

ADVENT REFLECTIONS 2020



SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE PARISH
BANGOR - BREWER - HAMPDEN - WINTERPORT

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

From ***“O come, O come, Emmanuel!”*** to ***“O come, all ye faithful!”***, the holy seasons of Advent and Christmas are nearly upon us once again!

As people of faith, our common prayer asks that God send his Son, Jesus Christ, into our broken and hurting world, “Come maranatha!”

As people of hope, our collective voice expresses a heartfelt expectation that our Lord and Savior will return soon in the fullness of his divine glory.

As people of love, our compassionate response to the gift of salvation is to incarnate Emmanuel’s mercy, forgiveness, and charity for all those in need.

Advent helps us to anticipate the second coming of Christ at the end of time and to commemorate His first coming to Bethlehem at Christmas. As such, it is my privilege, as your new pastor, to journey through these sacred seasons with you. May the reflections in this booklet, which have been lovingly prepared by our fellow parishioners (thank you so much for sharing these thoughts), be a source of light and inspiration for you and your loved ones. May they strengthen your relationship with the Eternal Word of Truth and Life. And may they bring each one of us, our Church, our nation, and our world to deeper communion and everlasting peace.

We are extremely grateful for the generosity of all our benefactors. In a special way, we thank Brookings-Smith, Kiley & Foley Funeral Services, and one anonymous donor whose combined donations have defrayed the entire cost of printing and mailing this Advent booklet for our fellow parishioners. Thank you!

Lastly, there will be many other opportunities to extend these greetings, but it is never too early to offer all of you, our cherished parishioners, these wishes: “Blessed Advent and Merry Christmas!”

Sincerely in Christ,

Msgr. Andrew Dubois

Sunday, November 29

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

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

1 Corinthians 1:3-9 Mark 13:33-37

Prepare me

God our Father, Mold me, as a potter's hand.

Holy Spirit of God, Guide me, like a lost sheep.

Arch Angels, Guardian Angel, Protect me,
from wickedness.

Saints and Spirits in Heaven, Pray for me,
to receive grace.

Cross of Calvary, Forgive me,
my waywardness.

Eucharistic Adoration and Communion,
Feed me, unconditional Love.

Blessed Mother Mary, Saint Joseph,
Prepare me, body, mind, heart and soul,
to be awake, for the,
"Coming Hour"

John Dougherty

Monday, November 30

Romans 10:9-18

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10,11

Matthew 4:18-22

Listen to the voice of GOD
Of JESUS, the Word, the LORD.
Believe & you'll never be put to shame,
On you HIS grace will be poured.

Confess with your mouth that JESUS is LORD.
Embrace his resurrection.
Preach as did the "fishers of men."
Preach of JESUS, HIS love, HIS perfection.

"Fishers of men"? Did they know what this meant?

Yes, they came to understand
That JESUS was LORD,
The longed-for MESSIAH
HIS cross would now be their brand.

Others were called, (Andrew, James & John)
The sons of Zebedee.
They dropped their nets & followed HIM
Turning their backs to the sea.

In the prime of HIS life JESUS died on a tree.
Then rose from HIS tomb, from death.
Believe in this!! Repeat the story!!
Let the GOOD NEWS ride on your breath.

Gus Ruhrold

Tuesday, December 1

Isaiah 11:1-10 Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17

Luke 10:21-24

"Blessed are the eyes that see what you've seen." In these readings, we are exposed to the prophet, Isaiah, who proclaims the coming of Christ as Messiah. The Messiah will be a sprout from the stump of Jesse and he would be a "just judge". He would cause the earth to exist in harmony with no conflicts, even the animal kingdom would be at peace. The wolf would be guest of the lamb and the child would play by the cobra's den and be unscathed. "There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the Lord, as water covers the sea." "Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever." Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and gave thanks to his Father for revealing to his disciples the hidden information that was not revealed to the wise and learned people. His disciples had to be child-like and open to the teachings of Christ from His Father. The disciples realized that Jesus Christ was the Messiah and would reveal to them the kingdom of heaven.

Lord, give us the child-like disposition to receive your word and understand your will and evangelize it to others.

