

The First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 2023



Transfiguration of the Lord Parish

**Saint Mary 14 Park Street + Sacred Heart 58 Church Street + Saint Mark 105 Stanley Street
North Attleborough, Massachusetts**

Transfiguration of the Lord Parish

Rev. David A. Costa, Pastor
Rev. Deacon Joseph E. Regali, Parish Deacon
Sister Kathleen A. Corrigan, S.U.S.C., Pastoral Associate
Rev. Kenneth R. Sicard, O.P. & Rev. R. Gabriel Pivarnik, O.P., Weekend Assistants
Mrs. Martha O'Neill, Administrative Assistant
Mrs. Jean Howard, Business Manager
Mrs. Elaine Corvese, Director of Religious Education
Mrs. Lisa Serak, Principal, Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School
Mr. Adam Turcotte, Director of Music
Mr. Miguel Peixoto, Buildings Supervisor
Mr. James Kitsock, Building Maintenance

Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School

Mrs. Lisa Serak, Principal
57 Richards Avenue,
North Attleborough, Massachusetts 02760
(508) 695-3072 FAX (508) 695-9074
smsh@smsh.dfrcs.org www.smshschool.com

Saint Mary Cemetery

Mr. Jarrod Ward, Superintendent
Towne Street
North Attleborough, Massachusetts 02760
(508) 695-1173 or email ripco@comcast.net

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saint Mary Church • Saturday 3:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Sacrament of Baptism

Baptisms are celebrated on designated Sunday afternoons at 12:30 pm, with a limit of four families at each baptism. Please contact the office at stmaryna@noozi.com for more information and available dates/locations.

Sacrament of Marriage

Marriage is usually celebrated on Saturday morning and afternoon. Please contact the Parish Office at least nine months in advance to begin preparation.

Sacrament of the Sick

Pastoral care to those in need of the sacrament of the sick is arranged through the parish office. Please call to arrange a visit.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is offered on the first Friday of each month in **Saint Mark Church** beginning at 9:00 am and ending at 6:00 pm with Benediction.

Parish Offering

If you are attending in person, you may drop your contribution in the collection basket. You are welcome to mail your budget envelope to the parish office, at 14 Park Street, North Attleborough, MA 02760. You may also leave your envelope in the drop box located outside the parish office door, to the right on the landing. Or you can use this link for online giving:

<https://app.gabrielsoft.com/guest/mafrdiocese/31>

Thank you for your ongoing support!

Weekend Masses

Saturday 4:00 pm **Saint Mary Church**
Sunday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**
Sunday 9:30 am **Saint Mary Church**
Sunday 11:00 am **Sacred Heart Church**

Weekday Masses

Monday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**
Tuesday 4:30 pm **Saint Mark Church**
Wednesday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**
Thursday 8:00 am Communion Service
Saint Mark Church

Links to: Transfiguration of the Lord Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/Transfiguration-of-the-Lord-Parish-North-Attleborough-106529317647894/>

YouTube at <https://tinyurl.com/ysfaxaty>

Parish Office

14 Park Street, North Attleborough,
Massachusetts 02760
Parish e-mail • stmaryna@noozi.com
Parish website • www.saintmaryna.com
Phone 508-695-6161 Fax 508-695-5248
Faith Formation • TransfigurationRelEd@gmail.com
Faith Formation • 508-695-3823
Music Ministry • transfiguration.na.music@gmail.com



December 2/3 – The 1st Sunday of Advent

Saturday

4:00 pm

Sunday

8:00 am

Sunday

9:30 am

Sunday

11:00 am

December 2 – Vigil (St. Mary)

William & Denise Boyland

December 3 (St. Mark)

Marjorie Morrissey

December 3 (St. Mary)

Judy Leco

Victoria Ann Leco

December 3 (Sacred Heart)

Mary J. Wagner

Walter M. Miller

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Monday

8:00 am

Tuesday

4:30 pm

Wednesday

8:00 am

Thursday

8:00 am

Thursday

7:00 pm

Friday

9:30 am

Friday

12:05 pm

December 4 (St. Mark)

Glenn Joubert

December 5 (St. Mark)

Frank Ausiello

December 6 (St. Mark)

