

CLOSING PRAYER:

~ A Prayer to Begin Advent ~

As a deer
longs for flowing streams,
So my soul longs for you,
O God.

My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God,
When shall I come
and behold the face of God?

My tears have been my food day and night,
While people say to me continually:
“Where is your God?”

Why are you cast down,
O my soul,
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God;
for I shall again give praise,
My help and my God....

By day
the Lord commands God’s steadfast love,
And at night
God’s song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

(Psalm 42:1–3, 5, 7–8)

CAMPUS MINISTRY OFFICE:

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

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.

FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION — DEC. 9:

Sunday, December 8th, is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. But because the fast falls on the first Sunday of Advent, it is moved to Monday, December 9th. It REMAINS a holy day of obligation. This is an important feast day because Mary, under the title of her Immaculate Conception, is the patroness of the United States. This Feast is also at the heart of the Advent Season. We will not have a Vigil Mass on Sunday. We will have 3 Masses on Monday, December 9th — 9:00 AM [Lower School]; 10:25 AM [Middle School], and 5:30 PM. All Masses will take place in the chapel. We have much to pray for in our nation at this time. Please mark your calendars so that you will be able to join us for Mass on this important Feast Day.

**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.

**THE GIVING TREE:**

Our Chapel Giving Tree will be up next weekend. We will have tags on the tree for items requested by Our Lady of Fatima Family Center, for the children & young people they serve. There will be a selection of toys and clothing for children from age 5 –12 years. **Select a tag from the tree, purchase your gift, and bring it back to the Chapel UNWRAPPED, to place under the tree. Please attach your tag to your gift. Gifts need to be turned in by Monday, December 16th. Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org] if you have any questions.**

**“ADOPT A FAMILY”:**

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, in their school & parish. We are given the grade levels of the children & other family information. Since the pandemic, we have been limited to gift cards, **but this year we are opening it up to gift cards or actual gifts.**



So St. Adalbert has sent us their list of families whom they would like to serve this year. The need is greater than ever. In addition to gifts for family members, we also ask that you provide a Christmas meal for the family in the form of Gift Cards for Wal-Mart, Dave’s or Aldi [or purchase non-perishable items and place them in a basket].

Those from our Chapel family who participated in this project last year spoke very highly of the benefit of this project to their own families. This is a project that the entire family can get involved in. Families can be matched according to family size, ages, etc. It was truly inspiring. Adopt-a-family gifts should be WRAPPED. **Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szaniszlop@gilmour.org] if you and your family would like to participate.**

DISCOVERING ONESELF:

There is no faster way to happen upon the purpose of your life than to embrace life’s daily opportunities to serve those around you.

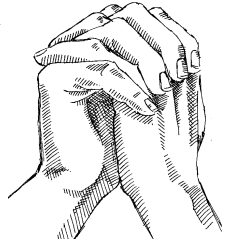
—Matthew Kelly

PRAYER REQUESTS:

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

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK:

- For John Zippay, family friend of Bernadette and Stephen Ritley, who is seriously ill.
- For Jill Thompson, who is undergoing treatment for mental health issues.
- For Mike Heryak, husband of Janet, father of Lillian [‘09], Rosa [‘12] and Edwin [‘17] Heryak, who is seriously ill.
- For Debbie Langer, friend of Cindy Frimel, who was diagnosed with brain cancer.
- For Nada Kucmanic, who is seriously ill.
- For Josephine Fernando, who is seriously ill.
- For Father Ray Sutter, pastor emeritus of St. Matthias Parish, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Cathy Lough, friend of Cyndi Frimel, who is undergoing health struggles.
- For Dave & Elaine Tanaski, who are suffering with dementia and other health complications.
- For Nick Chiacchiarri, father of Mark Mark Chiacchiarri [‘94], father-in-law of Michelle Chiacchiarri [‘96], and grandfather of Aurelia [‘28], and Olivia [‘30] Chiacchiarri, who is recovering from open heart surgery.
- For Kip Apel, who is recovering from surgery.
- For Sabrina Kumar, who is undergoing treatment for cancer.
- For Margaret Thompson, friend of Joyce Toth, who is under the care of hospice.

**PRAYERS FOR THE DECEASED:**

- For Michael Guljas, brother of Father Andy Guljas, C.S.C.
- For Craig Koenig, father of Bridget Palmer [‘04], brother of Brian [‘63], Uncle of Kevin Koenig [‘89], Kristen Bird [‘90], and Kyle Koenig [‘94].
- For Brother Peter Nault, C.S.C.
- For Edward Rogers, Jr. [‘68]
- For Terry Hartman
- For Thomas Verdi, father of Gilmour Parent, Katie Impullitti, father-in-law of Nick Impullitti [‘01], grandfather of Joey [‘34], Jackson [‘36], and Quinn [‘39] Impullitti.
- For Peter Ducic
- For Patricia Smolik, grandmother of Faith Smolik [‘22]
- For Arleen Turk, aunt of Upper School Science Teacher, Edward Turk, great aunt of Trinity [‘22], Edward [‘24] and Henry [‘29] Turk.
- For Mary Chambers
- For Mary Grace Welch, grandmother of Holy Cross novice, James Welch

BEWARE!

Jesus reminds us what happens when people deceive themselves into thinking that they are self-made, and they forget to be grateful, they forget the real basis of life: that good comes from the grace of God, that good comes from his free gift. When one forgets this gratitude to God, one ends up facing one’s situation and limitations no longer with the joy of feeling loved and saved, but rather with the sad illusion of needing neither love nor salvation. These people stop letting themselves be loved and find that they are prisoners of their own greed, prisoners of the need to have more than others, of wanting to stand out over others.

—Pope Francis

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 political polarization.
- For an end to the war between Israel and Hamas.
- For an end to the war between Russia and Ukraine.
- For an end to violence as a means to resolve differences.
- 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.

A HOLY CROSS ADVENT REFLECTION:

This Sunday, with the beginning of the Advent season, we start a new liturgical year to celebrate the Lord’s coming into this world. We know that from Bethlehem emanates the joy of His first coming, and we wait expectantly for His glorious coming. As Luke’s Gospel tells us, the Son of Man will come to come on “a cloud with power and great glory” [Luke 21:25-36]. These words give us a message of hope and salvation — Christ will make a glorious return at the end of time, bringing the fullness of His kingdom of justice, peace, and love.



