "why is there an 'Easter' gospel right after Christmas?" My guess is that it is because today is the *Feast of Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist*. This particular gospel is not only purportedly written by "John the Evangelist" but is self-referential to the writer as "John the Apostle." Biblical scholars argue about it, but the general consensus is that John the Apostle and John the Evangelist (as well as the writer of Revelations) are actually "different Johns." And whether or not the "beloved disciple" was actually the Apostle John, we do not know, as Holy Family Parishioners are well aware. As I meditated on this, I was also struck by the *apparent* humility of this disciple who reached the tomb of Christ first but waited deferentially for Simon Peter to enter before he did. Some scholars have suggested that this was important during the time this gospel was written to ensure that Peter be shown



as "the leader" in "discovering" Christ's resurrection just as he was chosen by Jesus to "lead" his church. One might argue however, that although this Evangelist "allowed" Peter to be "the first one in the tomb", he already tells us (his readers) that a woman and he himself had already made the discovery. He is *suggesting* that he is humble, but perhaps, actually feels rather bitter about the pecking order; human nature is human nature, even

among the “greatest of the greats.” This helps me to be more forgiving of myself and the fact that sometimes I want to “be first” as my love of God compels me to run toward the truth but this may not always be what God is asking of me, sometimes it is just to be a *witness* to truth, sometimes it is more important for whom I step aside.

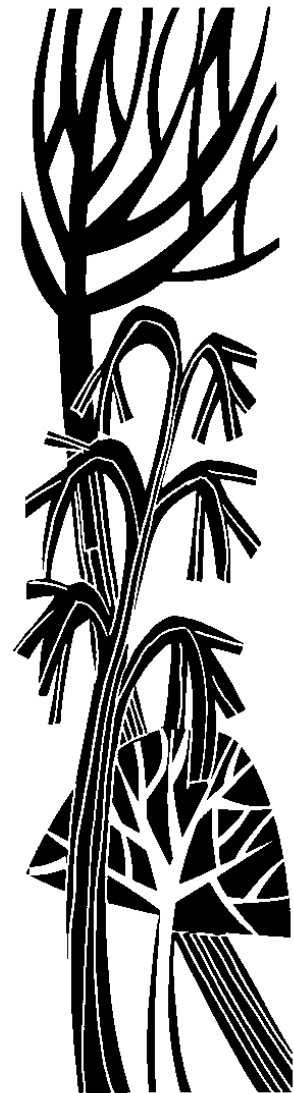
Despite this being a rather short gospel, there is so much here to meditate on and ponder, including the apparent importance of the placement of Christ’s burial cloths. Of course, it being so close to Christmas, I can’t help but think of baby Jesus’ “swaddling clothes” and His being born in a cave in juxtaposition to these burial cloths and His being buried in a rock-hewn tomb. But that is best saved for another time as whole books have apparently been written about this very thing. It never fails that Scripture calls me to a desire for deeper and deeper discovery of truth.

Prayer

Jesus, help me to be authentically humble in the challenges of each day. Teach me what it means to be humble. Help me to wait my turn to speak and to be at peace when others outshine me. Grant that I may listen with a spirit of objectivity rather than an ‘I know it all’ attitude. Lord, grant that I not only be content with who I am, but have confidence that your grace can make me better! Help me to be obedient without resentment and ready to do Your Will. I ask that You make up for whatever I lack and increase those desires within me that lead to true humility. Most of all, help me to believe in your revelations, hope in Your word and love you more than myself. Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like Yours! Amen.

by Deacon Bill Steltemeier

Mary Schimmoller
Holy Family Volunteer Coordinator



December 28, 2014

[Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph](#)

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 or Genesis 15:1-6; 21:1-3

Psalms 105:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 8-9

Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17 or Hebrews 11:8, 11-12, 17-19

Luke 2:22, 39-40

Reflection

The Church devotes today to our parish patron, the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. This feast is observed three days after Christmas because it offers insight into the purpose of the Incarnation that we celebrate during this season.

Today's first reading opens with the second verse from the third chapter of Sirach. We do not listen to the verse with indifference because it appears to state the "obvious." Nor do we dismiss the verse because it, in some way, does not conform to our ideas of the roles of parents and children. If we make these lapses in understanding, we overlook the teaching of the remainder of the reading.

The balance of the reading emphasizes the service that the child should devote to parents. With this focus, we understand why the Church chose this reading for the feast of the Holy Family. If the Incarnate Word could humble Himself to become the human son of Mary and Joseph, are we no less called to serve our heavenly Father as the child is called to do in the first reading? The responsorial psalm affirms the teaching of the reading. The second reading exhorts us to perform with love the service to which the first reading calls us. Noteworthy is the command to put on "heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience," perhaps the most succinct guidance for the conduct of our family relations. In turn, the command describes the wondrous dynamic of the life of the Holy Family itself portrayed in the Gospel.