People of the Parish

December 7 (St. Mark)

People of the Parish

December 7 (St. Mark)

People of the Parish

December 8 (Sacred Heart)

SMSH School Mass

December 8 (St. Mary)

People of the Parish

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December 9/10 – The 2nd Sunday of Advent

Saturday

4:00 pm

Sunday

8:00 am

Sunday

9:30 am

Sunday

11:00 am

December 9 – Vigil (St. Mary)

Robbin M. King

December 10 (St. Mark)

Jennifer Ann Gengo

December 10 (St. Mary)

Wayne Burtchell

Riana Marcelino

December 10 (Sacred Heart)

Dale William Lutes

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Parish Contributions

Collection for November 18/19: \$11,505.95

Special Collection (Human Development): \$1,618.50

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Tuesday Communal Rosary Schedule

Tuesday, December 5, 2023: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, December 12, 2023: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, December 19, 2023: Prayer & Pizza (5PM)

Tuesday, December 26, 2023: No Mass or devotions today

December 8 – Holy Day of Obligation



The Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, a holy day of obligation, on **Friday, December 8**. Mary, under her title of the Immaculate Conception, is patroness of the United States. There will be three Masses celebrated for the holy day:

Thursday, December 7

7:00 pm Vigil Mass – Saint Mark

Friday, December 8

9:30 am Mass – Sacred Heart

*(Mass will be celebrated with the children of St. Mary-Sacred Heart School **and** our parishioners)*

Friday, December 8

12:05 pm Mass – Saint Mary

Please note: the 12:05 pm Mass will be live-streamed and available on our Facebook and YouTube pages.

The collection taken at these Masses supports the good work of our parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society as they serve the needy of our area. Many thanks for your continued support of our Vincentians! May God bless your concern and generosity.

Bulletin Submissions

Please note that due to anticipated delivery issues with FedEx during the entire 2023 holiday season, all transmission dates have been moved up by our publisher. Anyone wishing to submit a notice should email it as early as possible and include the dates you would like the notice to appear. It will be published in the earliest weekend available.

Parish Grand Annual Appeal

As we approach the “official” conclusion of our Grand Annual Appeal for 2023, I offer sincere thanks to all who have participated in this special endeavor. Your tremendous response indicates a deep commitment and a special pride to and in Transfiguration Parish. We are awaiting the final reports, but as of this printing the total for this year’s Appeal is over **\$207,000.00!**

We will continue to accept donations for the Appeal till the end of the calendar year. Please know we are most grateful for any and all donations. Please contact the parish office if you have any questions. God bless!

thank you, thank you, thank you!

From Fr. Costa:

You may have heard Adam, our music director, refer to the Christmas Mass schedule in his “plug” for new choir members. Yes, that schedule has been determined. To assist with your planning, I offer the schedule and some of the rationale behind this time schedule.



As Christmas falls on a Monday this year, we celebrate a very, very brief fourth week of preparation. The **Fourth Sunday of Advent** is Saturday, December 23, and Sunday, December 24. There will be **two** Masses scheduled for this last Sunday of Advent:

Saturday, December 23, Vigil Mass @ 4:00 pm
St. Mary Church

Sunday, December 24, Morning Mass @ 9:30 am
St. Mary Church



There will be six (6) Masses celebrated for the **Christmas** holy day in our parish. Each of our churches will have two Masses. As the 4:00 pm Vigil Mass is the most popular with our parishioners, there will be three 4:00 pm. celebrations. The solemn Mass for Christmas will be celebrated at 9:00 pm in Sacred Heart Church. The Roman Missal (the official prayerbook for Mass) no longer refers to this as Midnight Mass. Now it is called “Mass in the Night.” This Mass will feature our choir and instrumentalists. There will be a concert of Christmas music before the Mass. The full schedule for Christmas Masses is as follows:

Saint Mary Church

Christmas Eve, December 24, Mass @ 4:00 pm
Christmas Day, December 25 @ 9:30 am

Sacred Heart Church

Christmas Eve, December 24, Mass @ 4:00 pm
Christmas Eve, December 24, Mass @ 9:00 pm

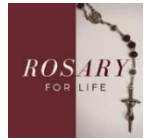
Saint Mark Church

Christmas Eve, December 24, Mass @ 4:00 pm
Christmas Day, December 25 @ 8:00 am

I hope the early sharing of this information will be helpful for planning your Christmas activities. Because people always ask, I also want you to know that the collection taken on Christmas remains 100% in the parish. Many thanks for your generosity and commitment to Transfiguration Parish.

