

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer of a Hope-filled Person ~

O Lord,
I ask for your help.
Help me to do more than pray,
Help me to be a person of integrity
Whose word is my bond.

Help me to be a person of fraternity —
To make friends,
Not enemies.

Keep me from being the maker of strife,
The spoiler of conversation,
The bringer of discord.

O Lord,
I am far from perfect,
But I still have hope
That you will rejoice over me in gladness
And renew me in your love.

Father,
I have learned
to rejoice in you.
Allow me to never grow weary in my work —
but even to be glad
that you call me to labor
in the vineyard of the world.

May I always be a person of glad spirit,
touching the pain of the world
with your loving embrace.
Amen.

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

The Campus Ministry Office is located in **Our Lady Chapel**.
phone: [440] 473-3560 [office] or 216-570-9276 [cell].
e-mail: blazekj@gilmour.org

Our Lady Chapel



Our Lady Chapel is a Roman Catholic community founded in the love of the Father, centered in Christ, and rooted in the Holy Cross tenets of building family and embracing diversity. We are united in our journey of faith through prayer and sacrament, and we seek growth through the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in liturgy and outreach, while responding to the needs of humanity.

WELCOME ADVENT:

However you slice the word “troubled and abandoned,” “harassed and helpless,” or “weakened and cast down” — it is clear that the crowds milling about Jesus like lost sheep need direction and healing [see Matthew 10:1-8]. And so are we. Of course, Jesus is the ultimate good shepherd who leads his flock to a place of safety. But in Matthew’s Gospel, he makes it clear to his disciples, and to us, that his is not a one-person rescue operation. Indeed, as he notes, there seems to be a chronic labor shortage when it comes to doing good in the world. These days in particular, as we grapple with a fractious society, frightening levels of violence, an unpredictable climate, increasing political uncertainty, and a murky economic outlook, — all of us qualify as harassed and helpless.

And yet each of us can do something to help with the harvest. We can volunteer for the food pantry or the clothing bank. We can offer to pick up groceries for a homebound older person, or take the time to stop by and visit with someone who may be lonely. We can simply refrain from engaging in divisive political discussions with family members or friends. And we can — we must — continue to pray steadily and earnestly that God’s transforming power will heal the world’s many grievous ills.

As we stretch out our souls in prayer during these days of preparation, let us strive to be, as British mystic Evelyn Underhill put it: “the assistants of that Good Shepherd who gives His life for the sheep.” If we can bring all of the gestures and small daily works we pursue into harmony with the will of God, we will be doing our part in the seeds of Advent and the coming of Christ by bearing witness to the Love that created and sustains us.

—taken from the writings of Betsy Cahill which appear on the internet.

**ADVENT PENANCE SERVICE:**

On **Monday, December 18th at 7:00 PM**, we will celebrate our **Advent Communal Penance Service**. This service will consist of scriptural reflections by those involved in the Christmas Story. There will also be songs and hymns, and a time to straighten the paths of our lives to ease the arrival of our God. Each of us needs to truly hear in our heart the message of John the Baptist: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand” [see Mark 1:15]. The service will last about 45 minutes. There will be an opportunity for individual reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation following the service. Please join

**ADVENT DEVOTIONS:**

On the table in the narthex of the Chapel are several Advent devotionals to assist you in your spiritual journey during this season of Advent. We hope that you will make use of them for you and your family. [1] **The Little Blue Book** with daily readings and devotions. This book corresponds to “The Little Black Book” that is so popular during Lent. [2] The daily scripture devotion, **The Word Among Us**, is available. It lists the scripture passage for the day along with a short reflection on one of the passages.

**CHRISTMAS FLOWERS AND DECORATIONS:**

Again this year we will accept memorial donations to help defray the cost of flowers and decorations which we use in our chapel for the Christmas season. If you are interested in making a donation **in memory of loved ones**, please put the names of the loved ones along with your donation in an envelope, mark it “Christmas Flowers,” and either give it to Father John or drop it in the offering basket on the pillars as you the center doors of the chapel. We will publish the names of the loved ones in the Bulletin as a memorial.

**PRAYER REQUESTS:**

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS:

- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- For a couple experiencing difficulty in becoming pregnant
- For the victims of the earthquake in Nepal
- For an end to violence as a means to resolve differences.
- For an end to sexual abuse and lack of respect for human persons.
- For a greater respect for human life, from the moment of conception until natural death.
- For all caregivers.
- For all service men and women serving our country, and for their families.
- For a greater awareness of our call to create a more humane and just society.

THE WAITING SEASON:

Advent is one of the most difficult periods of the church’s liturgical cycle and all of the life-questions that the Scriptures bring. Why? Because Advent is all about waiting. And waiting is not easy. As life goes on, the liturgical cycles seem to become more and more meaningful to us. Perhaps after you’ve done enough living you come to understand that every life waits, suffers, comes to new life and rejoices in the ordinary. Advent is especially meaningful because it teaches me to wait without complacency, and to wait without compliance.



There is so much to wait for now in life — human development, love, peace in the church and in the world. And most of us do not wait well for what we want, or what we are meant to be. We get impatient, or we get depressed. We question, or we doubt. We argue, or we get alienated.

And now, we all wait, not for the coming of Christ — God took care of that — but for the coming of the Gospel, which we are delaying in the name of God.

The key to the contradictions must be in the waiting. The question is: what is there about the waiting that is redemptive? The chosen people taught us how to wait and why. They waited for years and decades and centuries through captivity and the destruction of the temple and the Roman occupation. And they never gave up.

Now women must wait through the captivity of their full humanity by the church. Now nations must wait through the mad planning for the destruction of the planet by governments sick with power and paranoid with fear. Now the poor and uneducated and middle-class unemployed must wait, through occupation by the militaristic mind-set, for the return of social programs and high ideals for all.

But while we wait we can learn and grow and become stronger than ever in our convictions. We can be conscientious and creative. And no matter who wants to suppress us or to silence us, we can be signs of hope that never, never go away until, someday, the star finally shines.

.. —taken from the writings of Sister Joan Chittister, O.S.B., which appear on the internet

NOVENA TO BLESSED BASILE MOREAU:

Blessed Basile Moreau was the founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross, to which Fr. John and the Brothers at Gilmour belong. We have two booklets with Novenas to Blessed Basile Moreau. One is used for a personal intention or healing; the other is used when praying for the intention or healing of someone other than yourself. The Novenas were composed by Father Thomas Looney, C.S.C. Many have received blessings and healings through the intercession of Blessed Basile Moreau, and now we want to extend this invitation to you and your family .



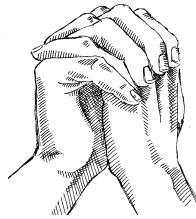
Please see Father John and he will be glad to give you the booklets.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

Jesus calls us to pray for one another. Please keep all these people in your prayers.