We marvel at the description of Mary and Joseph in the Gospel. The couple just want to honor their ancient tradition and present the Infant Jesus in the Temple.



The birth of Jesus already had been a struggle unlike any other for the two of them. Instead, two different individuals make such prophecies about Jesus that “[T]he child’s father and mother were amazed at what was said about him.”

Mary and Joseph did not panic or rebel against these predictions. They returned to Nazareth to raise Jesus. He, for his part, “did not regard equality with God something to be grasped,” Phil. 2:6 although He is precisely that. In his humanity, he accepts the role for a son described on the first reading.

May we allow the example of the Holy Family guide us in our family relations and our service to God.

Prayer

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendour of true love, to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic Churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division: may all who have been hurt or scandalized find ready comfort and healing.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, graciously hear our prayer.
(Pope Francis)

Roland Simpson,

Parishioner



December 29, 2014

Fifth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord

1 John 2:3-11

Psalm 96:1-2A, 2B-3, 5B-6

Luke 2:22-35

Summary

Jesus, Mary and Joseph present themselves in the temple on the 8th day after the birth of Jesus in accordance to the Law of Moses; for the dual purpose of Mary's offering the two turtle doves for her purification after giving birth to Jesus and Jesus' circumcision as dictated by the Law.

Reflection

This scene in Scripture is an illuminating tableau of holy obedience as presented to us by Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Can we find a more inexplicable example of humility beyond measure given the holy sanctity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ever Virgin who knew not man. Whose conception of her son was by the power of the Holy Spirit. That she was required to submit herself to the law of purification as if, she was made impure by her giving birth to her son, the spotless Lamb of God our Savior. And this is not all, that we find here, that we should prayerfully ponder. The circumcision of Jesus, why? Because Jesus, Mary and Joseph were observant Jews and this was the sign of God's covenant to Israel for every male child that came forth from the womb. Think about this, that God became a baby for you. Emanuel, God with us and was circumcised like all other Israelite babies, so that you might have an example as you practice your Catholic faith seriously and

wholeheartedly. What Jesus, Mary and Joseph did, we should do, in our practice of our Catholic faith. "BEING FAITHFUL"! In the same way as the devout Simeon recognized who Jesus was, the Savior, a light to the Gentiles and the glory of Israel. Simeon's prophecy to Mary that her child would be a contradiction and the rise and fall of many in Israel; that a sword would pierce her soul, that the hearts of many, shall be revealed, is recondite in the extreme, an enigma that only the saints and the doctors of the church, probably can fully understand. But we must try!



Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus bless us we your people, with greater fidelity , to practice of our Catholic faith, remembering that nothing is impossible with you. And our confidence is set up on you. AMEN

Wayne A. Baldwin
Parishioner



December 30, 2014

[Sixth Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord](#)

1 John 2:12-17

Psalm 96:7-8A, 8B-9, 10

Luke 2:36-40

Summary

There was a prophetess, Anna, who worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer in the temple. She was a holy woman who gave thanks to God and spread the word about the Child-Jesus who was to come and redeem us.

Reflection

Anna is called by God to spread the word about the Holy Family. Her name in Hebrew means “Grace” and she is called a prophetess. She is described as a holy elderly widow in the gospel today. We know this because Luke says she was married for 7 years and lived until she was 84. She is an older woman whose life of pain and loneliness is revealed by her prayerfulness and love for God. She lived up to her name: “Grace” by her steadfast commitment to prayer and sacrifice.

The grace of God clearly worked through her. After her husband died she spent most of her days fasting and praying. Because of her spiritual life and profound understanding of prayer, she was filled with grace and had the privilege of being called a prophetess and be a witness of the birth of Jesus. She was called to share what she knew about Jesus with all who would listen to her.

Today we are all called to follow the example of Anna, and make a commitment to a life of prayer and sacrifice. We will be filled with the grace of God to help us take on this task of being a prophet.



I love that God chose a woman to do this job. Personally, I can relate to the prophetess Anna. This reading stirs my memory of the wise women in my life: my two grandmothers, Sara and Enriqueta and my mother, Margaret. Like Anna, they lived long lives. They set an example of what it's like to be a committed, spiritual and grace-filled woman. Their well-earned wrinkles and confident, gleam in their eyes were the results of their consistent prayer life. All my life I watched and listened to their life stories of joys and struggles. Through it all, their faith in God never faltered. I learned that having faith will get us through any-

thing. These women were self-less and full of grace. They revealed their wisdom through commitment, prayer and love for their families. They are all gone now, but I still ponder their quiet, contemplative presence and how they taught me that sacrifice, prayer and commitment will prevail. Though the example of these "prophetesses" I am committed to God and my faith.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for the gift of grace. Thank you for sending your Son Jesus to redeem us. We know that we can't go through life alone. Help us to listen and learn from the wise prophets in our lives so that we may be grateful and spread the good news. Amen

Rita Fortner
Eucharistic Minister
Living Your Gifts



December 31, 2014

[Seventh Day within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord](#)

1 John 2:18-21

Psalm 96:1-2, 11-12, 13

John 1:1-18

Summary

Today's Responsorial Psalm continues to carry us along on the cloud of joy which we experienced yesterday in our celebration of the Birth of Christ! 'Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice', leads us into the beginning of the Gospel of John where we are filled with wonder and joy that "the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us"!

