

Advent & Christmas Season Calendar

12/3/17 - First Sunday of Advent

Masses Sat. 5:30 pm
Sun. 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am

12/8/17 - Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Masses Thu. (12/7) 5:30 pm
Fri. (12/8) 8:30 am, 5:30 pm

12/10/17 - Second Sunday of Advent

Masses Sat. 5:30 pm
Sun. 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am

12/12/17 - Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Las Mañanitas Tue. 7:45 am
Rosary Tue. 8:00 am
Mass Tue. 8:30 am

12/17/17 - Third Sunday of Advent

Masses Sat. 5:30 pm
Sun. 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am

12/19/17 - Parish Reconciliation Service

Mon. 7:00 pm

12/24/17 - Fourth Sunday of Advent

Masses Sat. 5:30 pm
Sun. 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am

12/24/17 - Vigil of Christmas

Masses Sun. 4:00 pm Church (Children's Mass)
6:00 pm Church
9:00 pm Church

12/25/17 - Christmas Day

Masses Mon. 9:30 am Church
11:00 am Church

12/31/17 - Feast of the Holy Family

Masses Sat. 5:30 pm
Sun. 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am

1/1/18 - Feast of Mary, Mother of God

Mass Mon. 10:00 am

1/7/18 - Feast of the Epiphany

Masses Sat. 5:30 pm
Sun. 8:00 am, 9:30 am, 11:00 am

Weekday Mass Schedule

Tue. 5:30 pm
Wed. 8:30 am
Thu. 5:30 pm
Fri. 8:30 am

Confession Times

Tue. 5:00 pm
Sat. 4:00 pm

The Season of Advent

Advent is the season that begins the liturgical year. It consists of four Sundays starting with the Sunday closest to November 30th. The word advent is derived from the Latin *adventus*, which means "coming" or "arrival." In the time of the Roman empire, the word *adventus* referred to the arrival of a person of dignity and great power -- a king, emperor, or even one of the gods. For Christians, Advent is the time when the church patiently prepares for the coming of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. Advent occurs in the month of December and is usually considered to be a prelude to Christmas. But Advent can also help us focus on three distinct "comings" of Christ. First, we remember the Lord's humble first coming in Bethlehem two thousand years ago. Second, we give thanks for His present and continual coming to us through Word and Sacrament. Finally, we look forward to His second coming in glory to judge the living and the dead on the Last Day.

While the world around us is overwhelmed by the furious rush of shopping, decorations, parties, and other distractions, Christians pause during the season of Advent to contemplate the wonder of God's tremendous gift to His creation, Jesus Christ, God made man. We approach this time of year in much the same way as expectant parents approach the months before a child is born. There are feelings of exhilaration, uneasiness, longing, and awe as the day of arrival approaches. Just as parents-to-be do everything they can to get ready and put things into good order, God's people prepare themselves at home and at church for the coming of the Lord.

Advent's four Sundays are thematically arranged to concentrate on different aspects of Christ's coming. The first Sunday in Advent deals with our need to watch for the return of Christ at the end of time. The only thing we can be certain of is that it will be a surprise. The second Sunday introduces the prophet, John the Baptist. He resembled Elijah, wearing prophet's clothes and eating the food of the wilderness, and encouraging his people to "prepare the way of the Lord." The third Sunday focuses on the relationship between John and Jesus. The Gospels all are very careful to present John as a forerunner of the Messiah and yet as subordinate to Him. The final Sunday in Advent is a bridge to Christmas as we hear of the Annunciation, the angel Gabriel's declaration to Mary that she has been chosen to bear God's Son into the world. Through her "yes" she collaborates with the Father and sets an example for all of us to follow God's will in our lives.

During the Advent season, our readings describe several heralds, or forerunners, of the Messiah. The first of these heralds is the prophet Isaiah, the herald of hope and expectation. John the Baptist also appears as the herald of repentance and purification. The Blessed Virgin Mary appears as the herald of joy and union with God.

The Advent Wreath

The Advent wreath is part of our long-standing Catholic tradition. By the Middle Ages, Christians were using Advent wreaths as part of their spiritual preparation for Christmas, both in churches and in homes.

The Advent wreath is a ring of evergreens with four candles, one for each week of Advent. Traditionally, three of the candles are violet (for weeks 1, 2 and 4) and one is rose (for week 3).