Rosary for Life

The Respect Life Committee of Transfiguration of the Lord Parish is pleased to announce that we will lead a Rosary for Life at 4:00 pm, prior to the 4:30 pm daily Mass in **Saint Mark Church** on the *first, second, fourth, and fifth Tuesday* of each month. The communal Rosary is also livestreamed for any participants who wish to join us remotely.



Winter Storm Mass Policy



As we face the unpredictable New England winter season, I share our Winter Storm Mass Policy.

Sunday Mass

Should there be significant snowfall or extreme ice conditions on a weekend, especially if we have been warned or “encouraged” to stay off the roads, weekend Masses will be celebrated **ONLY** at Saint Mark Church. We will follow the usual Mass times, but all Masses will be moved to Stanley Street because (1) I live on that property and the Dominicans would not be driving from Providence to be with us, and (2) only one property will need to be plowed and shoveled in time for Mass. Please note: when we are told to stay off the roads because it is too dangerous to travel due to weather conditions, any Mass obligation does not hold. **STAY HOME** for your safety and the safety of others. The Lord certainly understands!

Daily Mass

When school is canceled or delayed due to winter weather, the daily Mass is also canceled. If the delay is on a Tuesday, we will have Mass on Tuesday afternoon. If there is an early dismissal of school due to winter weather on a Tuesday, the daily Mass on Tuesday afternoon is canceled.

I hope these directives are clear. Thank you for your assistance and cooperation. If you have any questions, please call the parish office.

Knights of Columbus Monthly Meeting

Council #330 of the Knights of Columbus has been serving the Catholic Community of North Attleborough for 125 years. The Knights meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm, in the St. Mary Church Hall. Please drop by on meeting nights if you’d like to learn more about the Knights. Council #330 is committed to assisting local charities that align with the values of our Faith such as the Parish, the Parish school, and Abundant Hope. Contact Jim Schromm with any questions: jim.schromm@verizon.net.

Transfiguration of the Lord Parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society

Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are in need or are suffering, in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul. The Society meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month in the parish hall in Saint Mary Church. Please join us!

Call for Assistance:

If you need assistance, please call the help line for our parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society. They can offer information about the types of assistance available. Please call 508-212-4755 for help or more information.

Knights of Columbus – Annual Coat Drive

Knights of Columbus Council #330 will once again be



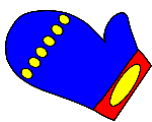
collecting gently-used coats, jackets, hats, and gloves during Advent. Collection boxes will be in all 3



churches **beginning the**

weekend of December 2nd-3rd. The drive will end on the weekend of **December 16th-17th.** The clothing will

be donated to local charities and distributed to persons in need. We appreciate the generous donations that our fellow parishioners have provided in the past and hope this year's drive will be as successful as previous ones. Thank you for your generous support!



If you are interested in joining our choir or becoming a cantor, please scan the appropriate QR code(s) and fill out the form.

To join the **choir**:



To become a **cantor**:



If you are unable to complete the form online, please see Adam Turcotte after any Mass to pick up a paper copy.

Note: We are in need of **instrumentalists** for the **9 pm Mass in the Night on Christmas Eve** at **Sacred Heart**. If you are interested, please email Adam Turcotte at transfiguration.na.music@gmail.com. Thank you!

Faith Formation Program 2023-2024

Director of Religious Education ~ Mrs. Elaine Corvese
508-695-3823; transfigurationreled@gmail.com

Faith Formation Office hours:

Monday – Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Class Schedule:

December 3rd: **Grades 1 & 2**, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
(following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

December 3rd: **Grade 9**, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

December 4th: **Grade 8**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

December 10th: **Grades 3 & 4**, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
(following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

December 11th: **Grade 5**, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

December 17th: **Grades 1 & 2**, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
(following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

December 17th: **Grade 9**, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

December 18th: **Grade 6**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Please see website: saintmaryna.com for the 2023-2024 calendar for all grades. Faith Formation classes are held at Saint Mark Church hall in Attleboro Falls.