Reflection

In the words of the Psalm, we should be singing a new song to the Lord! How fitting a thought for today. After all of our spiritual preparation and waiting through the four weeks of Advent, yesterday was the culmination of everything we had been anticipating and hoping for! Once again, we celebrated the birthday of our Saviour, our King, our God-incarnate best-friend. Hopefully, we all found some new-ness in our hearts and in our celebration. In reality, much of our preparation and activity over the last four weeks has probably revolved around shopping, writing cards, wrapping presents, baking, and hitting as many parties as we possibly could. But alas, it's not too late to marvel at the miracle of what just happened – yes, that's right, today we can begin to 'sing a NEW song to the Lord'. We

needn't discard the beautiful Christmas Carols which we carry with us and (hopefully) continue to listen to (although the rest of the country seems to think that Christmas ended with the stroke of midnight last night), but rather we can create a new song – one that is completely our own. Even



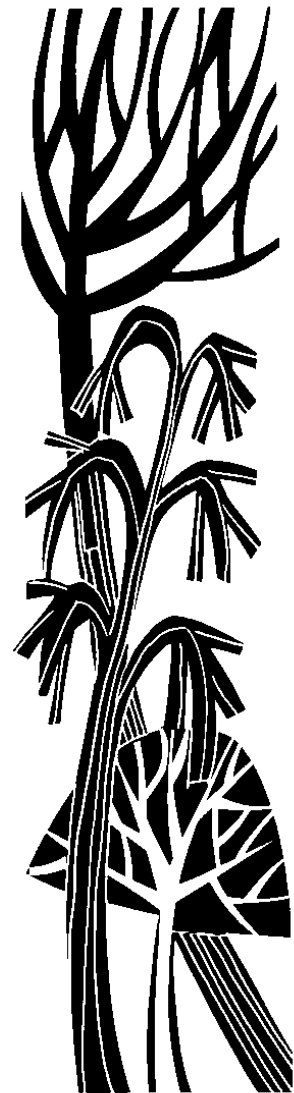
better, we don't need to figure out the notes, the melody or the harmony – in fact, the words can change each time we 'sing'! If we truly carry the birth of the Christ child in our hearts, and spend time each day thinking about the meaning of His birth, doubtless our heart will begin its own song of praise! And as your song begins, don't try to edit your thoughts, words, or feelings – just allow the Spirit of God within you to take charge and manage the lyrics. Your song will probably not make the Top 40, nor will it be recorded by Beyonce; however YOU will rejoice each time it enters your heart!

Prayer

Oh Lord, teach us all a new song, a song which brings us ever closer to you, and opens our minds and our hearts to the incredible love, example and compassion of Your Son. May we always be aware of the miracle of His birth, and the infinite love you showed by choosing to send your Son to live among us. We ask this, as we ask for everything, through your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bill Chapman

'Living Your Gifts' Facilitator



January 1, 2015

Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Numbers 6:22-27

Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8

Galatians 4:4-7

Like 2:16-21

Reflection

In these days I become more aware of mystery and destiny. To reflect on the tapestry of a year past is to face mystery. Why should it be so? For the ages we have wrestled with good and evil, good fortune and ill fortune, thinking it to be a problem to be solved. Now to realize that it is not a problem but a mystery. The unknowable which defies all logic and reason.



To look into a New Year is to belong to the unforeseen. And know again that the journey of life must be governed by a destiny beyond our grasp. And yet we plan as if tomorrow is within our reach. In our liturgy Mary, the Mother of God, is our example. Embraced in divine mystery "she kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart". Peace of soul is the harvest of reflective prayer, the grace to be secure in the care of our loving God. This is the great act of faith which allows us to celebrate today with no care for the tomorrow. Thus did Mary show us that she was perfectly human. The Buddhist nun, Pema Chodron, in her book *Comfortable with Uncertainty* is insightful and instructive. She confirms that the anxiety of a disturbed spirit comes not from not knowing the future but from the unfounded presumption that we should know the future.