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For Father Larry Jerge, C.S.C., who is under the care of Hospice.
- For Loretta Seidl, sister of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is undergoing medical treatment.
- For Elizabeth Toth, daughter of Jeffrey Toth ['84], nephew of James ['86] and Jennifer ['94] Toth, and cousin of Tim ['24] and Kate ['27] Papczun, who is undergoing treatment for a serious health issue.
- For John Zippay, family friend of Bernadette and Stephen Ritley, who is critically ill.
- For Elizabeth Benson, grandmother of Izzy DiPuccio ['25] who is recovering from a serious illness
- For Sister Mary Ann Lavelle, C.S.J., sister of Brother Robert Lavelle, C.S.C., who is in hospice care.
- For Jill Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for mental health issues.
- For Patty Szanislo, Chapel Office Associate, who is recovering from hip replacement surgery.
- For Nora Beach, wife of former Gilmour Religion Instructor, Bob Beach, mother of Hannah ['98] and Miriam ['99] Beach, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Jennifer Burger ['06], sister of Rachel ['10] and Paul ['16] Burger, who is undergoing treatment for rare form of breast cancer.
- For Maria Ruiz, mother of Elina Gurney, grandmother of Joseph and Christina Gurney, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Chuck Shade, father of Loren Shade, grandfather of Michael, Madeline, and Charles Shade, who is in seriously ill with several health issues.
- For Chuck Campanella, father of Anthony Campanella, who continues in rehab following serious surgery.
- For Judy Collins, aunt of Chief Academic Officer, Elizabeth Edmondson, great-aunt of Mollie ['21] and Abbie ['23] Edmondson, who is undergoing treatment for brain cancer.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian ['09], Rosa ['12] and Edwin ['17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For John Roddy, brother of Tim Roddy ['87], and brother of Gilmour Marketing associate, Mary Roddy Stretar, uncle of Katie Stretar ['29], and cousin of Daniel ['83], Mike ['85], and Matt ['86] Roddy, who is undergoing treatment for a recurrence of cancer.
- For James Farmer, father of DEI director, JaiCynthia Farmer, who is recovering from a serious heart-related issue.
- For Robert O'Neill, grandfather of Bobby O'Neill ['33], who is undergoing treatment for bladder cancer.
- For Brother Robert Dierker, C.S.C., who is undergoing treatment for a serious infection.
- For Debbie Marcum, former assistant in the Lower School, who is recovering from a severe heart attack.

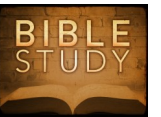


PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:

- For Marianne Culbertson, mother of William Culbertson ['85].
- For Joyce Evans, grandmother of Olivia ['16] and Fredericka ['18] Evans
- For George Bates ['56], brother of Frank Bates ['67], and father of Robert Bates ['93]
- For Joseph Mazanetz.
- For Skylar Schrams ['14], cousin of Natalie Kalfas ['12].
- For Mercedes Hronek
- For Hatti Spagnolo, mother of Dennis Spagnolo ['84]

NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 13th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, December 13th at 6:30 PM. Bible Study continues to meet bi-weekly. The Bible Study is open to everyone — all middle and high school students, college students, young adults, and all adults. We will all come together to be enriched by God's word. It's a great time, and a good witness of our faith to others. If you can't come at 6:30, come when you can. Gather your favorite snack and/or drink, but be prepared to be nourished on God's word.



Our topic: What is Hanukkah?

We also need your help — we need future topics. **So, if you have a topic that you would like us to discuss, please let Father John know.** Mark your calendars and be part of this wonderful activity that will deepen your spiritual journey. **We will meet every other week — topic to be decided at the end of the previous meeting.** Join us. You'll have a blast, and celebrate your faith along the way..

SCHEDULE FOR THE WEEK:

Sunday, December 10: 2 nd Week in Advent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream
Monday, December 11:	NO MASS
Tuesday, December 12: Our Lady of Guadalupe	8:00 AM; 9:45 AM; 12 noon; 2:00 PM
Wednesday, December 13: St. Lucy	8:00 AM; 9:45 AM; 12 noon; 2:00 PM
Thursday, December 14: St. John of the Cross	NO MASS
Friday, December 15:	NO MASS
Saturday, December 16: 3 rd Week in Advent	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, December 17: 3 rd Week in Advent	10:00 AM In Person & Live Stream

2024 CALENDARS:

Calendars for the year 2024 are available for your taking. Besides having space for you to write your family appointments, the calendar also contains information about Mass and Reconciliation times here at Our Lady Chapel. We wish to thank the Schulte-Mahon-Murphy Funeral Homes for their generous donation of these 2022 Calendars to us. Please feel free to take as many calendars as you would like. Thank you.



FAITH EDUCATION:

Our Faith Education classes have begun. Our Faith Education classes meet on **Sundays from 8:45—9:45 AM.** Please join us as we come together to begin our faith journey for this year by entering into prayer and worship together. If you have any questions, please contact Patty in the Chapel Office [[440-473-3560]. **Upcoming class dates: January 7-21-28.** Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility.



OLC “ADOPT A FAMILY” PROGRAM:

For many years, Our Lady Chapel community has worked with St. Adalbert Parish in adopting families to help them celebrate the Christmas Season. St. Adalbert identifies families — most often single parent, below poverty level families; we are given the grade levels of the children & other family information, so that you can purchase gifts appropriate to each member. In addition, if possible, we ask that you also provide a Christmas meal for the family [non-perishable items in a food basket, and/or Gift Cards for Giant Eagle, Aldi’s or Family Dollar.] Families are matched according to family size, ages, etc. **This year, our community adopted 22 families.** Special thanks to all who participated. **Remember, gifts are due to us this Sunday, December 10. Please call Father John in the chapel office [440-473-3560] you have any questions.**

**THE GIVING TREE:**

Our Lady of Fatima Community Center, the West Side Catholic Center and several Senior Health Care Agencies are in great need of items for their clients. Fatima Center needs hats, gloves, socks, underwear, sweaters, sweat shirts, hoodies, infant needs, books, toys and games for children, ages Newborn to 16 years. Senior Health Care facilities need fleece throws, footie socks, as well as hats & gloves. **We have posted a list of needed items next to our giving tree. Select what you would like to give and bring it UNWRAPPED and put it under the tree with a label showing the item needed.** These items would then be gathered and delivered to the various agencies. **Our goal would be to have all items assembled by December 17th, for pickup by the various agencies. Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org] if you and your family would like to participate in this program, or if you have any questions.**

**REFLECTION FOR THE WEEK:**

Advent has only three full weeks this year. Christmas Eve is on a Sunday — this means that the fourth week is only a short few hours. So as we say: “Better get with the program.” We wish sincerely that we could be better, but the reality is that we have less time this year to shape up, repent, respond, re-up, re-everything!

When there is messiness around us, it is hard to know just where to begin the cleaning. Beginnings are not easy all the time. Sometimes it’s downright hard to know how to begin a speech or an important paper, how to begin a conversation with the passenger seated next to you on a plane or a bus, how to begin preparing for Christmas — all are such human struggles.