At the same time, as we wait for His glorious return, the Lord does not stop coming to us every day. As He promised us: “I am with you every day until the end of history” [Matthew 28:20]. The Lord visits us in His Word, He visits us in the bread and wine that become His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, and He visits us in our neighbor, especially the one who asks for our charity. As our Constitutions say: “The face of every human being who suffers is for us the face of Jesus” [Constitution 8:124].

Now, as a senior citizen myself, one of my ministries is visiting other senior citizens in San Roque Parish in the Peñalolén neighborhood in Santiago, Chile. Part of old age is to live in waiting — waiting for the call of the Lord. For some, that produces anxiety; for others, I can see on their faces a peace and hope. They inspire me. They have the confidence of having fulfilled their mission, but even more, they have confidence in the Lord. They trust that as He has always come to them in their lives, so He will come to take them to our eternal home with Him in heaven.

These days of Advent invite us to cultivate this same confidence and hope, that by recognizing ever more the coming of the Lord in our daily lives, we will recognize Him clearly when He comes to say in His glory: “Come, follow me” [Matthew 4:19].

—Brother Joaquín Parada, C.S.C.

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].

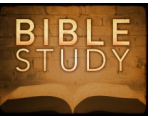


LIVING ADVENT:

Positive thinking doesn’t mean you ignore the reality of the situation. It means you have the optimism, belief and faith to overcome the situation.

NEXT BIBLE STUDY — WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4th:

Our next Virtual Bible Study will be on Wednesday, December 4th 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: The Humanity of Jesus

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 1: 1st Week in Advent	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream
Monday, December 2:	NO MASS
Tuesday, December 3:	NO MASS
Wednesday, December 4:	1:15 PM
Thursday, December 5:	NO MASS
Friday, December 6: St. Nicholas	NO MASS
Saturday, December 7: 2nd Week in Advent	5:00 PM In Person only
Sunday, December 8: 2nd Week in Advent	10:00 AM In-Person & Live Stream

A YOUNG ADULT GROUP:

The Young Adult group will be holding their **next meeting at 11:45 AM on Sunday, December 1st in the Lennon Board Room. We will be making our Advent Wreaths, and then engaging in some discussion.** Here is an opportunity to get together, share some time in faith, and also to support each other in life’s journey, as we continue to grow and become the people that God wants us to be. If you are interested and would like to be part of this new adventure, please join us at our next meeting, or contact Richard Jones, Stephanie Leonor, Joe Gurney, or Edwin Heryak. Of course, you can also contact Father John at the chapel if that would be easier for you. God bless you.



FAITH EDUCATION — NOVEMBER and DECEMBER DATES:

Faith Education is an important part of every person’s formation. Please make sure that you have not forgotten this important responsibility. Our Sessions go from **8:45—9:45 AM, on Sunday mornings**, with the hope that our children would then **participate in our 10:00 AM Family Mass.** Thank you for taking care of this important responsibility. **Meeting dates for December are: 8-15.**



REFLECTION ON THIS WEEK'S THEME:

It is Advent again — and in a little more than 3 weeks, it will be Christmas. Throughout these days, we are invited to be faithfully — and not fearfully — watchful. We do not like waiting. And so, very often, we begin celebrating Christmas before Advent has a chance to be a grace. If we do not enter into the graces which Advent offers, then Christmas will be a shallow celebration of disappointing emptiness.

It is important that we pay attention to this point. All of us have yearnings in our life, but what do we yearn for? The world tells us that we yearn for things — more toys, more gadgets, more conveniences. But these can never be enough. The prophets tell us that we yearn for a person — the Christ, the one who can truly make us whole. There is no “end-of-the-world” spirit in the Scripture Readings for this 1st Week in Advent; rather, we are invited to listen to our fears of not being in the right place for His coming.

Jeremiah has been a faithful voice of God, but he has met with great opposition. He has been led out of town, thrown into a cistern, and now he is under guard by the Jewish leaders — all of this because he has been prophesying about the calamities that will befall Judah and Israel because of their infidelities. Yet, in the midst of this darkness, God speaks of a hopeful promise [Jeremiah 33:14-16]. Jerusalem — which has been invaded by the “pagans” while Israel is banished from their God-promised land into captivity — will experience an advent of life and prosperity. There will be joy, marriages, singing, and thanksgiving sacrifices in the temple, and new life in the days to come.

An image of new life springing from the old is used by Jeremiah to predict recovery and God's eternal fidelity. A “shoot” or “branch” will bud from the old stalk of David. The “new” will complete the “old”. The future will be as safe and righteous as in former times. This “shoot” will be a man whose ways will be those of King David; he will bring about peace with justice. Those who longed for past times of prosperity and integrity — who now sit in exile and darkness — hear this with increased longing and hope. Something and someone is worth living toward, and living for. Someone is coming who will bring total recovery of national and religious stability.

A month or so ago, in the more eastern parts of The United States, days of weather-warnings preceded Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Days before its arrival, life changed. Schools, businesses, whole cities shut down — even Wall Street! Rain, winds, flooding and high ocean waves electrified — the coast-landers were thrown into fright and flight. Some doubted and tried to live through it all. Some didn't believe it would be as bad as predicted, and many lost their lives.

Jeremiah had made similar predictions of calamities befalling Israel because of their infidelities in their worship and their living according to the Law.

Jesus has some warnings Himself which sound worse than those of hurricanes Helene and Milton. Luke's Gospel is difficult to hear and understand [Luke 21:25-36]. The city of Jerusalem is central to the religious sense of the people. Jesus is speaking to His disciples about the total collapse of the city which has been the symbol of God's eternal fidelity. For the city to fall is similar to the sky falling, and all natural orderliness being disturbed. The stability of the temple as well as the city itself is similar to the order of the sun and moon, the seas, and normal living. As with the prophesy we hear from Jeremiah, the Pagans — or more precisely, the foreigners — will disturb this order by violating the city. Amid all this turbulence, Jesus encourages His disciples to stand firm because He is the “shoot of David” who will also appear and reestablish order and recovery of identity.

Jesus offers us the encouragement to stand firm against the disorders, tribulations, and temptations

**FAITH OVER THE LONG HAUL:**

Luke seems to be the first Christian author to presume that he and his readers will all die a natural death before Jesus returns in the Parousia. This delayed Second Coming forced one of the two basic changes which took place in Christianity's first century. Jesus' second and third generation followers had to switch from looking at their faith as a short-term experience to a life-time commitment. What they once believed to be just around the corner, was now in the distant, distant future. This appears to be one of the reasons that Luke [Luke 21:25-36] is so concerned with vigilance. Though we know from other parts of Luke/Acts that the evangelist is convinced the odds are against Jesus' imminent Parousia, Christians still can't put their expectations for the event on a back burner and forget about it.