In the journey ahead the grace of each day and the visitations of God's presence are easy to miss. Listen in prayer to the wisdom of the ancient Hindu tradition:

Prayer

"The child whispered, "God, speak to me"
And a meadow lark sang.
The child did not hear.
So the child yelled, "God, speak to me!"
And the thunder rolled across the sky
But the child did not listen.
The child looked around and said,
"God let me see you" and a star shone brightly
But the child did not notice
And the child shouted,
"God show me a miracle!"
And a life was born but the child did not know.
So the child cried out in despair,
"Touch me God, and let me know you are here!"
Whereupon God reached down
And touched the child.
But the child brushed the butterfly away
And walked away unknowingly."
~ Ravindra Kumar Karnani

Msgr. Clement Connolly



January 2, 2015

[Memorial of St. Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Dr.'s of the church.](#)

1 John 2:22-28

Psalm 98:1, 2-3AB, 3CD-4

John 1:19-28

Summary

John's purpose in writing the Gospel of John is "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). This theme crescendos in all of today's readings. In 1 John 2:22-28, the author declares whoever denies that Jesus is *the* Christ denies *the* Father and *the* Son. The author goes on to say "the anointing received from Jesus, that is grace and new life of the Spirit, exists in you". In other words, the Holy Spirit lives within you. Psalm 98 tells us that "the Lord has made his salvation known: in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice; and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God."

Reflection

In John's gospel we have the testimony of John the Baptist (not the author of this gospel). The term Jews has a geographic tone to it and is sometimes translated "Judeans". The author John is not speaking derogatorily about ethnic Jews. Jesus was a Jew and so was his mother, Mary. In this passage, geography plays a figurative role. The northern regions of Samaria and Galilee accepted Jesus in faith, but the southern region of Judea, especially Jerusalem, were hostile towards Jesus. Jesus met enormous opposition from the Judeans, particularly its leaders.

In John 1:19 we read that the Judean priests and Levites question John the Baptist by asking "Who *are* you?". Are you the Christ (or the Messiah; read Mk 14)? Elijah? John is not Elijah come again, but he fulfills his mission in spirit (Mal 4:5; Lk 1:17). *The prophet?* Israel expected a prophet in the image of Moses. The authorities interrogate John the Baptist by asking him if he's **THE** Prophet, not just *a* prophet (Duet 18:15-19).

John the Baptist announces "No. I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness" (Is 40:3). He then says "I baptize with water; but among you stands one whom you do not know, even one who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." The water baptism of John the Baptist is a sign of



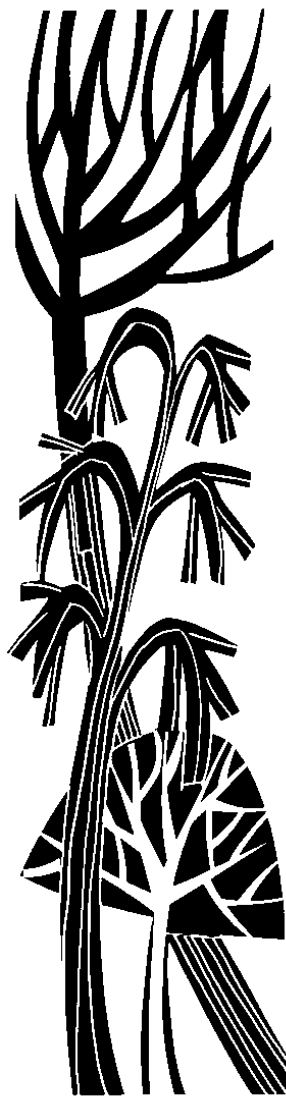
the sacramental Baptism of Jesus. The water baptism signifies our need for cleansing and renewal; sacramental baptism achieves this by uniting God's grace and the new life of the Spirit (Acts 2:38). In a word, you become a child of God - or receive Jesus as your personal savior, however you want to word it - at your Baptism!

When was the first time you realized that you had become a child of God at Baptism? What kind of grace did this transformation take? How do you experience God's grace in your daily life?

Prayer

Dear Jesus, Thank you for new life in the sacrament of Baptism. Help me to understand that I am a child of God. Help me to know you. Comfort me with your grace. In Jesus name I pray. Amen

Debbie Eggleston
Parishioner



January 3, 2015

[Christmas Weekday](#)

1 John 2:29-36

Psalm 98:1, 3CD-4, 5-6

John:29-34

Summary

Today's Gospel is of John the Baptist announcing, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." He continues on to describe the Holy Spirit coming down and remaining over the head of Jesus. Because of his experience and faith, John testifies that Jesus is the Son of God.