Every part of the wreath reminds us of an important truth about God. The circle shape of the wreath stands for the unending love of God - a love without beginning or end. The evergreens covering the wreath suggest life and growth and hope.

The light that the candles give reminds us of Jesus, the Light of the world. The light coming from the candles increases throughout Advent as each week one more candle is lit. The weeks of waiting for the candles' full light help us to recall the world's long years of waiting for Jesus, the Light.

On the First Sunday of Advent, we light a single violet candle, called the Prophet's Candle, for the holy men who foretold the coming of the Messiah to the Jewish people.

On the Second Sunday of Advent, we light two violet candles. The second candle is called the Bethlehem Candle, recalling when Jesus was born in the small city of Bethlehem.

On the Third Sunday of Advent, we light the rose-colored (pink) candle, in addition to the original two candles lit in prior weeks. The third (rose or pink) candle is called the Shepherds' Candle, reminding us of the shepherds, who listened and obeyed the angels, saw Jesus and believed, and told others what they found.

On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we light all four candles on the wreath. The fourth candle, a violet candle, is called the Angels' Candle, for the Angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary to tell her that God had chosen her to be the mother of Jesus, and for the angels who sang songs of praise to God to the shepherds in their fields.

This Advent, the parish of St. Michael is encouraging our faithful to adopt the devotion of the Advent Wreath. Advent wreaths and candles are available for purchase from the Knights of Columbus in the hall. For more information about the Advent Wreath and how to celebrate this Advent devotion in your home, go to our St. Michael's website at: www.smlj.org/adventwreath or pick up a copy of the Advent Wreath brochure.

The Jesse Tree



We develop our sense of identity, purpose, security and belonging largely from our families and often through a family tree. Jesus also has a family tree, which is called a Jesse Tree. This tradition is based on the prophet Isaiah, who said, “a shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.”

In the Advent tradition of the Jesse tree we trace Jesus’ family history and learn about the love of God for us as revealed through real-life ancestors of Jesus. A Jesse Tree can be either a real tree or a representation of one, decorated with symbols which mark the journey from the birth of man to the birth of Christ. The symbols represent the ancestral characters and major events depicted in the bible.

The Tree is a common symbol throughout scripture, most memorably featured in the fall of Adam and Eve. Jesus used images of trees, vines and branches to explain the power and life of God. Jesse was the father of King David. The Jesse tree illustrates Jesus’ human lineage, from the Birth of Man and Adam and Eve down to Mary and the Birth of Jesus, showing the fulfilment of God’s promise to redeem the world.

Today we can find Jesse trees in homes, parishes and schools. It is not limited to Jesus’ royal ancestry, but is a means to tell the story of God’s faithfulness over the thousands of years of human history up to the birth of Jesus. When we contemplate The Jesse Tree we realize ever more deeply the intimate relationship between God and our own humanity. It helps us to connect with the humanity of Jesus, who, like us, came from a family line that was in many ways imperfect.

A Jesse tree is especially useful for helping us enter into the spirit of Advent, a spirit of expectant, joyful longing for the God who loves and saves us. It is an engaging way to impart knowledge of our salvation history and the momentous place of Jesus’ birth within it. Thus, while the Jesse Tree is about the journey of the people of God, it also sheds light on our own life journey. It connects us more deeply to scripture, through which Christ never fails to reveal himself to us here and now.

This Advent, the parish of St. Michael is encouraging our faithful to adopt the devotion of the Jesse Tree. Symbols to adorn a Jesse Tree are available for purchase from the Knights of Columbus in the hall. For more information about the Jesse Tree, how to build, and how to celebrate this Advent devotion in your home, go to our St. Michael’s website at: www.smlj.org/jessetree, or pick up a copy of the Jesse Tree brochure.

Advent Resources

The following is a partial compilation of a variety of resources. To access these, go to this page on our website: <http://www.smlj.org/advent>



Advent Wreath—From our St. Michael’s website (www.smlj.org), this resource will help you understand the Advent wreath, ways to build one in your home, and how to celebrate the devotion. (Online & brochure)

Jesse Tree—From our St. Michael’s website (www.smlj.org), this resource will help you understand the Jesse tree, ways of assembling one in your home, detailed information on the symbols, and how to celebrate the devotion. (Online & brochure)

“O” Antiphons—From our St. Michael’s website (www.smlj.org), this resource will help you understand the “O” Antiphons, which are prayed in the seven days preceding Christmas. (Online & brochure)