“Beware,” Luke's Jesus warns, “that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a thief. Be vigilant at all times, and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man”.

Gospel projections of the end of the world are unlike those in the book of Revelation. In the Gospels, Jesus doesn't cause the “tribulations” — they're simply part of the human experience that all of us must endure before his Second Coming. Yet, in the midst of all our natural problems and tensions, Christians still keep focused on the risen Jesus' presence in their lives. Being alert to his presence is the distinguishing characteristic of our personalities.

Years before Luke encouraged his readers to adjust to a long-term faith, that same vigilance led Paul of Tarsus to make the other basic change in early Christianity — the switch from a Jewish church to a Gentile church. Like all Jesus' first followers, Paul was a Jew. Since the historical Jesus, a Jew, was a reformer of Judaism, who except Jews would want to be his disciples? Yet, as Paul tells us in his letters, the insight that the risen Jesus was different from the historical Jesus quickly developed in those Jewish followers. The risen Jesus is a “new creation” — someone not restricted by the limits within which the historical Jesus ministered. As Paul reminded his community in Galatia, the risen Jesus isn't slave or free, Jew or Gentile, male or female.

Paul's alertness to that Jew/Gentile insight eventually forced him to realize someone didn't have to be Jewish in order to be another Christ. That's why Paul's first letter to the Church at Thessalonika [3:12-4:3] is such an important document — not only is it the earliest Christian writing we possess, but it also contains Paul's reaction to his belief that non-Jews could mirror the risen Jesus in their non-Jewish communities. They could do this without following the 613 laws of Moses.

Though I presume Paul was confident his new “evangelization” would work, nothing can compare with discovering that it actually does work. His Gentile Thessalonian community provided the proof. They surfaced the risen Jesus in their midst not by worrying about Jewish dietary regulations, but by “increasing and abounding in love for one another and all.” Vigilant to the needs of all, they experienced Jesus in all.

Followers of Jesus can certainly identify with Jeremiah's vision of a better future [Jeremiah 33:14-16]. But as the prophet states, we can only do this because we imitate a God of “justice” — a God who builds proper relationships with everyone.

Our hope for a new world doesn't just revolve around Jesus' triumphant return. It's rooted in our being aware of what he wants us do right here and now, in our relations with others, long before his Parousia.

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

**WISE WORDS:**

If you have a pulse, you have a purpose.

—Paul Newman

The experiment worked, but it was a mistake in the long run. The butterfly emerged more quickly; however, because adding heat violated something within the natural process, the butterfly was born with wings too weak to fly. Haste and prematurity had stunted and deformed a natural process. Some things can't be rushed.

Dillard understood immediately what had gone wrong. A certain chastity had been violated. Impatience had triggered an irreverence that had interfered with, and damaged, the natural order of things. In essence, the Christmas gift had been opened too early — a process that needed an allotted period of time had been short-circuited. There hadn't been enough advent.

Advent means waiting. Among other things, it celebrates the idea that the Messiah must be born from a virgin. Why? Is sex something unworthy of God? If Jesus had been born in a natural way, would that somehow have given him less dignity? This is a dark underside in some spiritualities, but Jesus' birth from a virgin has nothing to do with that.

Scripture and Christian tradition emphasize that Jesus was born of a virgin to underscore the fact that he had no human father, and also to teach an important truth — namely, that in order for something sublime to be born, there must, first, be a proper chastity — a proper time of waiting, a season of advent.

Chastity is not, first of all, something to do with sex. Chastity has to do with how we experience reality in general — all experience. To be chaste is to have proper reverence — towards God, toward each other, towards nature, towards ourselves, towards reality in general, and towards sex.

Lack of chastity is irreverence, in any area of life — sex included. And reverence is a lot about proper waiting. We can see this by looking at its opposite — to lack chastity, to be irreverent, is to be impatient, selfish, callous, immature, undisciplined, or boorish in any way so that our actions deprive someone else of his or her full uniqueness, dignity, and preciousness. And we do this every time we short-circuit waiting.

Thus, it is understandable why the prime analogate for chastity is proper reverence in the area of sex. Sex, because it so deeply affects the soul, speaks most loudly about chastity, or lack of it. Sex is only chaste when it is not short-circuited by impatience, selfishness, or lack of respect. Sadly, because sex is so powerful, these things are often short-circuited. We violate chastity in sex whenever there is prematurity, unfair pressure, subtle manipulation, crass force, taking without giving, posturing an intimacy we don't mean, lack of respect for previous commitments, disregard for the wider relationships of family and community, or failure to respect long-range happiness and health. Annie Dillard's metaphor basically captures it — there is a fault in our chastity when we put a candle to the cocoon so as to unnaturally rush the process.

Chastity is about proper waiting, and waiting is about patience in carrying the tensions and frustrations we suffer as we live the unfinished symphony that constitutes our lives.

There are some wonderful refrains in apocalyptic literature around the importance of waiting. Before the Messiah can be conceived, gestated, and given birth to, there must always be a proper time of waiting, a necessary advent, a certain quota of suffering, which alone can create the proper virginal space within which the Messiah can be born — “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!”

All of these phrases say the same thing — what is sublime depends upon the fact that there first needs to have been some sublimation; a feast can only happen after there has first been some fasting; love can only be a gift if the gift is fully respected; and — as Carretto so poignantly puts it — we must learn to wait — for God, for love, for the bride, and for Christmas.

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



which lead to disorder. The Man of Justice and Integrity is always coming into the disorderliness of our personal, cultural, and global worlds. It is attractive to spend time interpreting natural and astronomical signs of the coming of the end. Jesus is always inviting us to be attentive to our own distractions, disorders, and “misidentities”, and thereby watch or be alert to the ways the Son of Man comes to bring back our own sense of integrity.

As Advent progresses, John the Baptist will appear onto the stage of preparation. We will hear his callings. But today we are invited to begin preparing for the coming into our lives of a Savior. To do this we are called to check up on the disorders within and around us to which Jesus is constantly arriving.

