



**MUSIC FOR THE LITURGY**

**Sunday, December 17, 2023**

**Third Sunday of Advent**

Gathering: Come, Come, Emmanuel

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 85)

**Show us your kindness, O God. Show us your kindness, O God.**

Preparation Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming BB 94

Mass Parts Mass For Christ The Savior

Communion Ubi Caritas BB 356

Recessional: Ready The Way BB 63



Out of respect for the Lord and in consideration of fellow parishioners, please remember to silence or turn off your cell phones during Mass. Thank you!

**PLEASE HELP US!**

As you leave church, kindly take your Bulletin with you - or return it to the basket at the entrance of the Church, return your music book and Mass card to their proper place, and pick up after yourself as you leave. Thanks for being attentive and respectful! F. Albert.



St. Luke the Evangelist is now on Facebook! Go to [www.facebook.com/stlukenh.org/](http://www.facebook.com/stlukenh.org/) or **St. Luke the Evangelist Parish – Newton/Plastow** and give us a Like! Please invite fellow parishioners & friends to do the same.

**✠ PARISH TITHING ✠**

Our Parish needs to take in **\$9700.00 each week in order to make ends meet.** This amount represents an adjusted budget offertory of \$8500.00 per week plus the combination of budgeted Property and Fuel second collections (\$4800.00 per month divided into 4 weeks or \$1200.00 weekly). Your weekly contribution helps ensure that the Parish remains a vibrant community. Please remember to submit your weekly gift even if you will be away. Consider signing up for electronic giving (see below). Especially in these trying times, your Parish depends on your responsible stewardship and support!

**December 8, 2023**

**Immaculate Conception \$ 962.71**

**December 10, 2023**

**Offertory \$7,039.05**

**Retired Religious Fund \$1,846.00**



Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish uses **Parish Giving** to provide parishioners with an opportunity to make your offertory and other contributions through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). Parish Giving is a simple, secure, and convenient way to manage your stewardship without weekly envelopes and without worries. This program is available to parishioners at no cost. Log on to the St. Luke the Evangelist Parish website at <http://stlukenh.org>, click on the Parish Giving logo, and follow the easy registration instructions.

**UPCOMING SECOND & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

December 17 Fuel  
 December 24 No Second Collection  
 December 25 Christmas and Needs of Parish

**Suggested Weekly Contribution Based on Income**

Annual Income	5% Commitment annually/ weekly	3% Commitment annually/ weekly
\$100,000	\$5,000/ <b>\$100</b>	\$3,000/ <b>\$60</b>
\$75,000	\$3,750/ <b>\$75</b>	\$2,250/ <b>\$45</b>
\$60,000	\$3,000/ <b>\$60</b>	\$1,800/ <b>\$36</b>
\$50,000	\$2,500/ <b>\$50</b>	\$1,500/ <b>\$30</b>
\$40,000	\$2,000/ <b>\$40</b>	\$1,200/ <b>\$24</b>
\$30,000	\$1,500/ <b>\$30</b>	\$900/ <b>\$18</b>
\$25,000	\$1,250/ <b>\$25</b>	\$750/ <b>\$15</b>
\$15,000	\$750/ <b>\$15</b>	\$450/ <b>\$9</b>

**Suggested Weekly Contribution Based on a Percentage Increase**

Your Current Offertory Contribution	25% Increase	30% Increase	40% Increase
\$75.00	\$93.75	\$97.50	\$105.00
\$50.00	\$62.50	\$65.00	\$70.00
\$40.00	\$50.00	\$52.00	\$56.00
\$35.00	\$43.75	\$45.50	\$49.00
\$30.00	\$37.50	\$39.00	\$42.00
\$25.00	\$31.25	\$32.50	\$35.00
\$20.00	\$25.00	\$26.00	\$28.00
\$15.00	\$18.75	\$19.50	\$21.00
\$10.00	\$12.50	\$13.00	\$14.00
\$5.00	\$6.25	\$6.50	\$7.00

**CLOTHING DRIVE**

**Kimberly's 18th Annual Holiday Give Away!!!**

I'm back!!! Despite having a toddler now and baby #2 on the way, I'm preparing for another collection!!! We will be collecting clothing and nonperishable food items on **January 6 and 7** at Holy Angels Church in Plaistow (in the Parish Hall), from **12:00 to 4:00 PM** each day. We are accepting CLEAN clothing of any size, any season, any decade. Any donations of socks or underwear must be new and packaged. If you have any questions, concerns, or would like to volunteer, please contact me at: [kimberly-andrade@comcast.net](mailto:kimberly-andrade@comcast.net). Thank you so much for your continued support throughout the years. I couldn't do it without you!

God bless,  
Kimberly Clenord

**EARLY BULLETIN DEADLINES**

With the holiday season approaching, we have several early bulletin deadlines:

Deadline for the December 31 bulletin is **Monday, December 18 at 12:00 Noon.**

Deadline for the January 7 bulletin is **Monday, December 18 at 12:00 Noon.**

**PARISH OFFICE CLOSED**

The Parish Office will be closed on Monday, December 25, Tuesday, December 26, and on Monday, January 1.