Cancellation of classes: In the event of cancellation of classes due to inclement weather, the Faith Formation Office will notify parents/guardians by email and the cancellation notice will also be on the answering machine of the Faith Formation office at 695-3823. Please note: if the North Attleboro School Department cancels school, Faith Formation classes are automatically canceled.

“Adopt-A-Family”

An Advent Project



Transfiguration of the Lord Parish is once again sponsoring “Adopt-A-Family” as an Advent project. Organized by former State Representative Betty Poirier and many faithful assistants from parish organizations, families from North Attleborough are provided with much needed assistance. This project provides warm clothes for all family members and assistance with heat and necessary bills. “Santa” is also given a helping hand with his list for the children. Envelopes will be available beginning **this weekend, December 2/3**. We ask that you please make your donations payable directly to **Adopt-A-Family**. Thank you in advance for your generous support of this annual project.

God Bless,

Debbie Fitzgibbons and Betty Poirier,
Adopt-A-Family Committee Members

SAINTS

SAINT MARY-SACRED HEART

Saints in Action:



During the week leading up to Veterans Day, the members of the National Junior Honor Society and student council sold flags for the SMSH Flag Garden to support members of the Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary. At the end of the campaign, our Saints were able to present a \$425.00 check to the DAV representatives. This touching tribute designed to honor our veterans was truly a wonderful experience for our Saints community. At SMSH, our students learn the importance of living out a life serving others as part of their experience each and every day. We invite you to learn more about our school's strong curriculum by visiting our website: www.smshschool.com.

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Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School Alumni:

Did you, your child, grandchild or other relative graduate from St. Mary's School, Sacred Heart School or Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School? If so, please go to the Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School website www.smshschool.com and under the Alumni tab fill in the form on reconnect with SMSH. We appreciate your support in this important part of our school's history!

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Army-Navy Raffle Ticket Campaign: Thank You!

The Army-Navy Raffle Ticket Campaign was a huge success! The participation of our Saints community was overwhelming. We raised over \$16,000 for our Saints Fund.

Due to the amazing response by our Saints, we decided to reward two classes with a whole class No Uniform Day and an Ice Cream Sundae Bar Celebration! The class that had the highest percentage of students participating was Grade 3. The class with the highest ticket sales percentage was Grade 6. And most importantly, the winning ticket pulled by Fr. Dave was sold by Delaney in Grade 7. Congratulations to all the winners!

Again, we thank everyone who supported this fundraising event. A very special thank you to the Monahan family for securing this incredible raffle package for our school. We are so appreciative!

December Women's Guild Meeting



The Transfiguration of the Lord Parish Women's Guild will be meeting on Tuesday, December 12, 2023. All women of the parish are invited to join us at the St. Mary's Parish Hall starting at 6:00 p.m. We will be having a Potluck Dinner and an Ornament Swap. Please feel free to bring a dish to share and a wrapped ornament for the exchange. RSVP to Cathy LaFratta at 508-612-4748 or catlaf@aol.com. Come join us for an evening of fellowship and fun!

Baptismal Preparation Classes Have Resumed

Parents requesting the baptism of their child should be registered members of the parish who attend weekend Mass here at Transfiguration of the Lord Parish on a weekly basis. Please pick up and complete one of the Parish Census forms if you have not already registered with the parish. If this is your first Baptism here at Transfiguration Parish, parents are asked to attend a brief baptismal preparation session. The next session will be held on Sunday, **December 10 at 12:30 pm** in the Sacred Heart Meeting Room. Advanced registration is required. Please call Martha at the parish office or email at stmaryna@noozi.com for more information.