But the real challenge for most of us is that we do not really want a Savior! — we want an approver. We do not want a negative judge whom we fear, but an approving and benevolent assessor. Most Christians want to sweep away their pasts or presents, and hope that the God of Vengeance doesn't see the carpet under which have been swept the disorders. A second group of Christians wants to pretend that the disorders or need for integrity do not exist, and they stay alert to their denials. A third group spends their lives obsessed with their doing nothing but right and correct things, so that a savior for them is quite unnecessary. Which group is yours?

The Savior has come, is coming, and will always come. The signs of disorder are all around and within us. Jesus was not born in “stableish-poverty” only because there was no room in the inn — the poverty is ours! And Jesus is always being born anew there — but only if we stay alert to the signs of disorder within us.

I had a wonderful African-American friend who lived his whole life in the back-waters of southwest Louisiana in southern United States. He told me once — with great faith and enthusiasm — that if God did not spend all his time forgiving us, God wouldn't have anything to do all day. Mr. Lienell trusted his being found, forgiven, and freed. He had lived long years in fear of the “white man” — and also of the “white God” — but near his last days, he knew racial freedom — and especially faith-freedom. His honesty about his life allowed him to be more honest about Jesus' life.

The Liturgy for this 1st Week in Advent does not encourage us to spend time interpreting the signs around us concerning the end of time. Rather we are encouraged to experience the signs within us which indicate disorder and kneel there in the poverty of our truth which will be come-to by the richness of His coming always and again. We as believers are waiting for the “new beginning” rather than an ending.

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

THE JUBILEE YEAR IS COMING:

On December 24th, Pope Francis will officially begin the Jubilee Year, 2025 — the Year of Hope. Jubilees are celebrated every 25 years in the Church and offer us a special time of grace and spiritual renewal. The jubilee calls for us to set out on a journey — pilgrimage — and to cross boundaries. Some travel physically, but we are all called to enter into the journey to change ourselves. Hence, it is important to prepare ourselves well, to plan the route, and learn about the destination. In this sense, the Jubilee pilgrimage begins before the start of the journey itself — the starting point is the decision to set out.

The journey takes place gradually — there are various routes to choose from and places to discover; it is made up of particular sets of circumstances, moments of catechesis, sacred rites and liturgies. Pilgrimage is an experience of conversion, of transforming one's very being to conform it to the holiness of God.

Begin to think of ways that you would like to grow spiritually throughout this Jubilee Year. More will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead as we observe this sacred time.

A GIFT:

Treasure this day and treasure yourself. Truly, neither will ever happen again.

—Ray Bradbury



WHAT ARE YOUR SECURITIES LIKE?

We spend enormous amounts of our resources, time, and energy on things that give us a sense of security. We buy expensive insurance policies to protect ourselves from any and every sort of disaster. We have high-tech alarm systems in our businesses, homes, and automobiles. Some of us work and even live in buildings surrounded with security fences. Closed circuit television eyes ominously stare at every living thing from the nooks and crannies of our habitats continually recording every movement.

And still we are not secure. Moreover, no amount of money, protection systems, medical effort, or bodyguards can protect us from the ultimate confrontation we each will individually face. For each one of us — you along with me — will one day stand face to face before Christ at the end of our earthly existence. Yet we live our lives awash in distractions, busily engaged in a whole lot that's seemingly very important to us now. Our eyes are torn away from what lies ahead down the road at the end of our time here on earth.

Thus it is that Jesus gives us fair warning at the end of Luke's Gospel — "Be careful, or your spirits will become weighed down with indulgence and drunkenness and worldly cares. The great day will unexpectedly close in on you like a trap. For this day will come upon all those who live on the face of the earth. So always be on the watch. Pray constantly for the strength to escape all that is about to happen. Pray also that you may be able to securely stand before the Son of Man" [Luke 21:25-36].



We will be standing there before our God without our bank accounts, our 401-K retirement accounts, our statements of net worth, our alarm systems, and with no security fences surrounding us. And we will not be looking into the eyes of closed-circuit television monitors. Instead, we will instead be looking into the eyes of the Son of God. His judgment of what we did with our lives will be upon us.

What securities will we have? What securities should we have? All you and I will have at that moment when we face the Son of God will be our memories; it is from them that we will draw up our accounts; it is in them that we will find the records of our lives.

I want to share with you here what I'd like to have in my own account of memories when I die. You might want to use these hopes as a basis for constructing your own set. I'd like my life's record to include:

1. **A lot of love for a lot of people** — particularly the hurting, the rejected, those without privilege and those who have experienced pain and loss. I'd like, too, to have a record revealing that I didn't have much anger toward others. I'd like the record to show what I wasn't haughty toward others, or arrogant, and that I didn't seek to manipulate others. I'd like to have a record revealing an absence of taking advantage of others. I'd feel a whole lot more secure standing before the Son of God without those debits in my accounts.
2. I'd like a **record of my life showing sensitivity, respect, tender loving care, and humility in my relationships with others.** I'd like to be known as someone who always had something to learn from those with whom I conversed. I would feel some security with those line-item credits in my final account.
3. **Reliance on the power of God** would be an important series of memories that I would like to have in my portfolio of securities as I face Christ when my time on earth comes to an end. I hope there will be a lot of entries revealing times when I let God be God, when I relinquished my lust to control outcomes, to control other people's decisions, to control the events of my life. I'd like my life's history to reveal many times when I simply and humbly let God take care of people, places and events in my life. I'd like it recorded that I frequently asked God to show me just how He wanted me to act, asked Him to tell me just what He wanted me to say to others, shaped me to be the man that He dreamed I could be.

terrifying uncertainty and learn to believe in and love God who is bigger and different from what we expect.

Maybe Advent is all about discovering God waiting for us to perceive the "day of the Lord." It is at hand if only we will allow ourselves to perceive it.

—taken from the writings of Sister Mary McGlone, C.S.J., which appear on the internet

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. In recent years, we have begun this project earlier in order to take advantage of pre-Christmas sales, etc. So again this year, St. Adalbert has begun to collect the names of families—**the need is greater than ever.** St. Adalbert identifies families — most often single parent, below poverty-level families. We are given the grade levels of the children & other family information. Since the pandemic, we have been limited to gift cards, but this year we are opening it up to gift cards or actual gifts. We do ask that you provide a Christmas meal for the family in the form of Gift Cards for Wal-Mart, Dave's or Aldi [or purchase non-perishable items and place them in a basket]. Those from our Chapel family who participated in this project last year spoke very highly of the benefit of this project to their own families. This is a project that the entire family can get involved in. Families can be matched according to family size, ages, etc. It was truly inspiring. Adopt-a-family gifts should be WRAPPED. **Please call Patty at the Chapel Office [440-473-3560 or szaniszl0p@gilmour.org] if you and your family would like to participate in this program, or if you have any questions.**



SERVING THE LORD IN THE POOR — DECEMBER 21st:

Our Savior Lutheran Church — across the street from the Chapel — 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 unloading the trailers and setting up items for distribution and preparing for the food pantry to open. It serves around 150 clients each time. The food pantry serves clients 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 join us for a great experience.