Advent is about new beginnings — the beginning of the liturgical year, and the beginning of our learning about this person, Jesus. This past Friday, we celebrated the Feast of Mary’s Immaculate Conception; it is the dramatic and unusual continuation of the divine beginning. Grace is always taking new places within us, and so our little lives are seemingly always beginning. We had Advent last year, and the year before — and here we are beginning again! Did it do any good?

This week we begin by allowing grace into our mess — into the wonderings of how to enter into the always-conversation which God began by being seated next to us on this flight of life. We have to make room — and it is not easy. God desires gracefully to sit right down in the mess and bless us by our getting to know the Word of God spoken once and for all. And so, we are called to pause at our most messiness-time, and to listen and respond.

The Book of the Prophet, Isaiah, can be divided into several sections. Chapter 40 begins “The Book of Consolation.” Israel has been exiled in Babylon for a long time because of their sin. But God has not forgotten them. The words of Isaiah are a preparation to be ready for the return trip home.

At the heart of Isaiah’s message is the “tenderness” and “compassion” of God toward his people —

THE LIVING WORD OF GOD:

The first words of the Prophet Isaiah are some of God’s most exciting biblical words — “Comfort, give comfort to my people says your God” [Isaiah 40:1-11]. Our faith has never been the same since the ministry of this unnamed prophet. Isaiah introduces a whole new way of looking at God working in our lives — a perspective on God that can only have arisen during the darkest days of the Babylonian Exile. A new situation demands new insights. Fortunately, the prophet was up to the challenge.

Not only does Isaiah announce an end to the 50-year exile, but the reason he gives for knowing it’s finally over is the key to all his oracles — “The mouth of the Lord has spoken.” When any Israelite demands to know how he’s certain they are going home, he/she simply responds: “The Lord has given his word.”

Though the Chosen People had known about God’s word long before the Babylonian Exile, this particular prophet puts that word at the center of their faith — once God speaks, it happens.

This emphasis on the power of God’s word deeply affected later biblical authors. Scholars, for instance, are convinced the Priestly author of Genesis had a copy of Isaiah in front of him when writing his unique creation myth [see Genesis 1]. Unlike the Yahwistic tradition of Genesis 2, God doesn’t get down on God’s hands and knees and form the human person from the mud; God creates only by saying: “Let there be!” Quickly followed by: “And so there was!” God doesn’t even break a sweat.

Without God’s word, there’s no creation.

Even the last writer of the Christian Scriptures — the unknown author of Peter’s Second Letter — falls back on that word. One of the few still holding out hope for Jesus’ Second Coming in the first years of the second century, the author assures his readers that “according to his [Jesus’] promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” [2 Peter 3:8-14]. If God has said it, it’s got to happen, no matter when it’s going to take place.

But almost 100 years earlier, John the Baptizer, as a member of the Dead Sea Scrolls community, fell back on a “repunctuated” version of Isaiah as assurance that God was soon to break into the Chosen People’s history — “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths” [Mark 1:1-8].

Though we Christians believe John is speaking about Jesus of Nazareth, scholars tell us he has no inkling this simple Capernaum carpenter is actually the divine person he’s looking for. After all, Jesus is one of his own disciples! How could someone so common actually be so special? These same scholars are convinced the “put-downs” John says about himself in reference to Jesus were put into his mouth by Christians dealing with the fact that, in the beginning, John was actually better known and more highly regarded than Jesus. Followers of Jesus are the ones who believe that “One mightier than I is coming after me” — not the Baptizer.

In some sense, the historical John’s misplaced belief in God’s word is simply an example of limiting that word to just the circumstances with which we’re familiar and comfortable. The late Marshal McLuhan often encouraged us to go through life looking out the car’s front window instead of constantly glancing in its rearview mirror. It’s easier to encounter what’s already been instead of what’s going to be.

Even if we follow God’s word, we must always appreciate it’s a constantly evolving, constantly new word. Change is an essential part of God’s nature. No matter how we’ve understood that word in the past, we’re now expected to deal with it in the present and the future.

Perhaps John the Baptist can demonstrate how best to accomplish that.

—taken from the writings of Father Roger Karban, which appear on the internet



way: “Conduct yourselves in holiness and devotion, hastening the coming of the day of our God” [2 Peter 3:8-14].

The Second Week in Advent calls us into the sort of waiting that actually hastens the fulfillment of God’s reign among us. Like Mary — the Christian Scriptures’ counterpart of Abraham who forged into the unknown at God’s invitation — we are invited to believe so strongly in God’s future that we will not hesitate to risk what it takes for it to come about. Our daily prayer is simple and straightforward: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” Will those words direct our lives or simply be rote phrases to which we can say “Amen” without feeling their power? —taken from the writings of Sister Mary M. McGlone, C.S.J., which appears on the internet

PREPARING FOR AN ARRIVAL:

Before I entered the monastery, I enjoyed hosting dinner parties at my house. I enjoyed planning the entire evening — from choosing the dinner and dessert menu, to selecting a good bottle of wine, to shopping, cooking and cleaning, and setting the table. I would prepare topics for conversation, and even readied a board game if the mood felt right! By late afternoon, I had freshened up, and the last minute food prep was underway. As the appointed time drew nearer, I put the flowers in the vase, lit the pine-scented candles, and vacuumed the rug one last time! I would feel a nervous excitement. Then “ding dong” went the doorbell, and the party was on!

The Advent season takes on this same anticipatory sense. We hear familiar plans mentioned in the scripture readings for this 2nd Week in Advent. Mark’s Gospel has, perhaps, the most familiar one — “Prepare the way of the Lord” [Mark 1:1-8]. But for so many of us, we forget what preparations John the Baptist is talking about. Why is that? While there are probably many mitigating factors, perhaps the result is the same — we’ve forgotten Whose anticipated arrival is the cause of all the merriment. Online sales and extended shopping mall hours, family decorating traditions, attending holiday parties, driving around town at night seeing houses elaborately lit up with various light arrangements, pictures with Santa Claus, and coordinated family outfits — none of these are bad, and to an extent they do help us to prepare, but for whom?

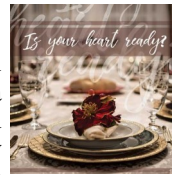
This second week in Advent tells us about a “voice that cries out” [see Isaiah 40:1-11]. Do we recognize it? Are we listening for a voice in the first place? How can we hear the herald’s cry of “good news” if we are too consumed with holiday-ness?

For some, the “good news” might arrive when the holiday schedule is over! We’ve done the gift exchanges; we’ve had the awkward conversation with relatives we haven’t seen in five years. We’ve baked and cooked, driven and eaten. We’ve caroled and opened presents, and even went to the midnight opening of that movie. But after-holidays relief is not quite the “good news” that the readings are describing. Advent has a strong emphasis on waiting, on preparing, on “making straight”, on “preparing the way” for Someone’s arrival.