Transfiguration of the Lord Respect Life Group

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe:

Please join us on **Tuesday, Dec 12, 2023 at the 4:30 pm** Mass at St. Mark church to celebrate the **Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe**. This feast commemorates the four apparitions of Mary in 1531 to peasant Juan Diego near Mexico City. Mary told him that a church should be built in that spot. The bishop needed more proof however, and Mary sent Juan to pick roses (rare in December) to present to the bishop. When he opened his cloak (tilma) to show the roses to the bishop, they discovered a painted image of the Blessed Virgin imprinted on the tilma, which is now preserved in the Basilica of Mexico City. Among other titles related to this event, Mary was declared Patroness of the Americas in 1999. We hope you can join us for this tribute to our Blessed Mother. This Mass will be preceded by the Rosary for Life at 4 PM. A collection basket will be available to benefit the charities of the Transfiguration Respect Life Group. Our Lady of Guadalupe, Pray for Us!

Monthly Meeting:

The next meeting of the Respect Life Group will take place on Thursday, **January 4, 2024 at 6:30 pm in Sacred Heart Church's Library**. We hope to see you there!

A Chaplain's Thoughts: Advent 2023

By Rev. James F. Quigley, O.P. '60

Associate Chaplain, National Alumni Association

She was just a young woman. On that unforgettable day she was surprised. Out of nowhere the archangel appeared. "Hail, Mary, don't be afraid. God has invited you, chosen you to be mother of his son, mother of the savior of the world." Mary thinks, "Can I? Should I?" St. Bernard speaks to her: "You have heard, O Virgin, that you will conceive and bear a son; you have heard that it will not be by man but by the Holy Spirit. The angel waits for an answer; it is time for him to return to God who sent him. We, too, are waiting, O Lady, for your word of compassion ... Answer with a word, receive the Word of God." Mary then freely, prudently, generously, humbly, trustingly said, "Yes ... Be it done to me according to your word."

The poet Denise Levertov paints a picture in words. "We know the scene: the room, variously furnished, a lectern, a book, a lily. Arrived on solemn grandeur of great wings, the angelic ambassador... We are told of meek obedience. No one mentions courage. The Spirit did not enter her without consent. God waited. She did not cry I cannot, I am not worthy ... bravest of all humans, consent illumined her ... consent, courage unparalleled, opened her utterly." The fate of the world rested on Mary's "yes". After that word the angel left her. Mary was alone, her future changed, her life changed, her world and ours changed. Her mission began and with it her closeness to God deepened, a closeness that she could see and feel and touch.

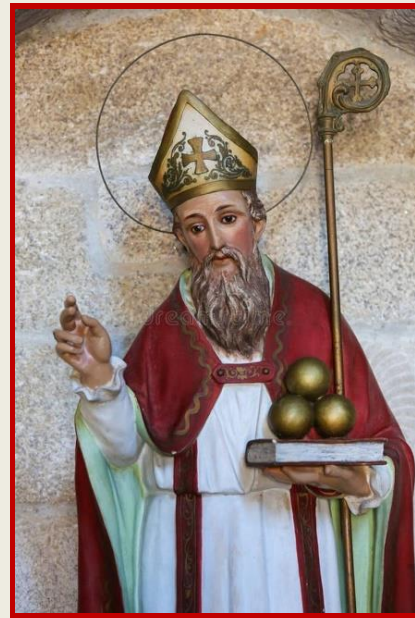
Advent has come again to our Church. It is a religious moment in the Catholic, Christian calendar year, when believers begin to get ready to celebrate the Christmas event. Sunday Mass readings, Advent wreaths, purple vestments, prayers direct us to reflect on end times, on angels, on Mary and Joseph, on the birth of a baby.

Advent suggests we pay attention to the providence of God. Many things can distract us from belief in God, in Jesus Christ, in a spiritual life, in the Church, in sacraments. Perhaps each of us in our own way might pray for enlightenment, for the grace to believe the way Mary did. With a mother's tenderness she cares for each of us, intercedes for us, whether we cling to faith or have disengaged from a spiritual world. And her courage won't allow her to give up on any of us.

Father Quigley has been associated with Providence College as a teacher, administrator, and chaplain for more than 35 years. We are blessed to have Fr. Quigley share his priestly ministry with us here in North Attleborough.

PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE COMING OF OUR
Lord Jesus Christ!

Saint of the Week: Saint Nicholas of Myra December 6th



The absence of the "hard facts" of history is not necessarily an obstacle to the popularity of saints, as the devotion to Saint Nicholas shows. Both the Eastern and Western Churches honor him, and it is claimed that after the Blessed Virgin, he is the saint most pictured by Christian artists. And yet historically, we can pinpoint only the fact that Nicholas was the fourth-century bishop of Myra, a city in Lycia, a province of Asia Minor.