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.

ADVENT — A TIME TO LEARN HOW TO WAIT:

Carlo Carretto, the renowned spiritual writer, spent many years living alone as a hermit in the Sahara Desert. He wrote a number of books from that place of solitude — including one entitled: *Letters from the Desert*. In that book, he has a message for those of us who live busy lives in the world — "What is God trying to say to us in our busy lives? God is telling us to be patient! Learn to wait — for each other, for love, for happiness, for God!"

Learn to wait! That's not something we do easily, and many of our problems flow from that. We often don't wait properly for things.

Annie Dillard shares this story about proper waiting — She had been watching a butterfly emerge from its cocoon, and was fascinated by the process until she grew impatient with how long it was taking, and, to speed things up, took a candle and heated the cocoon, albeit very gently.

GOD IS WAITING:

Like last week's Scripture Readings for the Feast of Christ the King, Luke's Gospel for this 1st Week in Advent gives us an apocalyptic vision amazingly applicable to our days. Lest we think we're unique, people throughout the ages have felt the same — and who's to say it's not true? Jesus says: "People will die of fright!" [Luke 21:25-36].

Wow! Did you ever feel like that was happening? Maybe you didn't think you would die, but did you ever feel paralyzed, unable to reply or think of a way to deal with something? Then there's the depression and deception we feel when good people suffer, or when a young mother dies while her great-grandmother lies in bed wondering why God doesn't take her.

Moments like these lead some to abandon their faith. God has not met their expectations; so God — or at least a loving God — must not exist. In truth, the god who failed them does not exist. The god who rearranges reality for those who pray hard enough bears little resemblance to the God Jesus revealed. The god of slaves who tells people to suffer in silence, for their reward will be great in heaven, is not the God about whom Jesus preached. The "god of the gaps" — the explanation for the incomprehensible — is not the God of Jesus. The god who is just a "miracle worker" or a "magician" or an "imaginary bodyguard" is not the God of Jesus.

The Readings for this 1st Week in Advent urge us to broaden our concept of God and God's involvement in history.

Scripture gives witness that many people need to pass through periods of doubt to refine their sense of God. Might that be what Jesus was talking about when he said: "The powers of the heavens will be shaken"? Jesus experienced that himself, especially as he was suffering and dying. He called out: "My God! Why have you forsaken me?" [Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34]. In the depths of desolation and solitude, Jesus called out to God who was not saving him in the way he hoped, yet who remained the God he loved and in whom he believed.



Jeremiah reiterates a typical prophetic promise. He writes: The God of justice will reign on this earth. How? Not by supernatural intervention nor by breaking the "laws of nature." Rather, God's justice will reign through people so open to inspiration that they allow the Spirit to move them in ways they had not imagined, the ones with enough faith to believe against all odds. These are the prophetic people through whom God transforms history [Jeremiah 33:14-16].

Jesus told his disciples — including us — that when the nations are in dismay and even nature seems a traitor to life, redemption is right around the corner. When he said: "the powers of the heavens will be shaken," might he have been describing the death of our comfortable false gods? It can come to pass that everything we once believed will appear inadequate.

When all of that happens, Jesus says: "Stand erect! Raise your head! Your redemption is at hand!" This does not sound exactly like good news. Yet isn't the whole of the Gospel a promise of unanticipated and unimaginable transformations? Isn't the Gospel a call to turn our perspectives inside out?

Just after announcing redemption in the midst of tragedy and disorientation, Jesus tells us: "Do not let your hearts grow drowsy" [Luke 21:25-36]. Doesn't that sound like a warning to shun the attitude of "it is what it is"? Isn't Jesus asking us to feel it all with him and to let him work through us by putting God's saving love into action? Isn't he telling us that when we see tragedy, innocent suffering or a profusion of lies, our task is to pray for the strength to be signs of hope, witnesses to the fact evil will never triumph over good? Isn't he telling us that complacency will smother God's dream in our hearts?

As we begin Advent, perhaps we should reverse conventional thinking and consider that God is waiting for us more than we for God. Maybe God is waiting for us to allow grace to open and strengthen our hearts and minds. Maybe God is waiting for us to exercise the faith we need to pass through days of

4. Finally I would stand a whole lot more secure before the Son of Man if I faced Him in the beginning of my next life and **simply continued on with the conversation we had already been having for a good portion of my life here on earth.** Wouldn't it be lovely to meet Christ face to face and discover that He was always near to me and was my dear Friend all along throughout my life here on earth... that we could begin to live eternal life together with each other simply by continuing on with the relationship we had already established while I was yet living here in the life He gave me?

Yes, I think I would stand a whole lot more secure before the Son of Man if that were the case.

The season of Thanksgiving and Christmas is a season of reflection, a time of examination, a time when we look ahead with expectant hope for the Son of God's coming to us. When we meet Him face to face at the end of our own personal lives, and when we all meet Him collectively at the end of the world, we will be filled with awe, that's for sure.

But will we be filled with terror or will we be filled with love and the sense of security that undergirds love? The answer, of course, depends upon the fabric of our lives, the contents of our relating to others, and the memories that we bring with us to that event. The judgment we receive at the end, you see, will not so much be God's judgment of us, but our own. It is we — not God — who are forging our image, our persona, our character, our personality, and our personhood, all that we take to God at the end of the lives we have fashioned here on earth. The content depends not so much upon God as it does upon us. As Jesus reminded us: "Be careful, or your spirits will become weighed down with indulgence and drunkenness and worldly cares. The great day will unexpectedly close in on you like a trap. For this day will come upon all those who live on the face of the earth. So always be on the watch. Pray constantly for the strength to escape all that is about to happen. Pray also that you may be able to securely stand before the Son of Man"

Advent brings with it the theme of darkness and light. Darkness envelopes so many of us; the darkness of our physical world, but the even more deadly a spiritual darkness of souls living in narcosis. For the addiction of being too busy can blind us, leaving us unwilling to be bothered with the effort of seeing, of paying attention, of gazing into the surrounding loveliness that is there for all who have eyes to see and ears to hear. Also, for many of us, perhaps it is the narcosis of overwhelming resentments that darken our souls so that we can no longer see the light of love, of kindness, compassion, forgiveness and acceptance. Finally, there is the darkness of being blinded by the glitz of this world's offerings, offerings that can blind us from paying attention to our souls and to the presence of God in our lives.

