

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 10, 2017

MASS READINGS

MONDAY: IS 35:1-10, PS 85, LK 5:17-26
TUESDAY: ZEC 2;14-17, or RV 11:19A; 1:1
-6A,10AB, JUDITH 13, LK 1:26-38
WEDNESDAY: IS 40:25-31, PS 103, MT
11:28-30
THURSDAY: IS 41:13-20, PS 145, MT 11:11
-15
FRIDAY: IS 48:17-29, PS 1, MT 11:16-19
SATURDAY: SIR 48:1-4,9-11, PS 80, MT
17:9A, 10:13

**NEXT SUNDAY: THIRD SUNDAY OF
ADVENT-RDGS: IS 61:1-2A,10-11, LK1, I
THES 5:16-24, JN 1:6-8, 19-28**

MASS INTENTIONS

MONDAY: BEVERLY FITZSIMONS
TUESDAY: DEC. MEM. OF ANDERSON/
FARRELL FAMILIES
WEDNESDAY: DEC. MEM. OF LEGION
OF MARY
THURSDAY: JIM RUMPZA
FRIDAY: POOR SOULS
VIGIL: KATHY LESTER
7:30: CHARLIE & CATHERINE
SPITZNAGLE
10:00: JIM RUMPZA
NOON: FOR THE PARISH

MEMORIAL FLOWERS

For the Holy Father, all priests, deacon & religious: (Burnell, Anna & Henry Tottten, Robert Stump, Victor & Dorothy Ringle). Deceased members of Schlosser & Kanthack families. (Owen & Yantis families, Almus Stanley, Marg Walker). (Daniel Fields, Robert Wyant, Goldie & Carl Goonen). (Clarence Slifer, Donald Biggs, Jack Hurst). (Mike & Rosemary Cavanaugh, Karen Fox). Judy Buckles. Marvin Anthop. Bob Bennett. Butz & Alting families. (Hank & Jean Corbin, Gene & Genevieve Bull-ock).

GOSPEL REFLECTION:

*“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.”*

It is correct we hear this especially at this time of year but I go without saying that this is something which is absolutely crucial to the life of a Christian if we are to call ourselves such. Before Jesus departed he said: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19), and we are to take this very seriously. In the first place this is meant so that we might allow ourselves to be taught. We must all be taught by God, (Jn. 6:45). In that we engage in a variety of actions which allow the power of God's word to take hold of us, to inform and transform. We are doing that just now by reading this and other materials meant to teach us how to be good disciples, i.e. good students. We then are in a better position to look within to discern the actions of our saving God so as to be ready to share them with others when the time presents itself, which is usually quite frequent throughout the day. In this we are ready to pass on what we ourselves have heard (through the Holy Spirit in our daily mediation). In this we fulfill Scripture since we are to never forget the works of the Lord, (Psalm 77). We then share with others, (I Cor 11). In what other ways are we most likely to “prepare the way of the Lord”? It is certain that while we might not yet feel quite so comfortable with what we call “evangelizing” at least we must put a guard over our lips, (Ps. 141), and say only those things men need to hear, (Eph. 4:29). Let us not cause scandal nor sow division by the way we speak so as to lead any of these little ones astray. In this we remain vigilant and watchful as the Lord travels through our lives preparing us for his glorious coming. To him be honor and glory and praise, forever and ever. AMEN



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What does John the Baptist teach us about the meaning of Advent?

Jesus said that John the Baptist is the greatest of all prophets: "there is none greater than John" (Mt 11:11a).

Why? Because the other prophets prepared the people for a Messiah who would come in the long-distant future, but John the Baptist prepared the people for the Messiah who was about to arrive, and when Jesus finally did appear, he was given the exclusive privilege of being the only prophet to announce that the Messiah had, in fact, come. As Jesus approached John pointed to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" (Jn 1:29,36).

The Baptist had a miraculous birth, and in Scripture when a person is the product of a miracle birth, the person always has an extra-special vocation. John's mother Elizabeth was elderly, had no children, and was beyond her child-bearing years, yet the archangel Gabriel appeared to her husband Zechariah, a priest in the Temple in Jerusalem, and announced that she would conceive, and so she did. John was filled with the Holy Spirit even while he was in his mother's womb (Lk 1:15), and he was chosen by God to be "the forerunner," to continue the ministry of Elijah, the Old Testament prophet who was to reappear to announce the Messiah (Mal 3:23).