Reflection

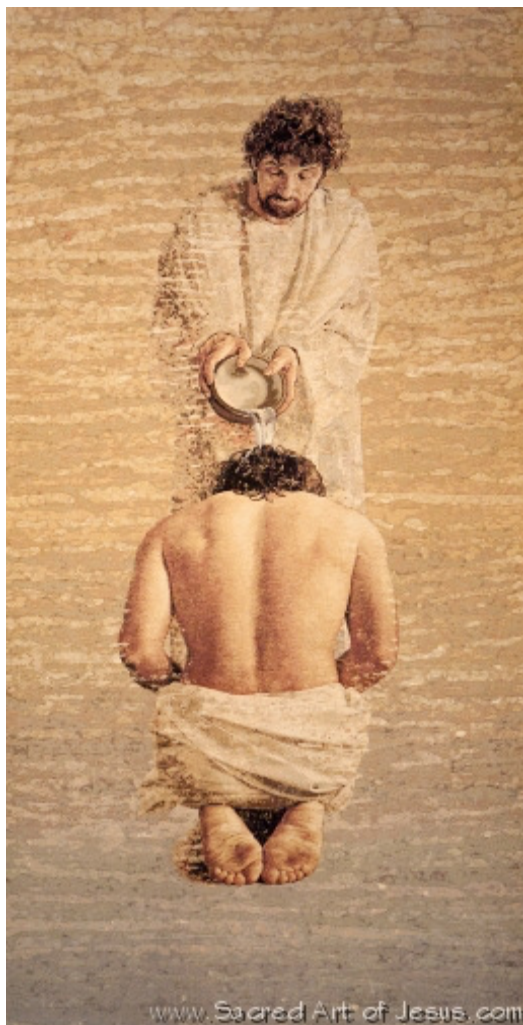
Recently we attended mass at the parish of some friends whose children were singing in the choir that day. The presiding priest was one of the youngest I have seen and must have been recently ordained. His homily was very good and the Pastor was in the audience as well. The Pastor got up to make some announcements including praising the new priest and his preaching abilities. Upon receiving the congregation's applause, the new priest immediately, simply pointed to the crucifix above him. His display of humility made his message that much stronger. It is also common to see professional baseball players point to the sky and perhaps offer the sign of the cross when making a good play. The humility of John the Baptist is inspiring and a testament to his own ability to pay attention to the Holy Spirit acting in his own life.

At times I find myself struggling with a stressful situation and I can't see the way through to a resolution to the problem or issue at hand. I want to quickly "fix" the problem and move on to the next item. Rarely do I see clearly when I'm in this situation and even my blurred vision is not apparent to me either. A call to my wife will normally help me tremendously. She carefully listens and while offering no "quick fix", she centers me and says a brief prayer putting things in proper perspective for me. This return to Christ and doing his will is what I am reminded of when reading of John the Baptist and his focus not on himself but on Christ as the Son of God.

John is so clear in his mission and his trust in God that his humility is not forced or contrived but rather a true gift of the Holy Spirit. In today's Gospel John the Baptist demonstrates many of the seven gifts at work in him. Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord.

In a well known tapestry at our Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels, the artist, John Nava, depicts the baptism of Christ perfectly. The strength and humility of both John the Baptist and Jesus is very apparent and inspirational.

Prayer



Jesus. We pray that we when faced with difficult times will follow the example of John the Baptist and follow Christ. Let us be the strength for each other and an everlasting reminder that with you; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are never alone.

Amen,

Bob & Veronica Hurd
Parishioners



January 4, 2015

[The Epiphany of the Lord](#)

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

Ephesians 3:2-3A, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

Summary

Epiphany comes from the Greek and it means *manifest* or *showing*. The Magi represent the Gentile world. The readings emphasize an invitation to all who seek a deeper meaning in life.

Reflection

What is it that you seek? I seek an opportunity to revisit a dark event with hope. Recently I had a difficult conversation with my daughter. She was hoping for a job; something she has been searching for—for months. I suggested that she might like to say a little prayer and ask for God's help as she goes through the interview process and to inspire the mind of her potential employer to be open to her. She told me that she doesn't pray. I asked her about her belief in God. She says she believes in God alright, but just does not pray. I asked why. She told me of the numerous things she



has prayed for and she did not get the answer she was looking for. One of the things she truly wanted was something I did not give her. It was difficult to hear and hard to live with the guilt.