Advent calls us to ask the question: What are we looking for?

God now calls us to see what He is offering us. That is what Christmas is all about. Come, let us join the wise men, journeying with them under the light of heaven's mysterious star in their search... and joining them in the answer to their quest.

—taken from the writings of Father Charles Irvin, which appear on the internet.

IN SERVICE, WE ENCOUNTER GOD:

Radical servanthood does not make sense unless we introduce a new level of understanding and see it as the way to encounter God. To be humble and persecuted cannot be desired unless we can find God in humility and persecution. When we begin to see God, the source of all our comfort and consolation, in the center of servanthood, compassion becomes much more than doing good for unfortunate people.

Radical servanthood, as the encounter with the compassionate God, takes us beyond the distinctions between wealth and poverty, success and failure, fortune and bad luck. Radical servanthood is not an enterprise in which we try to surround ourselves with as much misery as possible, but a joyful way of life in which our eyes are opened to the vision of the true God who chose to be revealed in servanthood. The poor are called blessed not because poverty is good, but because theirs is the kingdom of heaven; the mourners are called blessed not because mourning is good, but because they shall be comforted.

—Henri Nouwen

OUR ADVENT JOURNEY:

A story is told of the photographer taking a picture. He says to the woman: “Smile pretty for the camera.” A moment later, he says: “OK, madam, you can resume your usual face.” Whether you and I will have a successful Advent these next four weeks will depend on the attitude or face we bring to it today. We must stay awake — as Jesus advises us in Luke’s Gospel [21:25-36], and on top of our game. If we take Advent seriously, this first week in a fresh Liturgical year might quite literally alter our lives. We would all do well to make our own this season the prayer of the Jesuit poet Gerard Manly Hopkins: “O thou Lord of life, send my roots rain.”

Scholars trace the season of Advent back to the fifth century. It was placed in the Liturgical calendar of the Church so that we might purge out of ourselves all that is wrong. In a word, we have the opportunity to remake our own selves anew. And we have the luxury of a little less than four weeks to do get the job completed. When you look at yourself, and your sometimes-monumental flaws, do not become overwhelmed. The Chinese advise us that the way to move a mountain is by beginning to carry small stones. We would all do well to bring a pail and a shovel to this Advent. Jesus reminds us in Matthew’s Gospel that “If you have faith, you will say to this mountain: ‘Move from here to there!’, and it will move; nothing will prove impossible for you” [Matthew 17:20].

This new season invites each of us to become all that we can be. The quarry you hunt is yourself. The Greek philosopher Plato, who lived out his life several centuries before Christ, wrote: “The greatest victory in the world is the victory of self-conquest.” There is no one who will challenge that wisdom. The most serious coronary disease in the world is not a blockage of the arteries, but rather hardness of the heart. If you are not willing to recast yourself into a more attractive Christian this Advent, you do have a serious heart condition.

While God does not require you to be the best in the several weeks ahead, He surely wants you to try your best. Luke’s Gospel speaks of the “Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” [Luke 21:25-36].

When will He come? Many would-be prophets have given a day, month, and year to that question. As 1000 AD approached, a number of Christians in many countries were convinced that the Second Coming was about to occur. So, they settled all their affairs. Then they just settled back to wait for the Christ. It is reported that some even starved to death. A celebrated evangelist in 1950 promised that the end of the world would come on January 1st, 1957. It will not surprise you to learn that he stopped reminding his followers of that prediction on January 2nd. And there have been many more since — the latest of which was a few years ago.

Someone has suggested that every day should be considered a day of judgment. Live, said the prophet, as if Jesus died yesterday, rose this morning, and is coming back at any moment. We must labor in the now and here. The question of the Second Coming we must place on the back burner. The Teacher will plan His own arrival, and set up His own schedule.

If you are looking for an Advent program, you might consider the following: “Smile often. Pray. Tell those that you love that you do. Rediscover old friends. Make new ones. Hope. Grow. Give. Give in. Buy some flowers. Share them. Keep a promise. Laugh often. Reach out. Hug a child. Slow down. See a sunrise. Listen to rain. Trust life. Have faith. Enjoy. Make some mistakes. Learn from them. Explore the unknown. Celebrate your own life. Give so much time to the improvement of yourself that you have no time to criticize others.”

Perhaps the same author has written the prayer we should recite daily this Advent: “Help us this day, O Lord, to serve you devoutly, and the world busily. May we do our work wisely, give help secretly, go to our meal with appetite and dine moderately. May we please our friends duly, go to bed merrily, and sleep soundly. All of this for the joy of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

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



a Jew sitting by the fire. The Jew responded the same way. He wasn’t going to give his log up to allow a Moslem to survive. Nor would he share it to save the others — Christians who had persecuted his people throughout the ages. There was an African American there who decided that he would rather freeze to death as a statement against those around the fire whose ancestors had enslaved his ancestors. And so the fire died as each person withheld his or her log for reasons he or she were sure were justifiable. And the six froze to death.

This story was originally told in a poem. The poem ended with these tragic lines: “ Six logs held fast in death’s still hand // was proof of human sin. // For they did not die from the cold without, // they died from the cold within” [James Kinney].

The world of coldness, and darkness and hatred is the world that Advent calls us to change. We have to begin with ourselves. We have to surrender any lingering hatred we may have towards anyone. Maybe it’s that person who really hurt us — a former boyfriend or girlfriend; a former husband or wife; a child who now as an adult has estranged himself or herself from our family for reasons we may never know. Or maybe it’s that person at work, at school, or in the neighborhood who tried to ruin the life of someone we love. Maybe we have a hidden prejudice against a group of people — gays, or blacks, or straights, or whites. As long as we allow the hate to remain within us, we are freezing ourselves to death. We have to fight off the cold and darkness with the warmth of God’s love, and the light of His life. We need to do this for others as well as ourselves. We cannot allow past hurts and present prejudices to destroy our opportunity to bring light to those in darkness. We must allow God’s love to flow through us.