Alice Lambert

Wednesday, December 2

Isaiah 25:6-10A Psalm 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6
MT 15:29-37

I chose to present my thoughts on Psalm 23. Because of my ongoing involvement with 40 Days for Life, I have spent an increasing amount of time reading bible passages, and I always benefit from knowing the historical context. Psalm 23 is one of the more famous of the 150 psalms, and it is located in the first of the 5 groupings of psalms. They were written over several centuries, between The Exile and the Return to Jerusalem. Many of the psalms are said to have been written by King David, and Psalm 23 is considered to be "of David." It was likely written around 1000 BC. All the psalms are lyrical poetry and they express **passion**. It bears repeating...psalms are intended to be sung! So, what I do is read psalm 23 a couple of times and then do my best to sing it.

There are several different versions of inspirational Psalm 23 YouTube videos, but I prefer singing it myself, without all the music, pictures, and distraction. I can easily feel myself lying in green pastures, watching the beautiful clouds go by. I can taste the fresh water and feel the confidence that goes with knowing that I am loved. I **feel** God as a Good Shepherd, and I am a member of his flock. I **feel** him as a generous host, and my cup overflows! I can really **feel** that I dwell in the house of the Lord. Read (and then sing) Psalm 23 slowly, in a quiet space where you are exposed to outside air, sun, and greenery. Can't you **feel the passion? Feel God's love!**

Rey Dubois

Thursday, December 3

Isaiah 26:1-6 Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 19-21, 25-27A Matthew
7:21, 24-27

It seems pretty simple, perhaps even obvious ... build on rock, not on sand. So why, in today's Gospel, does Jesus tell his disciples that listening to his words but failing to act on them is like building a house on sand? Maybe it's because this world and our lives can be full of distractions and temptations that like a fierce storm can wear us down, tear us up, and spiritually even wipe us out. If this year has shown us anything, it has clearly demonstrated that storms of all sorts will come into our lives, and often, without warning. It's relatively easy to hear Jesus' words, but sometimes challenging to really listen to the meaning of those words, and most difficult, to act on them with consistency. The key, Jesus tells us, is in our actions as a response to his words. So, in preparing during this Advent season to celebrate the birth of Jesus, our Savior, we will be considering how well our own actions reflect his words, using this time to shore up weaknesses in our foundation.

Dave & Patti Lindemann

Friday, December 4

Isaiah 29:17-24

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

Matthew 9:27-31

Seeing Blind

The Christmas decorations from our secular world abound in stimulating splendor. Soon, we will adorn our own Christmas tree with lights to make it our visual centerpiece. December brings the shortest days of the year and our reliance on artificial light only deepens. We use light to see, to celebrate, to navigate and yet we are, in effect, seeing blind.

Today's readings use the metaphor of light to highlight our need to reflect, focus and pray on the one true Luminary Prince.

....And out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. IS 29:18

The Lord is my light and my salvation. PS 27

Then he touched their eyes and said, "Let it be done for you according to your faith." MT 9:29

As a society, we perpetuate the commercialism: Are the gifts purchased? Who's 'hosting' this year? What are we going to eat? Without a steadfast focus, our planning overshadows the true, illuminating presence of Christ. The Advent Season, with its culmination at Christmas provides an annual reminder that He was born a man to touch the eyes of the blind, so that we all may see.

Prince of Light, open our hearts during this Advent Season to humbly come to you in acknowledgement of our failings of misguided sight. Teach us to close our eyes and open our hearts, cure us of our blindness.

Jamie Derosier

Saturday, December 5

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26

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

Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5A, 6-8

In the gospel, Jesus notes that there are so many in need of help and so few to do the work. Jesus has the apostles to assist him in his works, but he could use more help, our help. This reading serves to remind us that we are all called to help Jesus through service to others. Simple acts of charity, prayer and love for others can have great ripple effects. As Catholics, we can be a reflection of Jesus' love through our works. Aiding our fellow man may serve to remind those around us of God's love for us.

Gene and Jen Weldon

Sunday, December 6

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

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

2 Peter 3:8-14

Mark 1:1-8

Do you ever say to yourself, "Time is passing so quickly."?
I sure do!