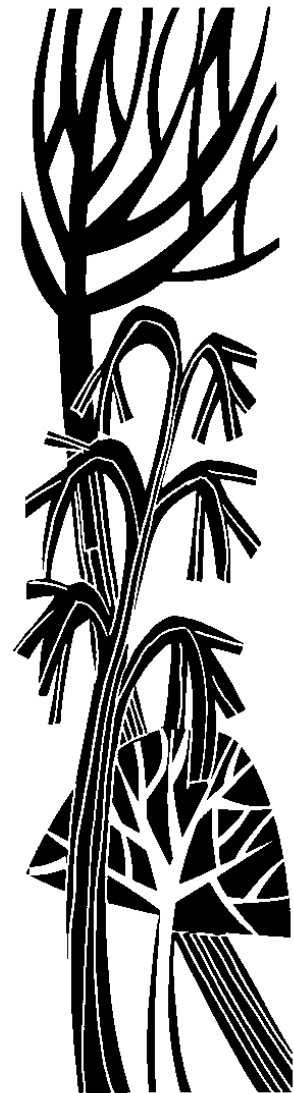
I mention this story with hope. I think of these wayfarers, who traveled untold hours to glimpse at the Christ child. The Magi traveled on a path of discovery illuminated by a star. Imagine the faith it took to travel so far and hope that you have read the prophecy correctly. Perhaps the Magi were bathed in God's true light which discloses God's ways. Perhaps our journeys to God also need to be based in Christ's light. I suggest the more that we immerse ourselves in Christ's light, the more capable we become of understanding the ways of our God.

Although at this time my daughter is not interested in prayer, I hope that she is still interested in seeking the ways of God. I do believe that she is sincerely open to God's light. However, I believe I need to reflect Christ's light in all that I do. This requires that I, like all of us, are called to walk in the ways of Jesus as his disciple and be willing to seek the light even in darkness.

Prayer

"Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem, the glory of the Lord shines upon you."

Isaiah 60:1



January 5, 2015

[Memorial of St. John Neumann](#)

1 John 3:22-4:6

Psalm 2: 7BC-8, 10-12A

Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25

Summary

Two central themes emerge from today's scriptures: living the commandment of love and becoming a light in the world.

Reflection

And his commandment is this:

we should believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another just as he commanded us.

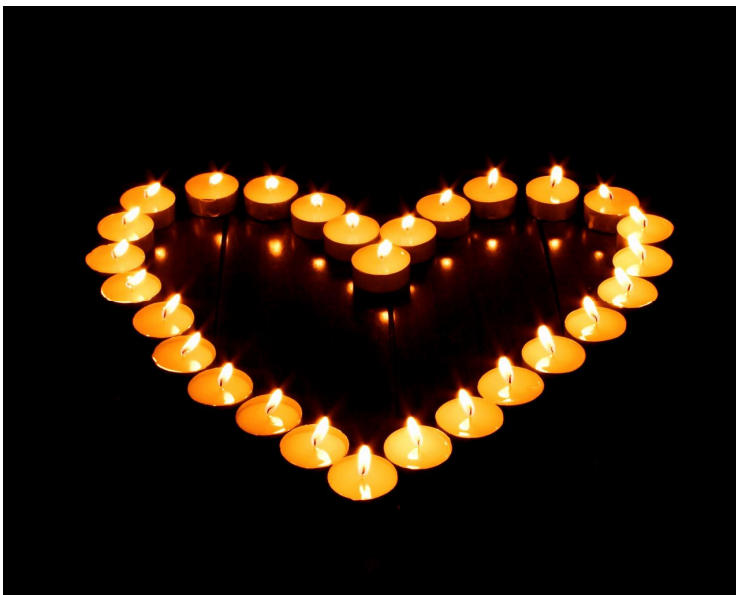
Those who keep his commandments remain in him, and he in them, and the way we know that he remains in us is from the Spirit whom he gave us.

We are commanded to “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*” and to “*love one another just as he commanded us.*” To believe in the name of God's Son is to live in God's love, and to love one another is to live in the promise that comes from the blessing of God's love. To live in the reality of God's love, not only in words, is the call to live in truth. That is, we must actively live out the commandment of Love.

As we live out God's love, we are called to live “from the Spirit whom he gave to us.” Our lives bear the fruit of God's Spirit. Paul affirms this so robustly: “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law*” (Gal 5:22-23). In this we are led by the Spirit: to believe and to love... two parts of the one reality of living in Christ. As such, we are called to be Beloved Disciples centered in Jesus Christ, who came to this world to serve and not be served.

In today's Gospel, we see the initiation of Christ's ministry on earth. In his teaching, in his preaching, and in his ministry of healing, he announces and reveals God's light in a dark world. Jesus was a light in his message, his ministry, and his call. He revealed God to others. Similarly, we live in a world that is blinded by the social darkness of “self-absorption” and “egotism”. As his followers, we too are to carry that message, ministry, and call to the world. Just as Christ, we are charged to be the “light” of the world.

Such a call may sound overwhelming, but it does not have to be so. There are



so many opportunities to be a “light” in this world, and we can start by lighting a “flame” of grace, gratitude, and generosity within our own Holy Family Parish. Our parish is blessed to have over 90+ ministries that await your spiritual gifts and loving heart. We pray that you may live out God’s commandment of love and become a light in the world and share your fruits of the spirit:

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life...”