As with many of the saints, however, we are able to capture the relationship which Nicholas had with God through the admiration which Christians have had for him—an admiration expressed in the colorful stories which have been told and retold through the centuries.

Perhaps the best-known story about Nicholas concerns his charity toward a poor man who was unable to provide dowries for his three daughters of marriageable age. Rather than see them forced into prostitution, Nicholas secretly tossed a bag of gold through the poor man's window on three separate occasions, thus enabling the daughters to be married. Over the centuries, this particular legend evolved into the custom of gift-giving on the saint's feast. In the English-speaking countries, Saint Nicholas became, by a twist of the tongue, Santa Claus—further expanding the example of generosity portrayed by this holy bishop.

The critical eye of modern history makes us take a deeper look at the legends surrounding Saint Nicholas. But perhaps we can utilize the lesson taught by his legendary charity, look deeper at our approach to material goods in the Christmas season, and seek ways to extend our sharing to those in real need.

Saint Nicholas is a patron saint of bakers, brides and grooms, children, Greece, pawnbrokers, and travelers.

The 1st Sunday of Advent – December 3, 2023



First Reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

You, LORD, are our father, our redeemer you are named forever. Why do you let us wander, O LORD, from your ways, and harden our hearts so that we fear you not? Return for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, with the mountains quaking before you, while you wrought awesome deeds we could not hope for, such as they had not heard of from of old. No ear has ever heard, no eye ever seen, any God but you doing such deeds for those who wait for him. Would that you might meet us doing right, that we were mindful of you in our ways! Behold, you are angry, and we are sinful; all of us have become like unclean people, all our good deeds are like polluted rags; we have all withered like leaves, and our guilt carries us away like the wind. There is none who calls upon your name, who rouses himself to cling to you; for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us up to our guilt. Yet, O LORD, you are our father; we are the clay and you the potter: we are all the work of your hands.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



Responsorial Psalm

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

O shepherd of Israel, hearken,
from your throne upon the cherubim, shine forth.
Rouse your power,
and come to save us.

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

Once again, O LORD of hosts,
look down from heaven, and see;
take care of this vine,
and protect what your right hand has planted
the son of man whom you yourself made strong.

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

May your help be with the man of your right hand,
with the son of man whom you yourself made
strong. Then we will no more withdraw from you;
give us new life, and we will call upon your name.

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

Second Reading

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always on your account
for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus,
that in him you were enriched in every way,
with all discourse and all knowledge,
as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you,
so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift
as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
He will keep you firm to the end,
irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
God is faithful,
and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

*Show us Lord, your love;
and grant us your salvation.*

R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

The Lord be with you.
And with your spirit.

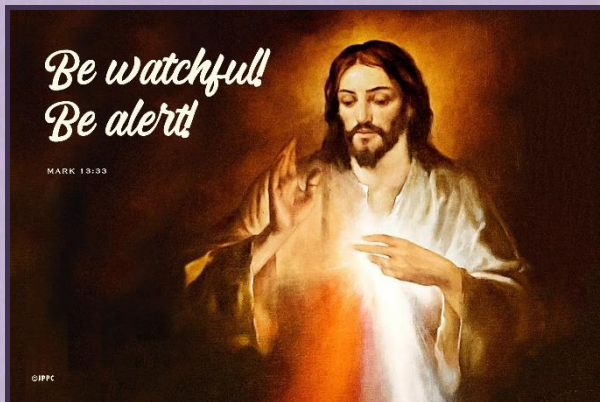
† A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark
Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said to his disciples:

*"Be watchful! Be alert!
You do not know when the time will come.
It is like a man traveling abroad.
He leaves home and places his servants in charge,
each with his own work,
and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.
Watch, therefore;
you do not know when the lord of the house is coming,
whether in the evening, or at midnight,
or at cockcrow, or in the morning.
May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping.
What I say to you, I say to all: 'Watch!'"*

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Vigilance:

Advent always reminds me of my grandmother's vigilance. Whenever we were planning to come to her house to take her anywhere, she was always ready - hours in advance. She would perch on the front stoop, arms akimbo, purse clutched tightly in her hand, watching and waiting for our coming. My father used to chide her, but Grandma would always retort that it was important to her to be ready, and besides, she had nothing better to do. Advent is the Church's time of vigilance and waiting. It seems to me that we could do worse than to emulate my grandmother. Let's take this Advent time and make it a time to be vigilant. Let's get ourselves ready for a very special coming. After all, as Christians, we really have nothing - absolutely nothing - better to do.