Maybe it's my age, but there is a poignant reality to this awareness, especially when considering the promised return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Will He be coming soon, unexpectedly like a thief in the night? Only Father God knows the exact moment. We can be assured, however, He's coming back! Yes, a lot to pray about, but pray about it we must.

In Mark's Gospel, we hear God's words through Isaiah the Prophet: "Prepare ye! Make ready the way of the Lord, clear Him a straight path." OK, you have my attention, but he doesn't tell us how, or does he? Read on! John the Baptizer was proclaiming a baptism of repentance, which led to the forgiveness of sins. The key word here for me is repentance. You see, I am a sinner, and God is a Holy God.

Am I a faith-filled believer? Am I prepared like the five wise virgins awaiting the Bridegroom's arrival? Am I filled with joyful hope at the coming of our Savior? Is my heart and soul ready for that glorious day when we shall see Him face to face?

I sincerely ask myself these exact pertinent questions. How about you? We could procrastinate, of course, telling ourselves there's plenty of time left, or we might even choose to avoid altogether, but at what consequence?

Susanne Degrasse

Monday, December 7

Isaiah 35:1-10

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

Luke 5:17-26

In times of hardship it is easy to lose sight of what is important. I have difficult days, where every hour seems to get more stressful and no calmness in sight. " Be strong, do not fear, your God will come" speaks to me in times of trouble. I tend to get caught up in stress and anxiety being placed on me and forget to put my trust in God.

It's hard to ignore the human stressors that close in on me. Eventually, I get a sign from God to remember to lean on him, pray to him to remove my stress, my anxiety, and be present with him. I begin to feel his presence and his salvation around me. God reminds me of my faith and gives me inner strength to come away from the negativity of the day. Sometimes it takes longer than it should, however I am reminded to listen to him and give my worries to him to handle.

We need to remember God is always there, ready to take on our troubles, our worries and He will make it better. We need to trust in Him and lean on His everlasting love.

Erin Farrar

Tuesday, December 8

Genesis 3:9-15, 20

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

Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12

Luke 1:26-38

PSALM 98:4

**Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth;
Break into song; sing praise.**

In today's Psalm, I picture myself in a faraway land and in a time long ago. I picture a great leader from the bible, maybe David or Moses or Elijah, calling the trumpeters and asking the crowd to stop and praise God for faithfully providing for our needs. My eyes are closed, my face is high, the sun is warming me, and my hands are in the air reaching for our Lord. My soul is smiling, and I am thankful and at peace.

This event could happen today; this should happen every day but instead I struggle. My faith is immature. When something is not going right in my life, whether it is due to my poor decisions or something out of my control, I find it natural to turn to God and ask for help. However, when life is moving along smoothly, it can be all too easy for me to spend many hours without a thought of our triune God. Admitting the problem is the first step to recovery.

I could be that leader I imagine in this Psalm. But what if there are no trumpeters... hey buddy, no excuses, I can start small. It all starts by leading my family in praise. One song at a time. Let's start with "Joy to the World, the Lord has Come".

EJ Hikel

Wednesday, December 9

Isaiah 40:25-31

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

Matthew 11:28-30

In the Gospel, it states: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest in your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

When thinking about this passage, it is helpful to visualize what a yoke is. It is a curved piece of lumber that links two work animals together, one to the other. In this manner, both animals share the work or the heavy load. We believe it is our burdens that are heavy, not the Lord's. We all have our own burdens or struggles. When we are tied down by these burdens, life is a difficult road. However, Jesus knows all about us, and He says, "Come to me...learn from me...and I will give you rest." So, we should take Jesus' yoke and He will walk beside us to help carry our burdens. If we submit to His plan (His yoke), His will, His love, then we shall receive Joy.

Maria Andrew and Lea Andrew

Thursday, December 10

Isaiah 41:13-20

Psalm 145:1 AND 9, 10-11, 12-13AB

Matthew 11:11-15

Gracious Mercy

I will help you, says the LORD... Is 41:14

The Lord is gracious and merciful; slow to anger, and

of great kindness... Ps 145:8

As a stay-at-home-mom of three young children I often find myself asking God for help. Like a child, I mess up, but He's there. He shows His face, and His love, in the faces of my own children. When they make mistakes and I correct them, help them and continue to love them, I am able to catch a glimpse into the immense love God has for me. God is there with great kindness when I cry for help. Through His gracious mercy I am able to be the woman He created. I am still learning who I am meant to be, but I know for sure that I am a child of God. The rest will fall into place when I trust and hope in the Lord.