What is there to prepare for the Lord but the wasteland and valleys of our hearts! Would that it be that our hearts are prepared akin to a sumptuous dinner party. Just as we would try our best that the dishes and tableware are washed, the drink ware without spots, a clean table cloth and dinner napkins set out, the menu prepared in advance so we can be attentive to our guests, so too a similar attention to the details of our interior preparations — our heart — would make for a warm and hospitable welcome for our Divine Guest. Would that we could make a conscious effort this Advent to remember who it is that we are eagerly awaiting and why we hope he’d come.

“Make your list” and “check it twice.” Your guest is less concerned if you’ve been naughty or nice, and more concerned with granting us the long hoped-for salvation [see Psalm 85]. This is the comfort to whatever consumes our attention in life. Yes, the holidays can be about gift-giving and memory-making, but the season’s deeper richness is found in the gift — the Person — that we receive into our heart. For some it maybe the first time; for others, the 1000th time this season. This is the guest who’d prefer an extended visit with you than a graceful exit from you.

16 —taken from the writings of Brother John Marmion Villa, which appear on the internet



their time of punishment is soon to be over. This experience will be for them a “new exodus”. They will be forgiven as God passes beyond the remembering of their guilt and shame. God will be their intercessor; mountains will be leveled and valleys will be filled-in. They are to be readied to go beyond what they fear from God and beyond what they remember of their pasts [Isaiah 40:1-11]. This quieting message presents God as the shepherd who will lead the flock back carrying them in his arms.

This is a prophecy of hope. They hear it all as the word of God, but as they listen, they are still in bondage — nothing has changed, except that this is all from God Whom they failed to trust in their past. They are beginning to learn all over again, beginning with the Great Exodus by which they entered their identity as God’s people. They hope it is all going to come true and as long as the prophet sings his songs, they will grow in trust until they return, and they do.

In Arthur Miller’s play, *The Death of a Salesman*, the title gives a hint to the audience that Willy Lowman, the salesman, is going to die. During the action we understand that maybe the death is not physical, but of Willy’s salesmanship. Only near the end of the play do we find out exactly what “death” means. This is the story of Advent.

In the opening lines of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is not even present [Mark 1:1-8]. The play-goer might ask: “What is this play actually all about?” The answer comes in Mark’s first words — this whole Gospel is about Jesus the Christ, our Messiah, who is the Son of God. It is as if Mark comes out on the stage and clarifies and highlights that Jesus is the main character and He is the Son of God and if you watch the whole play [read the Gospel] you will come to the knowledge and acceptance of these beliefs.

We are beginning then in these early days of the new liturgical year to be open to the on-coming of Jesus. We can hear the words as addressed to us that we should “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight His paths.” We know these words; we have heard them before in the prophet Isaiah. Here’s the reversal. We can think that Advent is the time for us to shape up, straighten up, and get rid of our ways to make a place for Jesus. That is very nice, but not exactly what is meant. The prophet Isaiah images God as predicting that God will do this for the people. God will straighten and level the way for the people’s return.

We can picture John the Baptist’s shouting at the people that they should clean up their acts. This does not sound anything like “Speak tenderly” from the prophet. The people have come for cleansing according to their Jewish tradition. John calls to them about something new. We know, because Mark has told us, exactly what’s so new. The New is the awaited-for Messiah and He will cleanse and baptize not with water, but with a gift, the Holy Spirit who will tenderly, gently, straighten and level. The “gospel” is the “Good News” that the Son of God and the Holy Spirit of God has embraced our human condition. We do not, all by ourselves, have to clean up our acts so that God will free us and tenderly bring us back.

Advent is not the waiting for Christmas, nor the celebration of Christ’s birth in Bethlehem; it is the time we give to letting Jesus come closer and closer to us — a time to get ourselves straightened up for the journey ahead. The closer we allow His birth in us, the straighter and smoother our ways become. It is all very good news.

—Edited from the writings of Father Larry Gillick, S.J., which appear on the internet

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION:

Father John is available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation with you. Please call him [440-473-3560] to arrange for this experience. All social distancing will remain in place. Always remember the Lord’s invitation: “I will give them a heart with which to understand that I am the Lord. They shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart” [Jeremiah 24:7].



THE WILDERNESS OF ADVENT:

As we enter the 2nd Week in Advent, we hear the account of the ministry of John the Baptist as given by the Evangelist Mark [1:1-8]. We should pay attention since in the coming liturgical year we are going to work our way gradually through the whole of Mark's Gospel. Mark is much briefer than Matthew, Luke, or John. It misses a lot of material that we find in the other Gospels — for example there is no account of the infancy of Jesus. Mark's Gospel is about what Jesus does and where Jesus goes.

An important word in Mark's Gospel is "immediately" — he tells us how Jesus does something and then "immediately" does something else, or quickly moves on to another place. By this we get a strong feeling of movement and progress in Jesus' ministry from the Gospel of Mark.

And in Mark, too, there is a much stronger emphasis on the conflicts that Jesus has with the authorities. This is evident even in the beginning of Mark's Gospel as we hear about John the Baptist. He is everything the Priests, Scribes and Pharisees are not. They are in the Temple; John is in the wilderness. They live luxurious lives; John lives a primitive life. They are unpopular; John is immensely popular. They are proud; John is humble. John proclaims the immanent coming of the Messiah; they do everything they can to obscure his coming. And the more you look the more you will see further contrasts between them.

It is very important that John proclaims the Advent of the Messiah in the wilderness. The desert for Mark is a symbol of the religious situation of Israel. Israel was formerly a people with great faith and trust in God who had led them into the Promised Land. But now the religious authorities were content with a comfortable, outwardly-conforming sort of religion; and they see no room or even reason for change.

John attracts the common people into the wilderness to hear his message of repentance so that they are purified and spiritually ready for the coming of the Messiah. They perceive John to be a genuine prophet, and are convinced by his message. That John proclaims his message in the hardship of the wilderness gives his message an added air of authenticity.

Advent itself is designed by the Church to be a sort of liturgical wilderness to prepare for the celebration of the Birth of Christ. During Advent everything in the liturgy is more somber and stripped of adornment. It is designed to be a quiet time of reflection and repentance. In particular we are asked to pay renewed attention to prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Our difficulty today is that Advent is completely overlooked by society at large. Even in financially straightened times Advent is swept aside in favor of a frenzied consumerist preparation for Christmas. Black Fridays and Cyber Mondays are given far more attention in the media than is ever given to Advent. Advent Calendars used to be a wholly Christian tradition, but now they have been hijacked by chocolate manufacturers.

This is the reason I suggest that in a house with children, it is good to set up a Jesse Tree. Just put a branch in a pot and decorate it either with figures from the Old Testament or with religious symbols. A Jesse Tree will help to prepare the family for Advent because the parents find themselves having to explain just who Moses, or Noah or Elijah actually were. We should do what we can to create some space in our lives and in our homes so that we can keep Advent in a proper way. But I fully appreciate that this is a lot easier said than done.

John the Baptist never attempted to draw people to himself — his first and foremost concern was to point people in the direction of God and to warn them to prepare themselves for the imminent coming of the Messiah. This is our task too — not to proclaim how wonderful and worthy we are, but to point people to Christ and to tell them about his goodness and how true salvation is to be found in him. Like John we are road-menders — it is our task to open up paths along which Christ can travel.