Comment:

If the environment in our parish churches did not change today (different colored vestments, Advent wreaths and candles, etc.), it would be difficult to tell from the readings alone that a new liturgical year and season had begun. Today's readings follow the course of those of the last few Sundays in Ordinary Time in that they continue their eschatological flavor.

The first reading is from the prophet Isaiah. Besides penning some of the most beautiful and inspiring literature of the Bible, Isaiah writes some of the most courageous. Isaiah haschutzpah. He doesn't pussyfoot around. He goes to the heart of the matter and isn't chary of taking even God to task. Today's first reading finds Isaiah sharply calling God to attention, reminding the Lord of the ancient covenants, and beseeching divine intervention. Isaiah doesn't quit with God, however. He quickly moves on to us. Wrapped in his exhortation to God is an urgent wake-up call, reminding us of our side of the covenant and goading us to both vigilance and malleability. Isaiah pleads with us to remember that our attitude toward the Lord's coming must be one of hope. God will come as a caring parent. We must be ready and anxious to be reshaped into God's children. If we are vigilant and we make ourselves ready - like clay receptive to the potter - God's coming and meeting with us will be joyful indeed.

Saint Paul picks up the theme of hopeful joy in today's passage from his letter to the Corinthians. Paul reminds us that we have been blessed with wonderful gifts, even the greatest of gifts, God's own Son. God's Son is with us, strengthening us, upholding us, so that when he returns in glory, we may worthily meet him.

The Gospel multiplies the calls for vigilance. Although Mark's words are words of warning, they are not meant to instill fear. Rather, Mark urges vigilance and watchfulness. The Lord is coming at a time we least expect. Now is not the time to doze. Rather, we must be awake and ready for that coming by living vigilant lives.

Reflection:

Do you like long lines at the supermarket? Don't you just love the signs in school or government offices that say, "For faster service, please take a number"? So, like some chump, you do. Your number is 145, and the sign on the wall says, "Now serving 12." Is your favorite part of going to an amusement park snaking around the barriers of an extended queue for forty-five minutes, just to spend three minutes of consummate terror on a roller coaster aptly named "Cardiac Arrest?" For my time and money, waiting has got to be worth more than any of this.

The temptation when writing about Advent is to strive to wax eloquent about waiting. Well, nuts to that! For the most part, waiting is a grind. It's sort of like pedaling a stationary bicycle - lots of effort going nowhere. Not what you'd call a fun time. Ask anyone who is or who's ever been pregnant. She'll tell you. Waiting is a pain.

So let's not spend Advent just waiting. If we do, when Christmas arrives, we might just figure that it wasn't worth the wait. Instead, let's spend Advent attending. Attend to the personal needs you've long neglected: the need for excitement, the need for rest, the need for attention. Attend to the needs of others: the need for understanding, the need for empathy, the need for your attention. Attending demands attention, paying heed, being watchful and vigilant. Attending demands all the things Isaiah demands, all the things Paul counsels, all the things the Gospel exhorts. If we have to have a stance for Advent, let's not stand waiting. Let's stand at vigilant attention.

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Reflections for the Week beginning Sunday, December 3, 2023

Sunday, Dec 03, 2023

A season of welcome

The color violet reminds us that a new season has begun: a time to prepare to welcome Christ in our midst for all days and in all persons. Coincidentally this year, Advent starts on the World Day for Persons with Disabilities. How welcoming is our church to the people with physical and mental challenges? Not just improving accessibility with an entrance ramp or elevator but providing accommodations for those with hearing, visual, and intellectual impairments, including for liturgies and sacramental preparation? Take a look around your own parish. Is it true that "all are welcome"?