It is no surprise, then, that John appeared wearing a coat of camel's hair. Elijah is the only Old Testament prophet to dress in this way (2 Kgs 1:8). Jesus would later explain how Elijah had come before him in the person of John the Baptist (Mt 17:10-13; Mk 9:11-13).

There had been no prophet in Israel for hundreds of years, so people were thrilled at the prospect that a prophet had appeared during their lifetimes. If the Baptist truly was what was claimed, a prophet and the return of Elijah, the people could hardly let the opportunity pass. Crowds went in great numbers out into the desert, a traditional place of encounter with God, to hear what this exceptional man of God had to say.

John cried out, "Prepare the way of the Lord" (Mk 1:3). This message, ever-old, initially for the crowds two thousand years ago, is ever-new for us today. During this Advent season we should prepare the way of the Lord, clear away any obstacle that would prevent Jesus from coming to us, so that when he does appear on Christmas, he will have unimpeded access to our hearts.

John also preached a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mk 1:4). John wanted his listeners to renounce sin, be washed of their past impurities, and be in the state of grace when Jesus appeared.

Likewise, as we anticipate the memorial of the coming of Christ, if we wish to be well prepared for the solemn feast of Christmas, we would be wise to renounce our own sin, be washed of our past impurities, and be in the state of grace on Christmas when Jesus comes to us once again. The Baptist kept Jesus first above all things (Jn 3:30), and so should we!

About Father Michael Van Sloun

Father Michael Van Sloun is pastor of St. Bartholomew Catholic Church in Wayzata, Minn. As a former school principal, high school instructor and athletic coach, he has always been a teacher. He now teaches the faith as a homilist, Bible study leader, retreat director, pilgrimage guide and author of numerous articles.

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This traditional prayer in honor of St. John the Baptist has three parts, corresponding to the three stages of his life: his decision to go into the wilderness to practice a life of penance and mortification; his preaching to those who followed him into the wilderness, preparing their hearts for the coming of Christ; and his martyrdom at the order of King Herod.

Note the attributes of John the Baptist that are included in the prayer: He is, as Christ Himself said, the "greatest prophet born of woman".

In Honor of St. John the Baptist

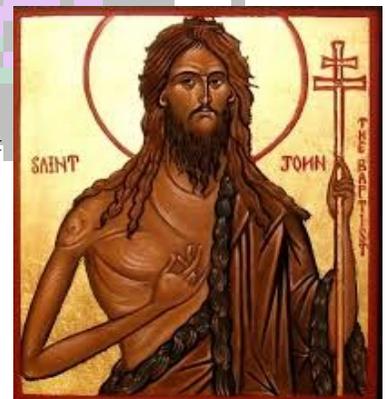
I. O glorious Saint John the Baptist, greatest prophet among those born of woman, although thou wast sanctified in thy mother's womb and didst lead a most innocent life, nevertheless it was thy will to retire into the wilderness, there to devote thyself to the practice of austerity and penance; obtain for us of thy Lord the grace to be wholly detached, at least in our hearts, from earthly goods, and to practice Christian mortification with interior recollection and with the spirit of holy prayer.

V. Pray for us, Saint John the Baptist

R. That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray.

O God, who hast made this day to be honorable in our eyes by the commemoration of blessed John the Baptist, grant unto Thy people the grace of spiritual joy, and direct the minds of all Thy faithful into the way of everlasting salvation. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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Advent: a call to conversion

The season of Advent is the start of a new liturgical year. Each liturgical year is carefully planned so that the seasons, and the major feasts, guide us through our very own worship into a closer relationship with God in Christ.

The liturgical readings are chosen to teach us about the Lord, to relay to us the Lord's message and to make us better aware of God's mercy for us as humanity and for us individually.

The first reading is from the third section of Isaiah. When it was composed, the Jews were in a quite difficult situation. The exiles had been allowed to return to the Holy Land from Babylon, but this return brought them home to no paradise. Life was miserable. The prophet called for faith in God, not only as almighty, but as true to the covenant, to the belief that God would protect the chosen people.

The prophet appeals to God, in the name of the people, for relief. However, the prophet does not say that the people are being treated unfairly, at least in terms of God's care for them. The prophet makes clear that sin has led the people away from God, and this estrangement has produced their woes.

Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians provides the next reading. Counseling the Christian of Corinth was a challenge for Paul. Not only did temptation and vice surround them on all sides, but also they argued among themselves. Paul had to call them to faithfulness, and also he had to try to influence them to put their differences with each other aside.

He saw disciples as having enormous religious potential, able themselves to draw more closely to God and also able to infuse the goodness of Christianity into the circles in which they moved.

St. Mark's Gospel is the source of the last reading. It offers us a theme found quite often in the New Testament, namely that Christ will come to earth again, but in this Second Coming the Lord will be the victor.

When the Gospels were written, even in the case of the Gospel of Mark, the oldest of the four as they now exist, Christians were numerous enough, and geographically distributed enough, to catch the public eye. Yet they were not numerous enough to be able to stand against their enemies. The culture was an enemy. Soon, the political system would be an enemy.

Problems, if not dangers, lay ahead. The atmosphere was tense, uncertain and frightening. Thoughts of the Second Coming naturally were appealing. The reading, quoting the Lord, reminded the early Christians that they did not know the future. Life for them could change dramatically and suddenly.

The message was clear. The only permanent reality is God. If anyone truly is with God, there is no need to fear.

Reflection

Advent is much more than a religious gloss over the rush of preparing for Christmas. It is a call for personal conversion, to bring Christ into our hearts and lives.

Using Mark's Gospel, it builds on the belief that nothing else is as permanent, or as important, as the reality of God, and the reality of our need to be one with God in Christ.

Advent is an opportunity for us to face this reality, an opportunity to achieve this union with God.

The very busy nature of the season merely serves to remind us to sharpen our focus.

If we respond to this opportunity, then Christmas becomes not a national holiday, not even a religious commemoration, but the moment when we truly bring God into our lives, having prepared ourselves for this wondrous encounter.

Advent: Beginning the New Liturgical Year

By Jennifer Gregory Miller

New Beginnings: Mercy and Conversion

Advent starts the new Liturgical Year and can be seen as another opportunity to spiritually begin anew. Holy Mother Church knows how many times we need to start again! There are particular themes in the Liturgy throughout Advent (as I quoted last year): a spirit of waiting, of conversion and joyful hope. These liturgical themes inspire what we do with the family or Domestic Church during Advent.

The Year of Mercy has just ended, but as Jeff Mirus pointed out, it was just a beginning; we are living what we learned this past year. The attitude of conversion continues and grows. The parable of the Loving Father to his Prodigal Son was used often during the Year of Mercy as an example of a spirit of conversion and it also applies to beginning again in Advent. St. Josemaría Escrivá sums up this Advent theme of conversion and mercy:

Human life is in some way a constant returning to our Father's house. We return through contrition, through the conversion of heart which means a desire to change, a firm decision to improve our life and which, therefore, is expressed in sacrifice and self-giving. We return to our Father's house by means of that sacrament of pardon in which, by confessing our sins, we put on Jesus Christ again and become his brothers, members of God's family.

God is waiting for us, like the father in the parable, with open arms, even though we don't deserve it. It doesn't matter how great our debt is. Just like the prodigal son, all we have to do is open our heart, to be homesick for our Father's house, to wonder at and rejoice in the gift which God makes us of being able to call ourselves his children, of really being his children, even though our response to him has been so poor (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 64).

My favorite quote from St. Josemaría continues this thought (emphasis mine):

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If you should stray from him for any reason, react with the humility that will lead you to begin again and again; **to play the role of the prodigal son every day**, and even repeatedly during the twenty-four hours of the same day... (*Friends of God*, no. 214).

We are trying to live in Advent what we learned throughout the Year of Mercy. “Playing the role of the prodigal son” means pushing the restart button not just for this new liturgical year but every day, maybe even multiple times a day. The Advent season helps us hone this daily habit of conversion to keep us working for the ultimate purpose of our lives.

Waiting

Another major theme of Advent is waiting. It is not idle waiting, but waiting in a spirit of preparation. Last year one of our parish priests gave a wonderful homily on the three ways we are waiting for the coming of Christ: **in history, in mystery, and in majesty**.

- **In History:** We recall the Old Testament waiting for the Son of God to be born at Bethlehem.

- **In Mystery:** We await Christ’s coming at Mass in the Eucharist and prepare for our reception of Him at Communion.