Best Advent Ever—Receive a daily e-mail from Dynamic Catholic (Matthew Kelly) containing short inspirational videos, practical tips, and more. (Online)

Daily Advent Reflections—Sign up for daily e-mails each day of Advent by Bishop Robert Barron. (Online)

Word on Fire—Visit the website by Bishop Robert Barron for a treasure trove of Catholic inspirational articles, homilies, videos, and much more. (Online)

The Pray More Advent Retreat—Register free for inspiring talks to help you prepare to celebrate the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Includes video presentations with transcripts and reflective study guides. (Online)

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Waiting



O God, you are the maker of heaven and earth, the potter who fashioned all of creation. Come and rouse our hearts from despair and fill us with the light of faith as we await your return.

Grant us patient perseverance during this period of waiting so that, having been enriched by Christ Jesus, we may joyfully and faithfully live in this world.

Keep us vigilant in our daily living. Wipe away all darkness so our hearts may be made holy and pure. Like our ancestors in faith, we cry out to you to come and save us!

Filled with hope, we trust that all creation will be made new on the day of your return. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Sunday, December 3, 2017

Keep Alert

Today's Readings: Isaiah 63:16b-17, 19b; 64:2-7; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37.

Today's readings may not be what you expect as this season of hope and longing begins. Two general themes unfold during Advent: the first two Sundays invite the Church to reflect on the Second Coming of Christ, while the final two Sundays direct our attention more specifically to the Incarnation. Along with the readings, be attentive to the Collects, or Opening Prayers, during the next few weeks, to notice these themes.

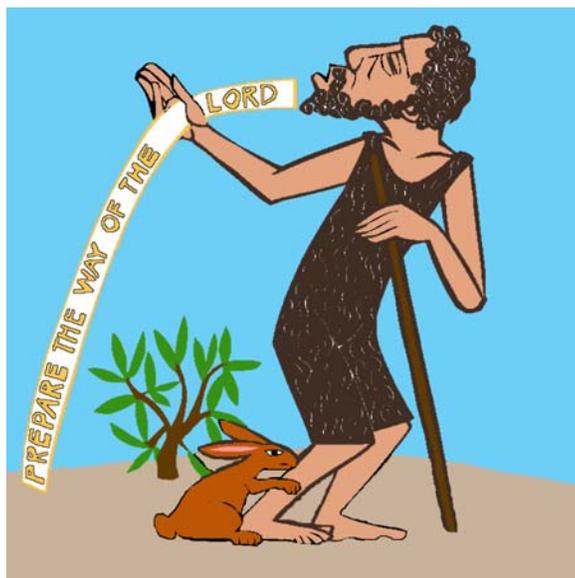
The overarching theme for today is "Keep alert." The First Reading, a communal lament (63:16b-17, 19) and a prayer (64:2-7), focuses our attention on a hurting world. When there is suffering, it is easy to complain or become cynical and forget God's faithfulness. St. Paul is telling us that in Christ we have already received the gifts we need to remain faithful during this life, this in between time. This is important information as we look to the Gospel. Jesus is very clear that we do not know the day or time of the Second Coming. Like the servants whose master is away, we have been charged to continue preaching the Good News, to keep our "house" in good working order.

We must remain watchful so that at that final hour, we may be found ready to give all glory and honor to the living God. This week, as you prepare your Jesse tree, consider the ways our ancestors were watchful and remained faithful. What might help you remain vigilant?

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SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Prepare the Way



Almighty and ever-living God, you are the source of all consolation and font of our salvation. You have saved your people from the wilderness, gathered them like lambs into your bosom, and fed them with a mother's care.

Make level within us all that sin has made rugged; take the crooked paths of our hearts and make them straight.

May our repentant hearts turn to you and, at the coming of your Son, be found eager to welcome him so that, in joyful celebration, your chosen people can say, "Here is your God!"

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Sunday, December 10, 2017

A New Heaven and Earth

Today's Readings: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalm 85:9-10, 11-12, 13-14; 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8

During this second week of Advent, we reflect on the future God has in store for us. When we delve more deeply into the Scriptures, it becomes clear that Advent is not as simple as we may think. Last week's readings urged us to be watchful and to ready ourselves for Christ's coming. This is not easy; it requires attention to God's Word within us. This week's message is in the same vein.