Emily Lizotte

Friday, December 11

Isaiah 48:17-19

Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 AND 6

Matthew 11:16-19

How I have taken for granted my faith and my faith family in the past. I think since COVID-19 I didn't recognize or truly appreciate the words preached by the songs sung.

The Holy Word of God. I think about how Jesus walked with the people and they didn't recognize Him as the true Lamb of God!

The Bread of Life! I now look at the Eucharist when I hold Him in my hands at Mass and keep saying "Thank You Lord - I'm so happy to be here.

Never let me take your for granted again!"

Susan Shaw

Saturday, December 12

Zechariah 2:14-17 or RV 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab
Judith 13:18BCDE, 19 Luke 1:26-38 or Luke 1:39-47

“See, I am coming to dwell among you.” Says the Lord.
This is a promise to us from God that we are never alone.

“Fear not, Mary, for thou have found grace with God.” Mary shows us how to be a true servant of the Lord’s will.

Mary, Our Lady of Guadalupe, told Juan Diego; *“Am I not your mother? You can always ask for help!”*

Do I have the courage to say, *“Lord, let it be done to me according to thy will?”* This is where ‘fear not’ and asking for help comes in.

This Christmas, let’s open our hearts to be a dwelling place for Our Lord and remember that Our Blessed Mother is always there in our time of need.

Kim Achorn

Sunday, December 13

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

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstances give thanks.... 1Thes 5:16-18

“Always”, “without ceasing”, and “in all circumstances” are some very strong words and St. Paul doesn’t make room for exceptions. There is much that we alone are not capable of in our human weakness, but we must remember that “... For human beings it is impossible, but not for God. All things are possible with God.” Mk 10:27

It reminds me of an earlier period in my life as a young mother. Home all day with four children, I remember feeling like I didn’t have time for prayer (or anything else), let alone “without ceasing”. A wise priest told me that everything I do can be a prayer if I offer it up to God. Suddenly, washing the dishes takes on a whole new meaning. As part of our morning routine, we can offer up our entire day to God through prayer and gratitude. Yes, I mean everything - not just our sufferings, but our leisure, passions, work and family responsibilities, too. God will use it for our sanctification and the conversion of others.

And when we really stop and think about it, don’t we have reason to always be joyful, ever aware of God’s presence, and constantly grateful? God has promised us that we will never be separated from him. Jesus took on our human flesh and died for our sins so that we, too, could become sons and daughters and live forever in heaven.

Lord God, help us to keep an eternal perspective.

Christine Lyons

Monday, December 14

Numbers 24:2-7 & 15-17a Psalm 25:4-5AB, 6, 7BC, 8-9
Matthew 21:23-27

All of us have questions. From simple questions, to silly questions, to real complex questions. Some of us even question our faith. Why was Jesus born into this world to die for us? Why did he take the form of a man and live a life in poverty? The list is endless. However, we should not feel the need to ask questions if we simply trust in our faith.

We believe we will one day see the gates of paradise open wide, and Christ himself inviting us in. We trust that we will hear the word of God speaking directly to us. We ourselves fall prostrate in prayer when we are most in need, to only have our eyes opened by God to the truth we have been seeking. The truth we have been asking questions about. We have certain mysteries in our faith that when questioned, will never be answered in our human life. But if we trust in God, we will one day see and hear the mysteries revealed right in front of us. When we kneel in front of the Blessed Sacrament, even in the tabernacle, we should not ask any questions. We should simply say "I trust in you". God has a plan for all of us.

As we approach the season of Christmas, we must open our hardened hearts to Him and trust Him.

Jesus I trust in you!

Jacob Gould

Tuesday, December 15

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13 Psalm 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19, 23
Matthew 21:28-32

"On that day you need not be ashamed of all your deeds, your rebellious actions against me..."
Zephaniah 3:11

Raised as a Catholic, in a family who over the years attended Mass less and less, it's not difficult to recognize how and why, by the time I became an adult, I had distanced myself from the church and a faith life altogether. Life in an increasingly secular world, with educational institutions, media, and society in general falling away from, and even criticizing, the religious, further reinforced a faithless lifestyle.