You are the light of the world...Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”

- Mathew 5:14; John 8:12

Prayer

I beg you, Lord, give me the light I need
so that I can be a light to those around me
and guide them to you
with the joy of celebration.

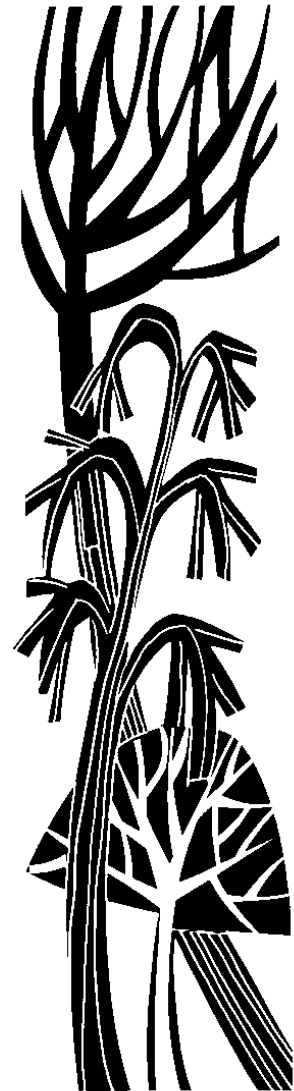
Give me the wisdom to see your love,
not only in my heart today,
but in my life every day.

Help me to be grateful for your incredible gifts to me.

I ask that you help me to open my heart more fully
to your love for me.

Amen

Veronica del Rio-Barreras, Ed.D. & Ramón B. Barreras, Ph.D.
Loving Parents of Patrick and Sofia



January 6, 2015

Tuesday after Epiphany

I John 4:7-10

Psalm 72: 1-2, 3-4, 7-8

Mark 6: 34-44

Summary

The first reading describes how much God loves us all and that when we love one another we know God. The Gospel tells the story of Jesus feeding 5000 people with only five loaves of bread and two fish, while he taught them.

Reflection

The common theme in all of these readings is LOVE. Love one another as God loves us is the message from the first reading. For to know love is to know God. What a beautiful message! God loves us so much that he sent his only Son to us knowing the pain and suffering his Son would endure. As the mother of a beautiful daughter, I can't imagine sending her off to suffer and die. But in looking at her I know the love that God has for us all. The Gospel story tells also a story of love. Jesus loves us and wants us to know our Heavenly Father and therefore teaches us the way to Heaven. He did not want the people to go "unfed" and therefore performed the glorious miracle of feeding 5,000 people with only two fish and five loaves of bread. During this Christmas season, we need to remember this miracle and what it signifies to us today. To love our neighbor, to love our community, to love our faith and share in that miracle by sharing our talents, resources so that none are in need. This is about how much God loves us and takes care of his people and our love can be shown by passing along that love.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father – Thank you so much for loving your people and providing all that we have. I ask, Lord, that in this beautiful season of Christmas, that the love you have for us can be reflected through our own thoughts of actions, especially to those in need. Let us love and care for those, as you always have for us. I ask this through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.



Vicky Ryan

Parishioner and Mommy to an Altar Server



January 7, 2015

Wednesday after Epiphany

I John 4:11–18

Psalm 72: 1–2, 10, 12–13

Mark 6: 45–52

Summary

Together, all three of these readings exemplify the ways we are loved and in turn can love others. The readings lead us right down to the essence of love from God, love with us in Emanuel, and love for others.

Reflection

In 1 John, the apostle declares that it wasn't the people's love for God that brought Jesus into their lives, but that God's love for the people was so deep that he sent his son to help us. John insists that because of that overwhelming grace, we are in turn obliged to love one another, saying "If we love one another God remains in us and his love is brought to perfection in us." But he then adds: "This is how we know we remain him and he in us, that he has given us of his spirit."

I, for one, struggle with the idea of the Holy Spirit. I have been praying for a lot of years, and always prayed to God. Having become a Catholic in 2010, I am coming to be closer to Jesus as a living being. When things begin to look challenging, I pray to him. It feels more intimate. Perhaps that is what the Holy Spirit is in me – God remaining in me, as John says. But there's a caveat – just before he says this, he first says "No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another" THEN we remain in him, and he in us." What better way to remain in him than to be living with God's deepest spirit right inside you!



Rereading scripture can be a great help. In Mark 6:45–52, he infers that a great deal of what make Jesus so stupendous are all the “impossible deeds” he did for the people of his time, the unfathomable acts from his soul. Even the disciples were skeptical – not to mention terrified – when Jesus walked on water. Upon Jesus’ leaving, he gave his disciples – and us – the Holy Spirit. It is deep, it’s in our being, it’s peace. As Eckhart Tolle says, It’s ALL in our being, in the eternal now. I would guess that is where Jesus’ spirit abides. What better could he give? How can we possibly thank him?