"People are always in a hurry; God is never in a hurry." "Every tear brings the messiah closer!" "It is with much groaning of the flesh that the life of the spirit is brought forth."

Carlo Carretto — one of the great spiritual writers of recent times — spent many years alone — a hermit in the Sahara desert. During these long, quiet years, he tried to hear what God was saying to us. In one of his books, written from this desert solitude, he suggests that perhaps the most important thing that God is trying to tell us today — especially in Western culture — is this: Be patient! Learn to wait — for everything — each other, love, happiness, God. The message of the great Advent figures — Mary, John the Baptist, Isaiah — is the same.

—taken from the writings Father Ronald Rolheiser, O.M.I., which appear on the internet.

GOD'S PROMISED FUTURE:

When I lived in Peru, I knew a holy woman who always led the town in the traditional novena that prepared them for their big feast. She had a wonderful voice, and she projected it so that a large crowd could hear her read those prayers at something close to the speed of sound. Everyone came in with a great "Amen" at all the appropriate places.

For us sisters whose first language was English, understanding her recitations was quite a challenge. Eventually, we realized that something seemed off — the prayers didn't make sense; we were calling on God to do some ungodly things.

When she sat down to explain the rituals to us, she realized that there were a couple of pages missing in her prayer book — she was skipping over very important parts that would have made sense of what came later. We enjoyed the irony that it took people who spoke poor Spanish to figure that out!

As we enter upon this Second Week of Advent, we hear some of Isaiah's most famous lines: "Prepare the way of the Lord! The glory of the Lord shall be revealed. All people shall see it together" [Isaiah 40:1-11]. Handel has taught us a magnificent way to sing about this and there are easier versions in which we can lift our voices with the same message, but what does it mean? Is it just a nice song, or is it supposed to indicate something important in our lives?

The beginning of Mark's Gospel offers us a perspective on preparing the way of the Lord. Mark tells us that John the Baptist proclaimed a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin" [Mark 1:1-8]. Believe it or not, John and his message of conversion were immensely popular! Great joy doesn't sound exactly like the emotion brought forth by a call to "repentance" and acknowledgement of sin. What's going on?

John's call to "repentance" wasn't an invitation to penance. He was inviting people to see everything in life from a new perspective. Instead of concentrating on the past, on what they had done wrong or lost, John, like Isaiah, invited people to focus on God's promised future — a future he told them was about to dawn.

What would that future be like? Not even John could really envision it — he sent disciples to ask Jesus if he was the "one to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus didn't fit the typical expectations for messiahs. To understand him, people had to return to Isaiah and ask about the servant he described.

Isaiah wrote to people who imagined their lives as a desert wasteland. Life was dry, and arduous the road that led to unscalable mountains. Isaiah invited people under this depressing spell to listen to glad tidings, to discern the presence of God's alluring love among them. It was not that mountains and valleys would actually disappear from their way, but the energy of divine grace would open their eyes to a future that would come into reality with each step they took toward it.

The repentance of which John and Jesus spoke did not look backward. It was a vision of an unimaginable different future so attractive that nobody need remain stuck or freeze another in their former ways. The "strong arm" of the Lord is not coercive; the rule of God is a hand up to those who desire the grace to move forward into the type of future for which we were created.

Today, between two major feasts of the Virgin Mary — The Immaculate Conception and Our Lady of Guadalupe — we can look to her for inspiration. Her prayer — "Let it happen through me according to your word" [see Luke 1] — came not so much from a vision, but from trust that God had more in mind for her than she could imagine. Elizabeth proclaimed that in one simple phrase that could be translated as "Blessed are you who believed that God's promise would be fulfilled" [also Luke 1]. The Second Letter of St. Peter says it this

ADVENT — CREATING A SPACE OF CHASTITY:

In one of her early books, Annie Dillard shares how she once learned a lesson — the hard way — about the importance of waiting. She had been watching a butterfly slowly emerge from its cocoon. The oh-so-slow process of transformation was fascinating, but, at a point, she grew impatient. She took a candle and heated the cocoon — though only slightly — in order to speed up things. It worked. The butterfly emerged a bit more quickly, but, because the process had been unnaturally rushed, it was born with wings that were not properly formed and it was not able to fly.

The lesson wasn't lost on Dillard. She understood immediately what was wrong — a certain chastity had been violated. She had short-circuited Advent. How so?

One of the motifs we celebrate in Advent is the idea that the Messiah must be born of a virgin. Why? Is sexuality somehow dirty? Is it beneath Jesus to be conceived and born in the normal way? Sometimes those, false, understandings have been put forth. The real reason however for connecting Advent and virginity is quite different. First, it underscores that Jesus, being the incarnate son of God, does not have a human father. Second, and key in terms of the spirituality of Advent, is the idea that the Messiah could only come forth from a virgin's womb because for something "divine" to be born a proper time of waiting, a proper chastity, must first take place. But why? What has chastity to do with Jesus' birth?

Sex, because it so deeply affects the soul, speaks most loudly about chastity, or lack of it. The answer lies in a proper understanding of chastity. What is it? Chastity is not, first of all, something specific to sex. It's about how we experience all of reality in general. To be chaste is to live in such a way so as to be fully and properly respectful of others, nature, and God. Chastity, properly defined, means living in such a way that our own needs, desires, agendas, and impatience do not get in the way of letting gift be gift, other be other, and God be God. Obviously this depends upon proper respect and proper waiting.

We can learn this by looking at its antithesis. We lack chastity when, for whatever reason — lack of respect, lack of reverence, impatience, selfishness, callousness, immaturity, undisciplined desire, lack of aesthetics — we relate to others, nature, or God in such a way that they cannot be fully who and what they are, according to their own unique rhythms and preciousness. We do this when we short-circuit patience and respect.

If this is true, then it is no accident that, so often, the prime analogate for lack of chastity is seen precisely as irresponsible sex. Sex, because it so deeply affects the soul, speaks most loudly about chastity or lack of it. Sex, like all other experience, is only chaste when it does not short-circuit full respect. But it often does so in a variety of ways. Prematurity, unfair pressure, subtle or crass force, taking without giving, posturing an intimacy that one isn't ready to enter, lack of respect for previous commitments, an unwillingness to include the whole person, disregard for the wider relationships of family and community, failure to respect long-range health and happiness, ignoring proper aesthetics, all of these make for a lack of proper respect within a sexual relationship. In essence, Annie Dillard's metaphor says it all — there's a fault in our chastity when we put a candle to the cocoon to unnaturally pressure the process.

And, as is obvious, the key element in all this is waiting. Chastity is 90% about proper waiting. It's for this reason that one of the rich metaphors of Advent is that of preparing a virgin's womb so that the divine can be born in a proper way. Advent calls us to patience — patience in carrying the frustration that we suffer when we have to wait for what we desire.