After establishing what most would consider a successful family and life of my own, I still felt a disconnect between the good life I had, and a nagging sense that something was missing. I felt an urging, for several years before I responded, from what I now recognize as the workings of the Holy Spirit within my heart.

With the encouragement from a friend to attend Christmas Eve mass, I cast aside my worries, fears, and shame, and thrust myself back into the Catholic faith life. The most beautiful consequence of that decision was when, two years later, my entire family - husband and four children - entered into full communion with the Catholic Church.

When I read the above passage from Zephaniah, it reminds me that it is never too late to course-correct and choose the right path. I am reminded that God is forgiving, loving, and, indeed, almighty.

Amy Curtis

Wednesday, December 16

Isaiah 45:6C-8, 18, 21C-25

Psalm 85:9AB AND 10, 11-12, 13-14 Luke 7:18B-23

In this reading, we find John the Baptist in prison and hearing of all the miracles being done by our Lord. As he sits there in prison, he expects our Lord to set him free. At this point of despair, John finds himself questioning our Lord's will for him. Should he look elsewhere?

We all at some point find ourselves questioning God's will for us. Thinking we know what it is we truly need. Looking for answers to our own personal problems in this world. At times we can become blinded by our own expectations. The greatest thing to remember is that God loves us and He has a purpose for us, that we can't always see.

Blake Langley

Thursday, December 17

Genesis 49:2, 8-10

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

Matthew 1:1-17

The book of genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

I heard in a recent homily that the Gospel should not merely be read, it should be prayed. However, praying a genealogy, what is the purpose in that? Reciting names, when there are so many other beautiful prayers available, seems boring and perhaps even useless.

We should remember that these are not only names, they are the genealogy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the heritage of the living Church, *our* heritage. To ignore, skip over, or forget our heritage may also be to ignore, skip over and forget our inheritance, the Kingdom of Heaven.

Boredom about a particular subject often is fueled by a lack of knowledge in that area. Pray the names, learn the names and the stories that accompany them. Honor our Lord Jesus by knowing his genealogy, the genealogy of our Church. Keep our faith alive by knowing it. When we know it we can share it. When we share it, we are becoming what God created us for, thus preparing for our inheritance.

Julie Morse

Friday, December 18

Jeremiah 23:5-8

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

Matthew 1:18-25

This is a time when everyone is afraid. We are afraid of getting sick. We are afraid to touch things. We are afraid to breathe when passing by strangers. We are afraid to lose our jobs. We are afraid to go to the doctor. We are afraid of dying and afraid of judgment afterwards. (We are even afraid of gaining weight from our "COVID diet"). We feel like we are in captivity.

God doesn't want us to fear. Through an angel, God told Saint Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary into his home. For through the Holy Spirit, Jesus was conceived in Mary. During this time of fear, we also need to take Mary into our home, and she will bring Jesus with her. When afraid, we can go to Mary instead of television, desserts, alcohol, and other vices. We can honor Mary by saying the Rosary to bring peace into our hearts. This is because Jesus gave us Mary to be our mother, and she cares about us and all our worries.

Kathy Filer

Saturday, December 19

Judges 13:2-7, 24-25A Psalm 71:3-4A, 5-6AB, 16-17
Luke 1:5-25

We hear of the promise to Zechariah that he and his wife would have a son even though his wife, Elizabeth, was advanced in years. We could all learn something from this beautiful moment of grace of God dwelling among us. We need to accept our God as a God of surprises. So many times, in my life, I fail to see him at work. It is only when I reflect on life events that I can recognize the work of the Holy Spirit. Too many times I'm like Zachariah and doubt or ask for proof. Zachariah was hard to convince and it took a drastic measure by making him mute. The most important thing we can do is to listen. God listens to us and should we not do the same? Do we listen to God more than we speak? Perhaps we need to be more contemplative in our relationships and in our prayer. God sends people to us to make his presence known. Are we like Zechariah and think that our many years has given us more knowledge than that of an angel sent by God? Zechariah, after nine months of forced silence, of forced contemplation, of not being able to speak, only listen, gives us a beautiful prophesy about his son, John the Baptist.