This is the work of the Christian. This is the work of Advent. This is how we prepare the way for the Lord.

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

ATTENDANCE:

If you attend Mass regularly here at Our Lady Chapel, it would be helpful if you filled out a Registration 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.

WEEKLY OFFERING:

Baskets are located on the pillars just inside the center door when you enter the chapel. Please place your offering in the basket. Baskets will not be passed during the offertory time. Your offering will help offset chapel daily operating expenses. When you choose to use the envelopes, you can request a printout of your offerings for the year to submit to the IRS. God bless you.

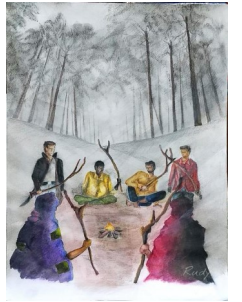
Total Offerings: Saturday [11/23/24] ————— \$ 210.00

Total Offerings: Saturday [11/24/24] ————— \$ 525.00

Total Offerings: Thursday [11/28/24] — [Thanksgiving] ————— \$ 215.00

LIVE LIFE:

—“The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.” —Thomas Edison



THE WORK OF ADVENT:

The Christmas music has started up. It is particularly evident in the stores where the merchants are trying to get us in the Christmas mood of giving — or buying! It is not that way in the Church, though. Instead of Christmas decorations, there is the purple of Advent. In Church, we don't sing Christmas carols yet — in fact, the beginning of Advent presents the exact opposite of the sweet and syrupy Christmas sentiments. Advent begins not with cribs and shepherds and *Silent Night*, but with the prophecy that God will make a powerful intervention in human history. Look at Luke's Gospel [21:25-36] — it is one of the scariest passages in Scripture: "People will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming. The Son of Man will come on a cloud with power and great glory."

God will step in and re-create His world. He will put an end to the exploitation of the poor and powerless. He will punish those who have turned the things of the world into their gods. He will make His presence known to those who think they have hidden themselves from His wrath. His people are to stand straight and raise their heads, for their redemption is at hand. They — we — are to pray for the strength to stand before the Son of Man.

This is tough stuff — not the stuff of Christmas Carols. But, again, this is the beginning of the Advent season, not Christmastime. Advent speaks about **preparation and transformation**. Preparation for the two comings of Christ. The first coming of the Lord began in Bethlehem two thousand years ago. He continued onto Jerusalem and Golgotha. He continues through us — the Lord's disciples empowered by the Spirit — to lead the world to Christ. The second coming of the Lord is at the end of time, when Christ will judge those who have lived in love and light, and those who have lived in darkness and hatred.

For us in the Northern hemisphere, Advent takes place during the darkest days of the year, when there is the least sunlight. The darkest day of the year comes towards the end of Advent on December 21st. Advent is the season of hope because it reminds us that the dark time will come to an end, and that the light of Christ will triumph. Hatred, racism, abuse of all forms, broken relationships, indifference to human suffering — these are part of the dark times of the world. These abominations to God's love will end. We — as Church and as individuals — are called to work towards their downfall. The transformation of the world from hatred to love is the work of the Christian. The season of Advent reminds us of the work we must do all year. Advent assures us that the work of God will be done as long as we live with God in our lives.

We must fight against the darkness. Advent demands that we ask ourselves where darkness has a hold in our lives. What must be changed for me — for you — to be people of light, not darkness? Maybe we need to give ourselves a Christmas gift by destroying anything in our lives that does not radiate Christianity. Certainly, we have to ask ourselves how we can bring light to those who are in darkness. Is there a gesture we can make to help someone feel better? Perhaps it might only be a smile — and that smile would be more than enough. Perhaps a courteous note in a Christmas card to someone who probably won't receive many cards this year. Maybe we need to say: "I'm sorry." It won't kill us, and there are few times we are totally innocent in an argument. Sometimes the most simple gesture on our part can heal the body and soul of someone whose world is in darkness.

There is a story told to bring home this point. It is about six people who were found dead in a cold cave — frozen to death. Their bodies were scattered around the ashes that had been their campfire on a tragic, frigid night. The story goes that each person had a log that he or she could have placed on the fire to keep the fire alive, but each refused to do so. Each was convinced that he or she had a good reason for not offering his log. There was a homeless man who would not give his log because there was also a rich man there. The rich man would not give his log because his contribution would warm someone who was, in his eyes, shiftless and lazy. There was a woman who would not offer her log because she wanted to strike a blow against the men who had, for all of history, put women down, after all the others around the fire were all men. Now there was a Moslem there. He would not give his log because there was also

TURMOIL, FEAR, and DISMAY:

Turmoil, fear, dismay. These are words we could use to describe the scene that Luke presents before us on this 1st Week in Advent [Luke 21:25-36]. They are also words that we could use to describe our world, because, like every period before it, the age in which we live is marked by many things that are wrong. Internationally democracies seem to be eroding from within as people elect leaders who promise stability no matter what the cost. Countries debate one another on how to handle the issues of global warming and the mass migration of immigrants pressing on their borders. In our own country, we have never been more politically polarized, and legislation seems to depend more on party interest than on the common good.

Turmoil, fear, and dismay, all around. This is why the image of Luke is so important. After describing the dismal scene, he says: "Then they will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with power and great glory." Luke is telling us that Christ comes to us in midst of the turmoil and the fear. Luke is saying that Jesus arrives, not once the mess is cleaned up, but even as the causes of our despair hold sway. This is a tremendously important image for us to hold on to: Christ in glory in the midst of our dismay. It is an important image, because all too often we limit the presence of Christ to situations that are harmonious and peaceful. When everyone in our family is healthy, when our job is secure, when all is going well at school, when our country seems to be moving in the right direction, we easily say: "Look God is blessing us." But, when things become unhinged, when we start to fear the future, we say: "Where is God? Why has Christ abandoned us?"

Luke's gospel invites us to look again, to believe that Christ can be present in every situation, no matter how painful. He is there as we sit in silence with only the beep of medical instruments in the Intensive Care Unit. He is there as we pick up the pieces of our life after a painful divorce. He is there as we wake up again to emptiness because of someone we lost in death.

How can Christ be present in the midst of so much loss and sorrow? There is a mystery to it for sure, because Christ does not come to condone what is wrong or to dismiss what is unjust. But he does come. I have seen it happen. I have seen him come, as a family gathered around the death bed of their mother is suddenly overcome with a love that demonstrates what they mean to each other. I have seen him come to a young married couple, who after months of marriage counseling look at one another and say: "You know, we might make it." I've seen him come when someone is belittled or their rights violated and another person stands up and says, "This has to stop."