Yet even long before Jesus, in a prayer for King Solomon in Psalms, the one who is praying uses Solomon as a metaphor when he insists there must be justice, rescue of the poor and the oppressed, help for the needy, etc. He knew how to thank God, a prophet before his time…

Prayer

Dear Jesus,

Thank you for your closeness to us as we attempt to build good lives. We turn to you for all our insufficiency. Please help us listen to your miraculous spirit and believe deep in our core that you are listening and loving.

Patsy Hilbert,
parishioner and RCIA sponsor



January 10, 2015

Saturday after Epiphany

I John 5: 14-21

Psalm 149: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6A & 9B

John 3:22-30

Summary

While John was baptizing people in Aenon, a dispute arose whereby a Jew questioned John since Jesus was also baptizing and 'everyone is coming to him.' John answered, "No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said that I am not the Christ, but that I was sent before him. The one who has the bride is the bridegroom; the best man, who stands and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice....He must increase, I must decrease."

Reflection

To me, this gospel illuminates two key lessons from our faith that we experience and live on a nearly daily basis. While we know Jesus was never 'married', we can interchange Jesus as the groom in John's gospel, as at every wedding the groom is the one taking the bride, and the focus of the ceremony. John is the best man here, but to me he also represents ALL of us. The Jew questioning John can't understand how John can be baptizing people just as Jesus is- who is the one to be worshipped? John makes it clear that there is but one who we should ALL be worshipping, and that is Jesus, and we all must not confuse anyone else for Jesus as the focus of our faith. We must all 'stand and listen for him, and rejoice at the bridegroom's voice"- there is but one voice that must remain the focus of our faith, and we must not lose that focus in our daily lives. It is easy in our 21st century world of TV / Internet / Media / Social Media to be potentially overwhelmed by different people or 'things' we should be listening to or 'following', but as Catholics we must remember to live our lives in the image of Jesus and act in ways that represent the one true voice to show us direction.

The second key lesson I take from this Gospel is somewhat of a derivative of the first, and is even more relevant during this Christmas season: the birth of Christ must be the focus of our joy and celebration at this time, not the desire for or joy derived from material things. We live in such a materialistic society it is easy to get lost in all the Christmas shopping and gift-giving, and it is important to remember the one 'voice' that we should be listening to and rejoicing over: Jesus. For those of you that like me have small children (my boys are 9 and 5), Christmas means something different to them. While it's easier with the 9 yr old

than the 5 yr old, I have to allow them to enjoy the child's spirit of Christmas (the tree, the wish lists, Santa Claus, etc.) while keeping the TRUE MEANING of Christmas, and our Catholic teachings, at the forefront of their minds as well. When I do that, it's also a good reminder for me at the same time. We can't get TOO caught up in the voice of our materialistic society, but rather remain focused on the 'bridegroom's voice' of Jesus as the most important one.



Prayer

Dear Lord, give me the wisdom to enjoy the true meaning of the Christmas season every day of the year, and the strength of mind and ear to remain tuned to your voice as the one that leads my choices and actions.
For this I pray each day. Amen

Michael James,

parishioner since 2005

Husband to Julie, Father to Ryan (age 9, Holy Family 3rd Grade) and Owen (age 5)



January 11, 2015

Baptism of the Lord

Is 42:1-4, 6-7

Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 9-10

Acts 10:34-38

Mark 1:7-11

Summary

Today's readings all speak of establishing a nation through the Lord God's servant (Jesus Christ) by the Holy Spirit, a nation that would serve Him and bring forth justice; first the Jewish nation and then through Jesus' baptism a nation where Gentiles (most of us) are welcomed into His flock.

Reflection

I shouldn't be but I'm always amazed when reading the Old Testament that it so clearly points and prophesies (and is quoted) in the New Testament. The first reading reveals the baptism and anointing by John of Jesus: "my chosen one with whom I am pleased and upon whom I have put my spirit;" the Holy Spirit whom then empowered the disciples to speak and "proclaim peace through Jesus Christ." Now the challenge for us: To proclaim His peace...To bring forth justice. Not easy and, I would say, impossible without the Holy Spirit to guide us. So we have

to remember to read, study and dwell on the Word "in season and out of season" so that when presented with issues that call upon us to testify of our faith and/or into action we are prepared with the right spirit, the Holy Spirit to guide us.



Prayer

Thanks be to God and all the Saints for this time of the year; to reflect on the most important tenets of our faith as Catholics . To humble ourselves before You in our spirit and to know that your will is being done. Help us to stop and listen to that still quiet voice. To know our sins are forgiven and Your son has done this for me, individually, and for all mankind. Amen.

Joe Bermudez, Welcome Center
Cindy (Koivu) Bermudez, Bereavement Ministry member