In Jewish apocalyptic literature, there are a number of wonderful refrains that try to teach us this. They give us the idea that, before the Messiah can be conceived, gestated, and born, there must first be a proper time of waiting. In short-hand, these aphorisms express the theology and spirituality of Advent —



We cannot bestow God's grace upon a person. We cannot bring about a conversion. We are unable to enkindle the gift of faith in another — let alone in our own lives. Only God can do these things. And while God does not need our help, he invites us to carry out this task — just as Jesus went along with John and submitted himself to Baptism at John's hands. Jesus invites us to cooperate with him in his task of saving the world. He asks us to help him open up paths in other people's lives down which he can travel. We cannot bring anyone to faith — that's something between the Lord and the individual. What we can do, however, is to prepare the ground.

A good example of this is in families. Parents try very hard to bring their children up as believers. But they know that belief is ultimately the free choice of the child. The most they can do is by word and example to show how much they value their own faith. We can guide our children in the ways of faith. We can pray with them and discuss together all kinds of religious issues, but ultimately the choice of whether to turn to the Lord or not is theirs and theirs alone.

Sometimes this might mean that we feel just like John the Baptist — "a voice crying in the wilderness". But we should persevere. Without becoming hectoring or forceful, we should persist in this God-given task of removing the obstacles that often grow up between our children and God.

A simple way of leading our children to faith is to pray with them. A good thing to do is to establish a tradition in the family of saying a formal grace before each meal. After saying "In the name of the Father", invite each child to pray for a particular intention such as the poor or the sick or for a particular need. Then say the traditional "Grace before Meals" prayer together. You will be surprised at the effect this will have on your family if it is kept up over many years.

We know that the road to faith is full of rocks and deep potholes. If we can help those around us by levelling the path for them we will be doing the work of God. Sometimes this might simply mean giving a good example. On other occasions it might be clarifying the teaching of Christ to those who misunderstand it. Or it might mean helping someone to interpret particular events in their lives so that they can more clearly see the hand of God at work. Or it may be that all you can do is pray for those you know who need it.

There are many such ways to be a John the Baptist in our world today — many ways to pave the way for the coming of Christ into the lives of those around us. Advent is a time of waiting and readiness. But there is nothing passive about it. Although it lasts only a month in the Liturgical Calendar it actually lasts a whole lifetime.

—taken from the writings of Father Alex McAllister S.D.S., which appear on the internet

SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — DECEMBER 16th:

Our Savior Lutheran Church, across the street from Gilmour, has a Food Pantry which distributes food to the community on **the third Saturday of each month**. They welcome volunteers. **On Saturday morning at 9 AM, they need help setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. The food pantry is then open from 9:30 AM—1:30 PM on Saturday.**



Our Savior Lutheran's Food Pantry was formed to serve those in emergency situations and/or with on-going need in the cities of Mayfield Heights, Mayfield Village, Highland Heights and Gates Mills. The Food Pantry respects social and cultural diversity and upholds the worth and dignity of those it serves. All those in the area with need will be served equally, as supplies allow. The food pantry is a member of the Greater Cleveland Food Bank.

Please let us know in the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you would like more information or if you would like to help. This is a wonderful way to serve others. Please consider this opportunity.

DON'T LET IT HAPPEN:

The world tries to define you by the mistakes of your past. But history defines you by how you responded, how you learned and improved, how you persevered, and what you accomplished afterwards.

A BANQUET OF LOCUSTS and HONEY:

The host for the celebration of Advent is John the Baptist, and what he is serving us is locusts and honey. These are the two foods that the Gospel associates with John. But before we turn up our nose at his menu, we should realize that these foods are more spiritual than gastronomic. These foods are intimately connected with John's message. Unless we interpret correctly what he ate, we will not be able to understand what he preached.

Why locusts and honey? Let's start with the locusts. Many people don't really know what a locust is — an insect similar to a grasshopper. In the ancient world locusts were a sign of utter destruction, of plague, of complete loss. Locusts would travel in swarms of millions and when they would come to an area or a field they would consume every plant. No green thing was left; no seed was uneaten. Locusts mean destruction. Honey, of course, is the sign of plenty, of abundance — as in the "land of milk and honey." Honey was a strong symbol in the ancient world of the bountiful nature of God's blessings.

These two foods, then, represent the two sides of life: the good times and the bad times, the gains and the losses, the joys and the sorrows. What John is telling us by his diet is that the diet of every person consists in these two foods. In each of our lives we have a certain amount of honey, and no one can get through life without having to swallow a few locusts. The food of John the Baptist describes the lives that we live.

This is how John's food is connected to his message. John the Baptist has one of the clearest messages in the Scriptures. We heard it today in the Gospel, "Prepare the way of the Lord." John's message is that God is coming. God is coming, and that is good news. When is God coming? Here's where the food comes in. God is coming in both the locusts and the honey. This connection makes John's message a real challenge, for it takes faith to believe that God is coming to us in both the good times and the bad.

It is easy to believe that God is coming to us in the honey. When we watch our children play and they are healthy and happy, when we look into the eyes of our spouse and realize that we are loved, when we finish a job and know that it is well done and it has made a difference, when we find common ground and reconciliation with an enemy, in those moments it is easy to believe that God is coming. It is easy to see God present in our blessings.

But dare we believe that God also comes to us in our pain? Can God be with us when we worry about a family member who is struggling with depression or Alzheimer's, when we have to face divorce, when we lose our job, when the doctor tells us we have six months to live? Dare we believe then that God is still coming to us in our lives? Our faith tells us that we must. Our faith does not ask us to pretend that the bad times are somehow good times. It does not ask us to imagine that our curses are actually blessings in disguise. But, it does say that in each and every circumstance we must believe that God is coming and we must prepare God's way.

The great Christian mystic Meister Eckhart is known for one peculiar teaching. It is this. Eckhart says, "Whatever happens to you today is the best possible thing." Now when you first hear this sentence, it sounds like nonsense. Indeed, it is nonsense unless you understand it correctly. It is not telling you that being diagnosed with cancer or losing a child in an automobile accident is the best possible thing for you. That would be scandalous and wrong. But what Meister Eckhart is saying is that whatever happens to you today, God is still coming. No trouble can keep God away. No blessing is too small, no tragedy is too deep, to stop God's arrival. And, if God is coming, that is the best possible thing for you.

This then is the strange and challenging menu for Advent. Such food may be offsetting, but I suggest that we pull up our chairs to the table. If there is honey on your tongue, savor it. Appreciate the sweetness of your relationships, of your successes, of your gifts. Delight in God's blessings. But if you

**EUCCHARISTIC MINISTERS:**

We are currently discerning a new group of Eucharistic Ministers who would undergo training within the next month. If you feel that the Lord is calling you to this ministry, we would be delighted to include you in that ministry here at Our Lady Chapel. Both adults and teens [must be a Senior in High School] are welcome to participate in this very special ministry. We are in need of ministers for both our Saturday evening and Sunday morning Masses. **Contact Father John or the chapel office [440-473-3560] if you feel called to this ministry.** We are always in need of Eucharistic Ministers.