- **In Majesty:** Our true preparation of Advent is preparing our hearts for Christ for our final judgment at Parousia, the end of time “when God will be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).

These are the three comings of Christ that we contemplate during Advent. So often the emphasis is placed on Christ at Bethlehem, but if we listen carefully to the Liturgy there are also many eschatological reminders, urging us to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ. Our waiting involves preparedness, just like the Wise Bridesmaids in the parable. We need keep our eyes on the coming of Christ and not end up without extra lamp oil.

Applying at Home with Joyful Hope

December marks three months since changing our family’s education plan, and six months since my foot surgery. This is my first year not home educating; both my sons are in Catholic schools. I’m also working part-time as a CGS catechist in one of the schools and balancing my physical therapy appointments. These have been big transitions and adjustments, but we are successfully finding our new rhythms.

Although we have many family Advent traditions, I remind myself that while every year has similarities, it will also have differences. Applying St. Augustine terms, the liturgy is “ever ancient, ever new.” There is repetition, daily and annually. The liturgy does not change, but we do. Our reception should expand as we grow in our spiritual life. Within my family the dynamics can and will change. The children get older, commitments change, health varies, etc. In all the Catholic customs I implement in the home,

I try to keep them at a minimum and open-ended so much of it can be child-led. I try to not direct most of the Advent practices, but leave room for my sons to make it their own, by research, contemplation and expansion.

As it is suggested in the Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy, the Liturgy is the primary reference point for popular piety.

The popular devotions of the Christian people [...] should accord with the sacred Liturgy...[and] in some way derive from it, and lead people to it, since in fact the Liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, as quoted in Dir. Popular Piety, no. 58).

With that in mind, all our traditions hinge on following the Liturgy.

Daily Podcasts on the Go: Now that I’m driving my sons daily to school, we utilize podcasts. In the morning we listen to the daily Mass readings from the USCCB. My youngest requested a podcast that would tell about the daily saint without being a homily and so our new addition is the Saint of the Day by Franciscan Radio. There are other podcasts that are short meditations that I will sometimes play in the afternoon, but I leave space for discussion and thinking about the readings. The past few weeks the readings have been from the Book of Revelation, which is such a colorful and action-packed book of the Bible. My sons were intently listening to all the details each morning and interesting conversations follow.

Advent Music: Playing and singing Advent music is also another component that sometimes utilizes digital forms with CDs and iTunes. Just like Christmas carols, there are certain songs we only sing a few weeks out of the year. From the haunting melody of “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” to the cheery “People Look East,” we listen, sing and play Advent songs, always looking to learn new ones. The Advent at Ephesus cd by the Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles is an entire cd of Advent hymns that we enjoy. I have several Advent Gregorian chant CDs, and then we find isolated Advent hymns on some of the Christmas CDs. I’m not completely forbidding Christmas carols in Advent, but I do try to present a balanced presentation of music so we don’t get burned out on Christmas carols before it is actually Christmas.

Counting the Days: The boys still enjoy having an Advent calendar. We have many varieties, from simple religious wall calendars to several Playmobil calendars. Last year I even found an allergy-safe chocolate calendar for my one son, so we had a chocolate calendar for each child for the first time. My favorites have been the traditional ones made in Germany, with short Biblical quotes for each window.

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My sons enjoy recognizing many of these verses from the liturgy and atrium, such as “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

Preparing the Manger: We will have a modified version of our tradition of Straws in the Manger. I know with my sons getting older that there might not put the straws in the manger to mark their good deeds. They don't need that physical reality. But the empty manger still is in a prominent place as a visual reminder of the spirit of Advent.

Advent Wreath: The Advent wreath is probably the most central and favorite Advent practice of our family. We hang our wreath over the table and light it with prayers and singing every night before our dinner meal. The Advent Wreath is not liturgical, but it has become one of the most universal and recognizable Advent traditions.

Jesse Tree: We have a very simple Jesse Tree that we set up, but this is one with minimal involvement from me, but room for my sons to look up the stories and read in the Holy Bible. I have been slow to expand this practice for many reasons, but I have decided to share a few posts on the Jesse Tree in the following weeks.

O Antiphons: The final days of Advent from December 17-24 are known as the O Antiphons and they are my favorite part of Advent. We keep this very simple, also, but we all love marking those days.