**MARRIAGE IN THE CHURCH**

**Did you know that all Catholics are required to be married in the Church as a condition of the validity of their marriage?**

Any Catholic married in a civil ceremony (JP) or in any religious ceremony other than a Catholic one (unless specifically excepted by the Bishop) is not living out the Sacrament of Marriage in its fullness according to the teaching of the Church. Contact Father Albert in the Parish Office for more information and assistance – there are ways in which your situation may be resolved!



**ADVENT EVENING PRAYER**

Join us on Sunday evenings of the Advent season for sung Evening Prayer at 6:00 PM at Mary, Mother of the Church in Newton. The Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available following Evening Prayer.

**NEW HAMPSHIRE CATHOLIC APPEAL**

Thank you on behalf of Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish for making a donation to the New Hampshire Catholic Appeal. If you have not made a donation to the Appeal, you can do so by filling out a donation envelope found in the pews or at the church entrance. You can make an online gift by visiting [www.catholicnh.org/about/get-involved/giving/nhca/](http://www.catholicnh.org/about/get-involved/giving/nhca/). You can also use your smartphone with the QR code below.

Our Parish target is \$46,740.00. **As of December 1, 2023, we have reached our goal!** Thank you again for your support of our NH Catholic community and these important diocesan ministries.



**GIVING TREES**

Thanks to all who took ornaments from the Giving Tree this year. You have helped to make the Christmas season brighter for children of the community and for many people who are struggling to make ends meet. Your generosity is truly appreciated!



**WHILE AWAY THIS WINTER...**

We appreciate all of you who remember to send in your Parish Offertory during the Winter even when on vacation or visiting other parishes. Thank you for remembering that our expenses also continue through the Winter months. We invite others to consider doing the same before or even after you return home.

✠ WEEKLY CALENDAR ✠

**Sunday, December 17**

10:00 AM Religious Ed – K to 6 *Plaistow*  
 6:00 PM Evening Prayer *Newton*  
 6:30 PM Sacrament of Reconciliation *Newton*

**Tuesday, December 19**

6:00 PM Grief Share Group *Plaistow*  
 6:00 PM Finance Council Meeting *Plaistow*

**Wednesday, December 20**

**Holy Angels Church Open All Day For Prayer**

7:00 PM St. Vincent de Paul Society Meeting *Plaistow*

**Thursday, December 21**

8:30 AM – 8:30 PM Eucharistic Adoration *Newton*

**Saturday, December 23**

3:00 PM Sacrament of Reconciliation *Plaistow*

**PRAYER LINE**

St. Luke's offers a prayer line as a resource for those seeking prayer assistance. To submit your prayer request please call Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 314 or email her at [csmith@stluketheevangelist.net](mailto:csmith@stluketheevangelist.net).



The Sanctuary Candle in Holy Angels Church will burn this week in loving memory of **Marcia Gallant** by William Tucker

**VIGIL LIGHT**

The Vigil Light in front of the Blessed Mother icon at Mary Mother of the Church will burn this week in loving memory of **Allen Neale** by William Tucker



The Sanctuary Candle in Mary, Mother of the Church will burn this week in loving memory of **Elizabeth Cronin** by William Tucker

✠ MASS INTENTIONS ✠

**Saturday, December 16 ~ Third Sunday of Advent**

*Is 61:1-2a, 10-11; 1 Thes 5:16-24; Jn 1:6-8, 19-28 (Vigil)*  
 4:00 PM Rick Field by Jackie Tremblay  
*Plaistow*

**Sunday, December 17 ~ Third Sunday of Advent**

*Is 61:1-2a, 10-11; 1 Thes 5:16-24; Jn 1:6-8, 19-28*  
 8:00 AM Suzanne Busch  
 by the St. Vincent de Paul Society  
*Newton*  
 10:00 AM Donald Nadeau by Bob and Sandy Nadeau  
*Plaistow*

**Monday, December 18 ~ Late Advent Weekday**

*Jer 23:5-8; Mt 1:18-25*  
 8:00 AM Barbara Metcalf by Alice and Bob Litwinovich  
*Newton*

**Tuesday, December 19 ~ Late Advent Weekday**

*Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a; Lk 1:5-25*  
 8:00 AM All Souls Intentions  
*Plaistow*

**Wednesday, December 20 ~ Late Advent Weekday**

*Is 7:10-14; Lk 1:26-38*  
 6:30 PM Linda Poire (Month's Mind) by her husband  
*Plaistow*

**Thursday, December 21 ~ Peter Canisius, Priest and Doctor of the Church**

*Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a; Lk 1:39-45*  
 8:00 AM Joseph A, Krafton by Barbara Metcalf  
*Newton*

**Friday, December 22 ~ Late Advent Weekday**

*1 Sm 1:24-28; Lk 1:46-56*  
 No Mass

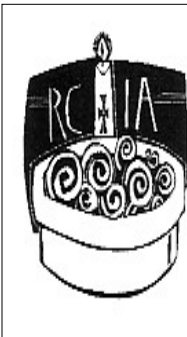
**Saturday, December 23 ~ John of Kanty, Priest**