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37 (2). *"We are the clay and you the potter: we are all the work of your hands."*

Monday, Dec 04, 2023

Iconic inspiration

Think of how much sacred images of Jesus, Mary, angels, and the saints—in painting, stained glass, and sculpture—have filled your life and stimulated your spirit. You might have many sacred images throughout your home. Perhaps you can find them in different public places in your city. Our Catholic churches are certainly full of them. Think of how much they inspire and prompt you to momentary prayer, a fleeting lifting of your heart and mind to God as you pass by them, or to long stretches on your knees, deep in conversation. You can partly thank John Damascene, who defended holy images against iconoclasm, a movement in the eighth century that was opposed to the veneration of icons. Treasure the rich imagery of our tradition.

MEMORIAL OF JOHN DAMASCENE, PRIEST, DOCTOR OF THE CHURCH

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 8:5-11 (175). *"Many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the Kingdom of heaven."*

Tuesday, Dec 05, 2023

Be a light in the darkness

As Advent days grow ever darker, Isaiah offers hope: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Isa. 9:1). We Christians seek the Son's light, but we also take the Savior at his word when he describes us as the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). 'Tis the season, to celebrate those who shared their light, such as Rosa Parks, who co-led the Montgomery bus boycott beginning this day in 1955. Or Mary McLeod Bethune, who formed the National Council of Negro Women 20 years earlier. To quote Saint Isidore of Seville (who opened the Fourth Council of Toledo on this day in 633): "Just as we must love God in contemplation, so we must love our neighbor with action."

ADVENT WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24 (176). *"He shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted. He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth."*

Wednesday, Dec 06, 2023

Peace on Earth requires living on the edge

This year we celebrate the centennial of the birth of Phil Berrigan, the famed peace activist and one-time Josephite priest. His dedication to serve the African-American community quickly blossomed into an all-out crusade for justice, resulting in his many

arrests, sentences, and continuing activities to emphasize the Catholic opposition to bloodshed. He was hardly rewarded for his efforts in this life, and in this time of war in our day, we owe him a great debt. We can pay it by walking as he walked, in the path toward peace.

ADVENT WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Matthew 15:29-37 (177). *"On this mountain he will destroy the veil that veils all peoples, The web that is woven over all nations; he will destroy death forever."*

Thursday, Dec 07, 2023

Unite to fight for good

Today is Pearl Harbor Day, when the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor officially thrust the United States into World War II. Americans sacrificed in multiple ways to serve the war effort, from military service to rationing. What if we were to unite in the same way to fight poverty? An emphasis on charity and justice for the poor exists within all the Abrahamic traditions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Who is fighting poverty in your community? Take a step today to unite with them.

ADVENT WEEKDAY

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27 (178). *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven."*

Friday, Dec 08, 2023

A day of grace

Today is all about grace. It was God's grace that provided Mary with the privilege of being born without original sin; it was Mary's grace that said yes to God's plan; and it is our grace to honor Mary's witness and protection. As Pope John Paul II explains, "Grace means love and the gift of God himself, the completely free gift in which God entrusts to [us] his Mystery." In honor of this day, pray the mysteries of the Rosary.

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (PATRONAL FEAST DAY OF THE U.S.A.)

TODAY'S READINGS: Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38 (689). *"Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."*

Saturday, Dec 09, 2023

Mary mirrors her people

Can you imagine what today's saint, Juan Diego, was going through when he encountered Our Lady of Guadalupe? First of all, she looked nothing like the pictures of the Blessed Virgin he was used to. She wasn't a blue-eyed, white European. She was brown-skinned with dark hair and dark eyes. She wasn't wearing a blue veil either. And she didn't even speak to him in Spanish, but in Nahuatl, the ancient language of his ancestral Aztec. Was she for real? When the image of the Virgin appeared on his cloak, he knew she was. Celebrate Our Lady of Guadalupe, who acts as a reflection for all the faithful.

MEMORIAL OF JUAN DIEGO CUAUHTLATZIN, VISIONARY

TODAY'S READINGS: Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Matthew 9:35—10:1, 5a, 6-8 (180). *"As you go, make this proclamation: 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"*

Invest just five minutes a day, and your faith will deepen and grow—a day at a time



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