

SUNDAY MASS

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 61:1-2,10-11.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM: Luke 1:46-54.

RESPONSE:

My soul shall exult in my God.

1. My soul magnifies the Lord,
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
for he has regarded the low estate of his
handmaiden.
For behold, henceforth all generations will call
me blessed. *R*
2. For he who is mighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on those who fear him
from generation to generation. *R*
3. He has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away,
He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy. *R*

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

Alleluia, alleluia! The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has sent me to preach good news to the poor. Alleluia.

GOSPEL: John 1:6-8,19-28.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON:

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear. Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

THE WEEK AHEAD

Live the Word

Mon 18 Dec Liturgy of the Day

Jeremiah 23:5-8; Psalm 72; Matthew 1:18-24

During Advent we are called to widen our hearts, and to deepen our hope and trust. God's light shines brightly in the dark. Love is a stronger force than danger. Reflect on this, allowing it to shape your behaviour.

Tue 19 Dec Liturgy of the Day

Judges 13:2-7,24-25; Psalm 71; Luke 1:5-25

Would you have believed the Archangel Gabriel if you were Zechariah? Or would you have doubted? Reflect, today, upon how well you listen to all that God is saying to you.

Wed 20 Dec Liturgy of the Day

Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 24; Luke 1:26-38

Mary knew God's voice, and she knew that the archangel was speaking to her a message from on high. As a result, she listened, accepted, believed and consented. How well do we know God's voice?

Thu 21 Dec (St Peter Canisius, PrD)

Song of Songs 2:8-14; Psalm 33; Luke 1:39-45

"We don't need to think of ourselves as better or worse than each other. I am who I am as the image of God and that levels the playing field." – Fr Richard Rohr OFM

Fri 22 Dec Liturgy of the Day

1 Samuel 1:24-28; 1 Samuel 2:1,4-8; Luke 1:46-56

We often wait to be 'inspired' by God before we give God thanks and praise. We wait until God touches us, fills us with a joyful experience, answers our prayer and then we respond with gratitude. But why wait?

Sat 23 Dec (St John of Kanty, Pr)

Malachi 3:1-4; 4:5-6; Psalm 25; Luke 1:57-66

Compassion flourishes when we have nothing to protect and everything to share. It is the gravity of all living beings that binds together all that is weak and limited into a single ocean of love. – Ilia Delio

Sun 24 Dec 4TH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-12,14,16; Psalm 89; Luke 1:26-38

In mature religion, the secular becomes sacred. There are no longer two worlds. There is no 'natural' world where God is not. "Nothing here below is profane for those who know how to see." – Teilhard de Chardin.

(KEY: SOLEMNITY: FEAST; Memorial; (Optional Memorial)
Pr=Priest; D=Doctor

Catholic Link

QUALITIES OF HOPE

Hearing Openness Prayer Expectation

3rd Sunday in Advent • Year B
Divine Office: Week III • 17 December 2023

Prayer

History says, don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up
And hope and history rhyme.

These lines from Seamus Heaney's poem, "The Cure at Troy", have been used to help people read, in hope, "once in a lifetime" events as varied as the fall of the Berlin Wall, the outbreak of peace in Northern Ireland and the transition to democracy in South Africa.

Heaney's poem can also illuminate aspects of Advent which focusses on the triple coming of the Lord. It commemorates the first coming of the Christ from the perspective of celebrating the historical birth of Jesus. Looking back to that mystery the Church is full of gratitude for the presence of God with us in Jesus. Even though the child of Bethlehem is destined to be crucified, he will always be "hope incarnate".

Advent also moves from gratitude for the past to the grace of the present. The presence of the Risen Jesus among us and his coming into our lives is a celebration of divine and human love, a great cause of our hope.

Both past and present comings of Jesus prepare us for the final and definitive coming of Christ in glory at the end of the ages. Before that conclusive event (which the Church calls the *Parousia*), each of us completes our own journey into God through the door of death.

Note the three aspects of human response to the triple coming of the Lord: gratitude, grace and glory.

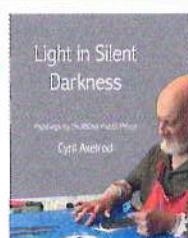
While the Church's liturgical year begins with Advent, each of us is called personally to experience our own inner Advent. Although Heaney's poem tells us not to hope "this side of the grave", and our contemporary troubled world rarely holds out much hope, as Christians we cannot but hope and prepare for the fullness of the Kingdom in the various comings of Christ.

Our world has prophets of doom in abundance. There is a "ministry of fear" constantly gnawing at us. But the Church's celebration of Advent lifts our gaze to the other side of the grave, to the horizon of Resurrection life. We could say that "hope and history rhyme" and meet in the rich traditions of Advent: our Advent wreaths, our Jesse trees, our Advent hymns, and the beautiful Advent readings and liturgies, all harmonize with the Good News of God coming to us in Jesus.

Advent hope is filled with prayer in gratitude, grace, and glory against the horizon of Resurrection. This Sunday, known as *Gaudete* (Rejoice) Sunday, introduces another quality to our Advent prayer: joy! "Rejoice always, pray constantly", St Paul writes to the Thessalonians. Christian joy is deeper than mere glee or gaiety. It is a harmony and peace poured out on those who pray and anticipate in their lives the glory of God manifested in him who comes in the name of the Lord.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear:
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.*

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL



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