**CAMP GILMOUR IS BACK FOR WINTER CAMP 2023:**

Camp Gilmour is hosting three one-day camps for campers ages 5-12 during winter break. Campers can return to campus and renew old friendships, make new ones and have a great time! Winter Camp has something for everyone! Join us for seasonal games and crafts, swimming, ice skating, field trips and more.

Camp is in session from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. [bring your own lunch] on the following dates: Wednesday, December 27, Thursday, December 28 and Friday, December 29. Each day is a separate camp. **Cost is \$60 per day per camper. Deadline to register is December 11th.** Sign up today for one or all three days at gilmour.org/wintercamp!

**SCHEDULE OF ADVENT/CHRISTMAS SERVICES:**

- **Sunday, December 17** — **Decoration of the Chapel for Christmas** following the 10 AM Mass
- **Monday, December 18** — **Communal Penance Service** at 7:00 PM
- **Sunday, December 24** — **10:00 AM** — Mass for the **4th Week in Advent**
— **4:00 PM** — **Christmas Eve Mass**
- **Monday, December 25** — **Christmas Day Mass** at **10:00 AM**
- **Sunday, December 31** — **10:00 AM** — Mass for the **Feast of the Holy Family.**
— There will be **no vigil Mass on New Year's Eve this year** because New Year's Day is not a Holy Day because it falls on a Monday

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a form [name, address, phone number, children, etc.] indicating this fact, if you have not already done so. Such information not only helps us to know who is attending Our Lady Chapel; it also is of great assistance to us in record keeping [for our friend, the IRS] of any contributions which you may make.

ENVELOPES:

- When you need a **new supply** of envelopes, please feel free to take a supply of them from the table in the vestibule, or call Father John at the Campus Ministry Office [473-3560].
- When you **use** your envelope, please make sure that **your number** is on it. If you need to know your number, please call the Campus Ministry Office. Thanks.

BE GENUINE:

The inner life cannot be improvised, it is not a matter of a moment, of once in a while, of once and for all; the inner life must be prepared by dedicating a little time every day, with constancy, as one does for every important thing.

COMFORT:

“Comfort, comfort my people” [Isaiah 40:1-12]. The prophet is told that the time of misery is coming to an end. Comfort the people. Let them know that God is going to come to free them from their sadness and their pain.

Right now, we need comforting. We are living in very difficult times. Politics has polarized us. People don’t just disagree with each other — they show anger and even hatred towards those who hold a different opinion than they do. Some Republicans shout out that all Democrats are communists. Some Democrats shout out that all Republicans are fascists.

Our Church is also divided between those who want a return to a traditionalist faith where Mass is celebrated in Latin and those who want the Church to continue developing with the times. Deeper than that, there are those who treat the Holy Father as a heretic, and those who treat anyone who questions Rome as being a schismatic. This is very stressful for us all.

Many families have had difficult years with horrible tragedies. Life as they knew it will never return. They need comforting. We all need comforting. That is a great word — comfort. We remember how when we were little our Moms or Dads used to tuck us in for the night. They made sure that we were comfortable so we could sleep peacefully. Comfort is the feeling of peace, of release from stress, of freedom from all that is hurting us.

The prophet, Isaiah, promised comfort to the people. He told them that God was aware of their pain and suffering. They had been held captive by the Babylonians for fifty years. They were totally powerless. They had been led to Babylon with hooks through their noses. They had to serve the pagan kings of Babylon. There was no way that they could be freed. They had no army, no means of rebelling.

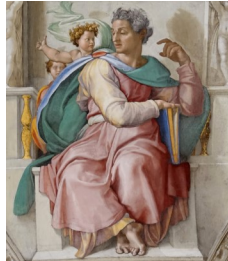
But then, after the prophecy that God is coming to bring comfort to the people, political events resulted in their being freed to return to Judea and Jerusalem. Babylon was conquered by Persia, and the new power released all the captive peoples to return to their homelands. God found a way to bring comfort to his people.

People today are looking for comfort. They may not realize it, but they are looking for God. It is up to us to tell them that Divine Help is near. “Prepare the way of the Lord,” John the Baptist calls out in Mark’s Gospel [Mark 1:1-8]. We are called to tell people that God is in control. He is going to free us from all that is attacking us. We have got to tell people to have faith and trust in God. We are called to let others know that comfort is near.

More than that, we are called to let them know that Jesus — the Divine Comforter — is here. We can do this if our faith is the very center of our lives. We can do this if our lives are motivated by the presence of the Lord within us.

We can proclaim comfort by living our Christianity. The decisions that we make in life, the way that we treat other people, the very way that we approach our day, must reflect the presence of Christ within us. People need us to be men and women of faith. People need our witness to our Christianity. Others are dependent on us. We must prepare them to receive the Lord in their lives. We must bring comfort to God’s people.

—taken from the writings of Monsignor Joseph Pellegrino, which appear on the internet.

**R.C.I.A [Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults]:**

Our RCIA program will begin shortly. If you have been thinking about investigating the Catholic faith, or if you know someone who has been thinking about it; if you have been away from the Catholic Church for a while, or are interested in learning more about the Catholic faith; if you know someone who is not fully initiated [Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation] in their Catholic faith — then consider joining or having them join our RCIA program. **Please contact Father John [440-473-3560] for more information.**



look down and there are locusts on your plate, do not despair. Even when you wake up to another morning with a heart broken because of the loss of someone that you love, even when your family is in shambles, even when you are weakened by sickness, do not despair. God is still coming. No trouble can keep God away.

The voice of John the Baptist continues to call out: “Prepare the way of the Lord.” How God is coming to you in your pain I cannot say. But that God is coming is the Gospel. In that we must believe. Whether with honey or with locusts, God is coming — and that is the best possible thing.

—taken from the writings of Father George Smiga, which appear on the internet

IT’S NOT ABOUT DELAY; IT’S ABOUT PATIENCE:

As we enter the 2nd Week in Advent, we read the second letter of St. Peter. It is the only time in the three-year cycle of Liturgical readings that we read from this letter. It was written by an anonymous author representing the tradition of Peter — perhaps as late as 130 AD — the latest book in the New Testament. In this letter, the author talks about “the day of the Lord” — the promised and expected second coming of Christ, now delayed for almost a century [2 Peter 3:8-14]. The author argues that God’s timing is not ours — “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day.” Thus the author can say: “The Lord does not delay his promise.” What we experience as delay is really an expression of the patience of God, who does not wish “that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” In other words, the “delay” is to our benefit, providing an opportunity for repentance. It remains true, however, that the day of the Lord will come — “like a thief” — at an unknown hour. Therefore, it is vital that we stay alert, conducting ourselves in “holiness and devotion,” living “without spot or blemish,” and peacefully awaiting “new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Although most Christians today are not terribly distressed by the delayed day of the Lord, we all live in the time between Christ’s life on this earth and the fulfillment of his promise to return and complete his mission. We all face an unknown future — waiting for what lies ahead. It is possible to mismanage the future in various ways — failing to prepare properly for future possibilities by not saving for retirement; attempting to control an uncontrollable future by forcing children to follow an unwise career path; giving into cynicism about creating a better future by withdrawing from the electoral process; fretting excessively about remote negative possibilities by being abducted by a drug cartel.