May each of us take the time to listen to the God who dwells among us through the Word made present in scripture, through the people around us, and in contemplative prayer.

Laura Charette

Sunday, December 20

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

Thinking of the Annunciation, I am reminded of obedience and gratitude, but that can feel impossible when faced with the enormity of God's love. We are taught first to show thanks on our knees, heads bowed, hearts open, but it is yet another of his innumerable gifts that the Lord helps us to our feet and shows us not just His love, but how to love Him in return.

Like Mary, God asks service of us all, service that sometimes seems more than we think we can give, but our strength is in Mary's words, "May it be done unto me according to thy word." Never are we more aligned with our faith, never are we more obedient than when we say yes to the angels of opportunity God has bestowed upon us. How infinite is his love to send us every day the chance to say yes. God never lets a day break without a thousand ways to offer our love and obedience. We cannot give the world the gift Mary did, but we can, daily, offer love and adoration in our service to each other. As we tend to our neighbors, to those in need, we each say yes to the call of the Lord. We often express our obedience and love in quiet prayer, but the Annunciation reminds us of the prayers said so loudly in our acts. As St. Francis may have said, and as Mary certainly lived, "Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary use words."

Kelli Pittman

Monday, December 21

Songs of Solomon 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18a
Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21 Luke 1:39-45

Three parts of the psalm stood out for me: faith, trust and hope in God. These are especially important to me during this Advent season as we await the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, at Christmas. This year 2020 has been like no other. In March of this year, like many others, I was unable to work due to shutdown and was out of work for about seven weeks.

During this time, I experienced a myriad of emotions; frustration, anger and sadness to name a few. My husband and I began to pray the rosary daily when this started and have continued saying it ever since. I find peace and comfort from this and it strengthens my faith. Through Mary, the celebration of the birth of Jesus and all the gifts from God our Father for which I'm forever grateful. I try to put these words in my life every day, faith, prayer and hope and love which is Advent to me.

Rebecca Dee

Tuesday, December 22

1 Samuel 1:24-28

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

Luke 1:46-56

My simple reflections, of the readings, I was drawn to them as a whole but the first reading and as a mother of four, the sheer thought of just leaving my child to the Lord gave me a twinge of panic.

But then I remembered a time when I was unsure if my husband and I were ever going to be able to have children. So, we made a pilgrimage to Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré in Canada. There within the basilica is a little chapel of St. Gerard, the patron of mothers. There we prayed.

Three years later, I returned with my daughter, Faith Anne as we walked up the steep hill, I was 4 months pregnant with my second child. Holding Faith's small chubby hand in mine as her short legs trying to keep the pace. When we reached the small chapel, she quickly released from my grip and ran ahead to an old statue with a small kneeler in front of it and knelt before St Gerard, as if to say I am home and Thank you! I was astounded that my 18-month-old responded this way! But was quickly reminded she was not mine but rather just on loan to me from our heavenly Father, and what a gift!

My simple story and reflections for these readings would be, God is all loving, generous but I will never forget the power He holds and gifts He gives us. This Advent season invites us to stop and remember the blessings the Lord has given, big and small.

Andrea Adams

Wednesday, December 23

Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24 Psalm 25:4-5AB, 8-9, 10, 14
Luke 1:57-66

Who is God's messenger and what is the true meaning of His message?

With so many distractions in society, on TV and social media, it is easy to forget the most important message and who it's coming from. Perhaps we can be the messengers in these challenging times. We need to allow God to help us purify our hearts so we can proclaim His message of forgiveness, peace, mercy, charity and love. How can we do this? Sometimes, you only need a smile or a kind word.

With so much uncertainty, we have to remember that we have His promise and His infinite love, which we cannot even begin to comprehend. How wonderful it would be if we didn't allow that uncertainty to creep into our minds and we allowed ourselves to be guided by the Lord without fear.

In the summer, when the leaves on the birch trees flutter fervently in the breeze, I feel close to Him as though the leaves are saying smile, laugh, God exists! It provides a feeling of peace that I wish the whole world could experience.