The prophet Isaiah paints a beautiful picture for the Israelites who are in captivity. Salvation will come, and the Lord will forgive all their sins. The image is radical. Isaiah depicts mountains being leveled and valleys being filled. He directs Zion to tell this Good News to the entire world. A similar theme is in the Gospel. John the Baptist is the herald of the coming Messiah. John calls all creation to repent and seek God's forgiveness. He is the herald who paves the way for Jesus, the one who reveals the new heaven and earth, which Peter speaks of in the Second Reading.

What does it look like to prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ? It takes a vulnerable and watchful heart. We can find ourselves held captive. When we seek God's forgiveness with contrite hearts, we open ourselves to an amazing grace. God's mercy is the well-spring of all healing. So let us act out our salvation in the ways we live and announce the triumphant entry of the coming Christ.

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THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Herald of Repentance



O God of Justice, you called the prophet John the Baptist, to prepare the way for the coming of your Son. John's message of repentance led others to embrace you.

Grant your servants ears to hear his cry in the desert of their hearts so that, transformed by love, we, too, may turn and embrace you. Fill us, O God, with the Spirit of courage and strengthen our will to be heralds of the Light.

Make us fervent in our prayer and direct us to bring glad tidings to the poor so that, on that final day, we may be found holy and blameless in your sight as we rejoice in the gift of your mercy.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Sunday, December 17, 2017

Glad Tidings

Today's Readings: Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11; Luke 1:46-48, 49-50, 53-54 (antiphon: Isaiah 61:10b); 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28.

Today is Gaudete Sunday, the turning point in the season of Advent. After two weeks of contemplating the end-time and Christ's Second Coming, the Church invites us to rejoice in Christ our Savior. We are filled with joy because we know that the coming of Christ is the coming of our salvation. Like Mary, we rejoice because God's love overflows into the world and takes root in our hearts. Today's response, taken from the Magnificat, is Mary's great song of praise and puts her words of praise on our lips. Imagine the joy she must have experienced. When has Christ filled you with joy? When we ponder the Incarnation, how can we not be filled with joy? Jesus is the Anointed One who brings Good News to the poor and frees the enslaved. Everything that God has promised to his people is revealed in Jesus and continues today to be revealed in his Church.

Even though this Sunday is joy filled, we cannot forget that many have lost hope and that they find themselves on the margins. Jesus calls us to carry the cross and be heralds of the Good News to the poor and brokenhearted. It is not always easy, but this is the work of all the baptized. This week, gather a group from your family or parish and using these readings for prayer, begin discerning how your community can bring glad tidings to the poor and release to prisoners.

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FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Find Us Ready



Good and gracious God, who sent the angel Gabriel to announce the gift of your Son, your love for us has no limits and endures forever.

As we prepare for the coming of Christ, eliminate within us all sin and fear, giving us pure hearts to receive him. May the Holy Spirit fill us with your grace, just as Mary was so filled, and find us ready to stand in your presence to serve you.

Keep us faithful to the covenant you made with our ancestors. May your joy saturate our beings as we go forth proclaiming your salvation, so that, on that final day, we will forever sing your goodness

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Sunday, December 24, 2017

Promise Fulfilled

Today's Readings: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38.

The readings proclaimed at the liturgy today invite us to ponder the mystery revealed in the birth of Christ. David wishes to build a proper house for the ark of God. The prophet Nathan reveals that God has a much bigger plan: to establish a house for him. God will build up the nation to prosper until the end of time. Because of the Incarnation, we are heirs to this promise and are members of God's household. As the psalm states, God has made a covenant with his people and we continue the song of praise and thanksgiving.

This promise cannot be fulfilled without Mary's yes. Since the time of the fall, all creation has waited for Mary. God chose her to bear his Son, the Messiah who establishes the Reign of God. Have you ever been in a situation where you had to give up everything (die to self) for another, especially for God's will? Here is a young woman whose whole life changes when she humbly says, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Tomorrow, the Christian world celebrates the birth of Jesus. The season of Christmas, challenges us to grow deeper in faith. Jesus reveals the Father's love and mercy. At every liturgy, the Church celebrates this mystery and receives the presence of God's own Son. We are to become what we receive—the Body of Christ. Take time today to reflect on your yes and see in what ways God has revealed himself to you

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CHRISTMAS

Christmas Masses:

12/24/17 - Vigil of Christmas (Sunday)

In the Church - 4:00pm, 6:00pm, 9:00pm

12/25/17 - Christmas Day (Monday) -

In the Church - 9:30 am, and 11:00 am