Peter’s letter suggests a Christian outlook on the future that we might call “active patience” or “patient activity.” This virtue is based on trust in God, who is faithful to the divine promises, who accompanies us on our journey, and who assures the final victory of good over evil. It inclines persons to wait patiently, to accept calmly the unknowable future, and to prepare prudently for contingencies. This virtue flourishes when we follow the advice of Peter’s letter by striving for holiness that trusts God and developing a healthy devotional life that fosters an integrated spirituality.

We can find inspiration in the persons who actually practice active patience. A widow managed her nightly bout with anxiety over the salvation of her soul by saying the rosary for one of her relatives in need. A collegian used his fear of rejection for grad school as a catalyst for studying harder and earning better grades. A citizen distressed by our political polarization rose above cynicism by getting involved in the campaign of a candidate she trusted. A sister who felt overwhelmed by the evil in our world prayed for the gift of hope which helps her recognize positive trends in our society. A mother persevered for years in tough love and daily prayers for her alcoholic son, always hopeful that he would eventually manage his disease with God’s help.

How could you cope better with the unknown future?

—taken from the writings of Father James Bacik which appear on the internet



FINDING THE HEART OF GOD IN ADVENT”

My mom tells me that when I was a preschooler, I was given one of those fun Advent calendars that has 24 little doors with chocolate or a picture behind each one. They’re supposed to be a fun way for kids to countdown the days until Christmas. “When all the doors are opened,” my Mom explained to me, “Christmas will be here!” At which point I apparently opened all the doors at once, only to be quite irked that my mom hadn’t clarified that it wasn’t 24 doors, but 24 days that needed to be passed for Christmas to arrive.

Poor me. No more doors to open and 24 days of waiting.

There is no shortage of waiting in life — especially in high school — waiting for the weekend; waiting to find out if you got the after school job; waiting to find out if you made the team; waiting for mom to pick you up from said job or team’s practice; waiting to get a driver’s license; waiting to hear from colleges. Don’t get me wrong — I know days are packed with extra-curriculars, homework, and *Netflix*. But there is also lots of waiting in the midst of all the activity.

The opening prayer for the 3rd Week in Advent says it all: “O God, you see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord’s Nativity. Enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation, and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.”

This describes us — the faithful — as awaiting the Lord’s Nativity. We can definitely relate to this idea of waiting because chances are it was only a few minutes ago that you were waiting for grades to post, waiting to get asked to Homecoming, waiting for the delivery guy to arrive with dinner, or waiting to get a text back. We know what it’s like to wait.

Because we wait so much, we can be tempted to think of Advent as just another time spent waiting for something to happen. We log in the four weeks of waiting — or in the case of this year, three weeks and a Sunday afternoon — and then we celebrate Christmas.

Yet this waiting is very different from what we would do at a bus stop. Christmas celebrates the Incarnation — the fact that the Son of God became human to accomplish our salvation. Salvation — that was His plan all along. That was His plan from the moment Adam and Eve sinned and He promised Satan that he would “put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers” [see Genesis 3:15].

The reality of Advent is that it is a time for us to prayerfully recall that at one time the world was awaiting the Savior, and now we all await His second coming. But it also invites us to consider how God has been seeking us, inviting us, and even waiting for us since the moment original sin entered the world. Unlike the way we wait for a bus or our coffee order, Advent is a season of active waiting — an opportunity to meditate on God’s desire for us, even as we walk through the waiting of the coming of the Messiah recounted in the Old Testament and allow the reality of the Second Coming to permeate our hearts.

The heart of God awaits us, and the season of Advent especially invites us to dwell on the mystery that God seeks us — seeks you, seeks me, seeks the person who annoys you most, and the person who is most overlooked — He seeks us all not because of obligation or duty, but simply because he loves. The challenge is to silence all the distractions of the season and truly encounter Him.

Rather than pass the time of Advent by simply checking off the days in a calendar — or eating all the chocolate behind the doors — we can seek to encounter Him in the opportunities this season offers. Some ways to consider:

- **Receive the Sacrament of Confession.** God is waiting to encounter us in this Sacrament of Mercy. If you went to Confession this summer, or at your fall retreat, this is perfect time to continue to receive God’s mercy. If you haven’t received the Sacrament



since your first Communion or Confirmation, don’t be afraid! God’s mercy is waiting for you.

- **Many Churches hold “missions” or days of recollection** — talks on a morning or over the course of a few evenings — that focus on a particular aspect of spirituality during the season of Advent. Find out if there is an Advent mission or day of recollection happening at a Church near you and plan to attend — even if it’s not something your youth group is doing. Take a journal and listen for what God is telling you about this season.
- With the Sunday Old Testament readings as a guide, **wade into the Old Testament** — especially the Prophet Isaiah — and appreciate how God’s promises in the Old Testament are fulfilled in Christ in the New Testament.
- **Pick some spiritual reading** — a book about the life of a saint you admire, or something by an author you appreciate — and resolve to spend a few minutes each day reading and studying before diving into *Netflix* or social media.
- **Find a ministry that needs help** like a soup kitchen, an after school program, or Sunday school — and spend some time bringing Jesus to those who are most in need.

Waiting — it can be hard, frustrating, disappointing, and boring. But unlike the many things we wait for in life, Advent will not disappoint, because we know that even in the midst of waiting, our longing for eternal love encounters our Father, who never ceases to seek us and call us to eternal union with Him.

LIFE TEEN and EDGE:

Our Life Teen and EDGE youth group is meeting in-person again. We will meet for an hour beginning at 11:30 AM following our 10 AM Sunday Mass in the Chapel. If you are unable to join us, there are many resources available for you on the Life Teen website — lifeteen.com. There are numerous blogs and videos for you to connect with. The Life Teen national office continues to release many new programs. **Please contact Father John for more information. And please join us each Sunday for our Mass at 10 AM — in person or live-streamed, and then come to our Life Teen/EDGE gathering after Mass.** And above all, let us continue to join each other in prayer. **Father John is available for you. Please contact him [cell: 216-570-9276].**



LIFE TEEN



READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday:	Isaiah 35:1-10. Luke 5:17-26
Tuesday:	Zechariah 2:14-17, Luke 1:39-47
Wednesday:	Isaiah 40:25-31, Matthew 11:28-30
Thursday:	Isaiah 41:13-20, Matthew 11:11-15
Friday:	Isaiah 48:17-19, Matthew 11:16-19
Saturday:	Sirach 48:1-11, Matthew 17:9-13

3rd Week in Advent: Isaiah 61:1-11, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24, John 1:6-28

FINDING JOY IN SILENCE:

There’s so much joy to be felt in slowness and softness.

—Ra Avis