Advent Reading: When my children were younger we had many Advent and Christmas themed books that we would read throughout Advent and Christmas. This year I'm going to redouble my efforts with my younger one to make more time for reading our special books, and give one chapter book for my older son to read. He has less time due to homework, but this would be considered his “spiritual reading” just like his parents have.

I'm not worried if these Advent plans aren't implemented on Day 1 of Advent, nor do I panic if we miss some days here and there. There are four full weeks or 28 days total for Advent, so we have plenty of time to spread around our traditions. Anything we do is not just for external satisfaction but to connect with the Liturgy and help with spiritual growth.

Following the final liturgical theme of Advent, we try to keep the spirit of joyful hope through all this season. At times it is difficult to keep that interior joy with the news from around the world. But we know all that has been accomplished by Christ for our salvation, and “the reality of grace in the world, will mature and reach their fullness, thereby granting us what is promised by faith, and ‘we shall become like him for we shall see him as he really is’ (John 3,2) (*Dir. Popular Piety*, no. 97). There is nothing that should disturb our joy and destroy our hope.

The liturgy and our Advent acts of piety are constant reminders of God's great plan of Redemption for us. May we always keep in our hearts a spirit of conversion, joyful hope and patient waiting during this season of Advent.

Come, Lord Jesus!

Jennifer Gregory Miller is an experienced homemaker, home schooler, and authority on living the liturgical year.



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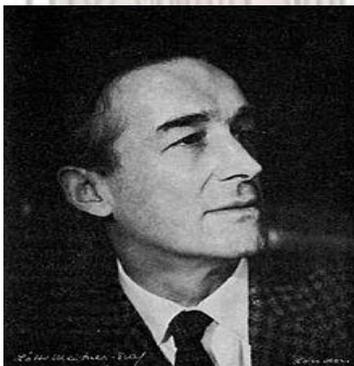
Announcements and Upcoming Events



The Saint Dunstan Schola presents

A GEORGE MALCOLM CENTENNIAL

Join us for a musical celebration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the birth of George Malcolm, Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral and critically acclaimed harpsichordist. The two-part concert will feature music from both aspects of his musical personality – the first half, in honor of the Advent season, will feature the Saint Dunstan schola singing Malcolm's *Christus Natus Est* – a setting of the liturgical office of Matins for Christmas, interspersed with readings from the Bible and the Church Fathers. The second half will feature special guest performer Dr. Rebecca Burkhart, professor of harpsichord at Ball State University, performing some of Malcolm's signature pieces – along with a few musical surprises along the way. Saturday, December 16th...a light supper will be offered in Memorial Hall after Mass with the concert to follow in the church.



Free will offering to benefit the St. Matthew 25 Care-and-Share Soup Kitchen.

STEWARDSHIP BY THE BOOK: Our readings from Holy Scripture on this Second Sunday of Advent remind us of what we are supposed to be doing during Advent, in fact throughout our lives. The reading from Isaiah anticipates the coming of Christ and John the Baptist as it proclaims "... prepare the way of the Lord." This is a time of preparation for us.

That message is repeated in our Gospel from St. Mark. Today's Gospel is the absolute beginning of Mark's Gospel and it immediately gives us that same signal by declaring, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths." Of course, we all realize that the path to the Lord may not always be straight for us, but now is a time to correct that.

God is waiting for us. St. Peter in his Second Letter, from which our Second Reading is drawn, indicates that God, however, "is patient with you." You might say on this Second Sunday of Advent that the Lord is giving us a second chance to respond to His call. One of the basics of St. John the Baptist's messages was that we need to get ourselves right with the Lord, perhaps turn our lives in a different direction. We can change; now is the time to do that.

Pope St. John XXIII once stated during a homily in Advent, "We are all part of an immense family. This is proven by what is in our hearts during Advent and Christmas." Now is the time to put love in our hearts and to truly prepare the way of the Lord.

Our 2017 bake sale was a huge success for our MESA Farm Worker Holiday Assistance. As announced this was to assist the migrant farm worker community. I am pleased to announce that St. Ann's raised \$1300 in support of this activity. I would like to thank the many, many people that came across to Memorial Hall to purchase our food which was donated. I would like to acknowledge our "cooks" which signed in when they dropped off their goodies

SUNDAY OFFERING:

\$9722

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