In this advent season, let's concentrate on preparing our hearts, as we prepare our houses, and decorate them with good works to help proclaim God's eternal love.

Lord, help me share your love and heed your true message of repentance and change my life to one devoted to serving Christ.

Peter and Annia Warner

Thursday, December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8B-12, 14A, 16 Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29
Luke 1:67-79

The Prophet of the Most High

These verses (Luke 1:67-79) are called "The Canticle of Zechariah" and are prayed every day in the Liturgy of the Hours. It is a father, Zechariah, prophesying over his newborn son, John (the Baptist), that he will be the prophet of the Most High.

John lived his life as the forerunner of the Messiah with his life always pointing to Jesus and his voice crying out, 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths' calling us all to repentance. His life really teaches us how to live – in total humility, knowing that our lives are not our own because we live for Christ. John told everyone that he had to decrease while Jesus increased. As should we. When someone looks at us, they should see Jesus in everything we do. We are the hands and feet of Jesus on this earth.

When Jesus comes to John for baptism, John declared Him to be the Lamb of God. He is setting the stage for Jesus who will bring to us the gift of salvation, the forgiveness of our sins and the gift of Eternal life.

On this most Holy Night as we celebrate the birth of our Savior and anticipate His return, may we hear John's voice echoing through the ages "Behold, the Lamb of God" our most precious gift from heaven. Jesus is the gift we celebrate – He is truly the reason for the season.

Linda Thayer

Christmas Day, Friday, December 25

Isaiah 62:11-12

Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12

Titus 3:4-7

Luke 2:15-20

OH, HAPPY DAY!

No, Not Happy Birthday

Oh, Happy Day!

This Day is one like no other. For it started the Journey of a carpenter's son to build back what was destroyed.

A Carpenter's son with Nails – Wood – Sweat – and Blood. He built it back by obedience what had been destroyed by disobedience.

Oh, Happy Day to come – as we await the return of the Carpenter's son. May we stay in the state of Advent and anticipation, as his mother Mary did, by keeping our hearts honest and pure so we may praise His Holy Name on meeting Him at his return.

May we see with our honest and pure hearts this son of a carpenter and who he really is:

– The Lord – The King – Our Savior – Emmanuel - The Son of God, Our Almighty Father.

So - when our own Advent Life has come to an end, we will be able to praise his Holy Name – Jesus!!!!

Oh, Happy Day!!

Melanie Ann Van Aken

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are extremely grateful for and indebted to the generosity of our benefactors who have contributed to defray the entire cost of printing and mailing this Advent booklet for their fellow parishioners. The mission and ministries of our parish are made possible and strengthened by every person who claims his or her dignity as a disciple of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, and seeks to share, serve and sacrifice just as he did. With humble gratitude on behalf of all our parishioners, we simply say, "Thank you very much."

Anonymous Donor

Brookings-Smith



SAINT PAUL THE APOSTLE PARISH

WEEKLY CONFESSION: 2:00-3:00 p.m. St. John's Church

THE LIGHT IS ON FOR YOU ~ *Additional opportunities for Confession*
6:00-7:00 p.m.

Monday, December 14 St. Mary's Church

Tuesday, December 15 St. Mary's Church

Wednesday, December 16 St. Mary's Church

Reservations are required to attend Mass

(The link to "Sign-up Genius" is on our parish website)

~Distancing/face masks/sanitation protocols observed~

CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve: Thursday, December 24

4:00 p.m. St. Mary 6:00 p.m. St. Gabriel

4:00 p.m. St. John 6:00 p.m. St. Mary

4:00 p.m. St. Joseph 6:00 p.m. St. Teresa

4:00 p.m. St. Matthew

Midnight Mass: Friday, December 25

12:00 a.m. St. John

Christmas Day, Friday, December 25

7:00 a.m. St. Mary 10:30 a.m. St. John

8:30 a.m. St. Gabriel 10:30 a.m. St. Matthew

8:30 a.m. St. Joseph

*Masses at St. Mary and St. John are broadcast live;
to view, visit our parish website or Facebook page*



Stay connected! Download the "MyParish" app on your Android or Apple device and receive instant updates on parish events, notices, and weather-related cancellations.

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