So, if you find yourself in turmoil, fear, or dismay, do not conclude that Christ has forgotten you. Christ is standing at your side in glory. His presence is mysterious for sure, and often difficult to discern, but he is there. Look for him!

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

O.C.I.A [Order of Christian Initiation for Adults]:

We are beginning to plan for our OCIA program [formerly known as RCIA] which will begin shortly. Why the name change? OCIA refers to the entire journey of faith discernment, whereas RCIA refers only to the Ritual aspects of the journey.

If you know someone who has been away from the Catholic Church for a while, or who is interested in learning more about the Catholic faith, or who presently is not a Catholic but would like to pursue this avenue of faith; or investigate it; if you know someone who is not fully initiated [Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation] in their Catholic faith — then consider having them join our OCIA program. **Please contact Father John [440-473-3560] for more information.**



ADVENT and NEW BEGINNINGS:

Advent begins — a time of searching and, hopefully, growth. Luke’s Gospel for this 1st Week in Advent is a bit scary [Luke 21:25-36] — it talks about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at the end of time. You might wonder at this, and question why we begin the Church’s liturgical year with a look at the end times. Surely that’s something for the very end of the liturgical year — in fact, we have already been doing that for the past several weekends.

But as we begin a journey, it is always helpful to keep in mind a glimpse of our destination — a look forward to our ultimate goal in order to help us orientate ourselves and focus on “that towards which we are headed” — the Last Day. Our final destination is that moment when Christ will come in glory at the end of time. It is he who will judge us, and, it is our earnest hope, that he who will welcome us into His Kingdom on that great day.

With this in mind, it becomes important for us to get to know intimately our God whom we need to learn to love — we need to make him the object of our whole existence. To do so, it is worth reflecting on the whole sweep of Christ’s ministry. We should recall that he is there at the very first moment of creation — that he is intimately involved with the creation of the world — and indeed our own creation. It is he who brings us into being.

Recall the various incidents of Christ’s life on earth. We call to mind his miraculous birth and all its attendant wonders. In the stories of his childhood, we get a glimpse of the person he was to become. We think of his involvement at the marriage feast of Cana, and how this gives us a foretaste of the Eucharist which is to be his principal means of communicating himself to us throughout our lives. Other great events, such as his Baptism and Transfiguration, tell us about his closeness to the Father; they give us a hint of his glory. There are the great miracles through which he shows not only his power, but also his great compassion towards the weak and the suffering. We recall those that he healed such as the blind man, and various paralytics, those he released from enslavement by demons, and those he raised from the dead and restored to life.

Each of these miracles is a sign to us of his authority over life and death, and his willingness to become involved in the tiniest detail of our existence. Each is a sign of his Kingdom, and an acknowledgement that in heaven, it is the poor and the lowly who are raised up, and the weak and the suffering who are healed and restored to fullness of life.

Then there is the whole content of his teaching, and the wonderful new way that Jesus opens up for us to live our lives in simplicity and holiness, relying not on human values, but on the values of the Kingdom of God. His teaching is at one and the same time a balm to our souls, and a challenge to our personal autonomy.

The way of life that Jesus invites us to take up is completely contrary to the values of this world. He invites us to live lives of simplicity and lowliness — lives based on goodness and trust in Divine Providence. He wants us to place ourselves in his hands, and live lives based on hope and trust in him.

Then come the great events of our salvation — his entrance into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, and the night in the Garden of Gethsemane, his trial and death on the Cross, but then his glorious resurrection, and ascension into heaven. This is the sequence of events that marks the turning point of the whole of history — for these are the things which brought about the salvation of humankind.

When we look at the life of Jesus in a broad sweep like this, we get a glimpse of the tremendous scope of his mission, and the greatness of what he achieved. We see that, at one and the same time, it is totally universal in that it is aimed at every single human being, and also that it has massive implications for you and me.

It is the implications for you and me that we need to think about. We need to understand that Christ’s mission was not only for the whole world in some general sense, but that it has specific



consequences for you and for me. In the face of his life and all that he achieved, we need to make a decision — we have to decide if his proposed new way of life is one that we want to accept as a blueprint for our own lives.

We need to make a decision in this regard, and follow it up with real and lasting changes to our own lives. And we have to review this decision again and again through the course of our lives. This First Week in Advent is a good moment for just such a reappraisal. It is an excellent opportunity to review our commitment to Christ and his Gospel; it is an ideal opportunity to rededicate ourselves to following the Divine Savior.

Perhaps sometime during this day, you could take a little time — maybe during Mass or maybe in some quiet time — take the time needed to review the life of Christ and his impact on the world. Take the time to work out what his impact is in your own life. Take the time to work out what further changes you need to make so that you can be sure that his Gospel of love has a true home in your heart.

There could be no better way to mark the beginning of this new liturgical year than this, no better way to fully integrate your Christian commitment into your life, no better way to give expression to the full amount of love for God and for the world that is in your heart.

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

READINGS FOR THE WEEK:

Monday: Isaiah 2:1-5, Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday: Isaiah 11:1-10, Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday: Isaiah 25:6-10, Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday: Isaiah 26:1-6, Matthew 7:21-27

Friday: Isaiah 29:17-24, Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday: Isaiah 30:19-26, Matthew 9:35-10:1

2nd Week in Advent: Baruch 5:1-9, Philippians 1:4-11, Luke 3:1-6

OUR TIME IS IN GOD’S HANDS:

Someone once asked St. Augustine what “time” was. Augustine replied: “If you don’t ask me, I know. If you ask me, I don’t know.” Time — like light, matter, being, and other ultra-basic things of life — is something we deal with daily, not because we understand them in the slightest, but because they are just always there. We start to assume that because they are always there, there is something indestructible or impassable about them — as though nothing is really bigger or more real than them. St. Peter reminds us that “with the Lord, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years are as one day” [2 Peter 3:8]. Thus time is like everything else — it is like a creature, and God is not limited by it in any way. God has all eternity to listen to a change of heart in the prayer of a person who leapt from a bridge in suicide, and then repented before they hit the ground. God can squeeze the whole age of the earth into one of his thimbles, and still have room left over for a thimbleful of other universes. So take some time — whatever that is — and spend it with God today in prayer. It’s preparation for the day you will step out of time into a glad eternity.