*Mal 3:1-4, 23-24; Lk 1:57-66 (Day)*  
*2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38 (Vigil)*  
 4:00 PM Joyce Gauthier by Sr. Lorraine Aucoin, pm  
*Plaistow*

**Sunday, December 24 ~ Fourth Sunday of Advent**

*2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38*  
 8:00 AM Dexter Cronin by Tom and Kathy Cronin  
*Newton*  
 10:00 AM Priscilla Aro (Birthday Remembrance) by her children and grandchildren  
*Plaistow*





**WELCOME IN CHRIST!**

Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish invites all to a deeper love of Jesus and to a fullness of communion with the Church. The **RCIA** is a process where adults and older children are welcomed into the Catholic Church. Some have never been Baptized, others never received Eucharist or

Confirmation, and others arrive at our door after a long faith journey.

Do you know someone who is thinking about becoming part of our Catholic community? Are you the non-Catholic spouse of a parishioner who is wondering about full communion with the Church? Are you an adult Catholic who for whatever reason, "missed" one or more of the sacraments of initiation while growing up? Do you have children over 7 years of age who were never Baptized, or older children who "missed" sacraments?

The Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (and its adapted form for children) welcomes all kinds of people into the Catholic family. The RCIA is for any adult who is: unbaptized and recognizes a need for spirituality in their life, or Baptized and raised in another Christian tradition but interested in learning about the Catholic faith, or Baptized in the Catholic faith, but never received any formal religious training.

Children of all ages are welcome and participate in age appropriate meetings for their RCIA experience.

Contact Father Albert or Cathy Smith in the Parish Office at 603.382.8324 for more information.

**THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS**

The Compassionate Friends provide support for bereaved families after the loss of a child, grandchild, or sibling—any age, any cause. Visit our website at [www.tcfnewburyport.org](http://www.tcfnewburyport.org).

**VITA NOVA – MEN’S RETREAT**

Join other Catholic men for fellowship and spiritual growth as they explore *Surrendering To Divine Providence* on **January 5-7, 2024**. For more information, go to [www.vitanova.org/catholic-mens-retreat](http://www.vitanova.org/catholic-mens-retreat).

**MEN OF ST. JOSEPH**

**ALL MEN OF ST. JOSEPH MEETINGS HAVE BEEN CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE**

**ADORERS NEEDED AT ADORATION**

We are truly blessed to have times for Adoration of Our Lord in our Parish. This time of prayer and intercession is not only a source of great grace for the individual but is a great source of grace for us as a parish family. We have many who have made the commitment to spend an hour each week with our Eucharistic Lord. Adoration takes place each Thursday in Newton from 8:30 AM to 8:30 PM. We also need people at all times so we can have 2 people at each hour. If you can commit to one hour a week in Adoration of our Lord, or if you can be a substitute, please contact Cathy Smith at 603-382-8324, ext. 305, or email her a [csmith@stluketheevangelist.net](mailto:csmith@stluketheevangelist.net).

**The Church in Plaistow is open all day on Wednesdays for people to stop by and pray before the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle.**

**HOLY ANGELS CEMETERY CLOSED**

**Holy Angels Cemetery in Plaistow will be closed from December 2023 until Spring 2024.** This decision comes as result of the real dangers of snow and ice in the Cemetery and the costs to Parishioners to inter during the winter months. Please contact the Parish Office with any questions.

**✘ PARISH DIRECTORY ✘**

Parish Office 603-382-8324  
Parish Prayer Line 603-382-8324 x 314  
St. Vincent de Paul Society 603-382-8324 x 315  
St. Luke’s Food Pantry 603-819-4949  
Preschool 603-382-9783  
Presentation of Mary Convent 603-382-2744

Fr. Albert Tremblay [fr.albert@stluketheevangelist.net](mailto:fr.albert@stluketheevangelist.net)  
Cathy Smith [csmith@stluketheevangelist.net](mailto:csmith@stluketheevangelist.net)  
Joyce Szczapa [jszczapa@stluketheevangelist.net](mailto:jszczapa@stluketheevangelist.net)  
Jackie Tremblay [jtremblay@stluketheevangelist.net](mailto:jtremblay@stluketheevangelist.net)  
Val Barczak [mvmbarczak@comcast.net](mailto:mvmbarczak@comcast.net)  
Parish Council [parishcouncil@stluketheevangelist.net](mailto:parishcouncil@stluketheevangelist.net)





**MONTHLY FOOD DRIVE**

**Sponsored by the Knights of Columbus  
St. Jude Council #6617**

The Knights of Columbus and Saint Luke the Evangelist Food Pantry would like to thank our parishioners for the ongoing support to feed those in need. Over the last two months, support has been provided to 135 families. That represents 118 children under the age of 18 and 111 adults over the age of 60, for a total of 370 individuals served. Shopping lists and bags are provided on the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of every month with the general collection of non-perishable items happening the following (4<sup>th</sup>) weekend. Food donations can also be left in the plastic totes at the rear of either church or brought to the Parish Office any time they are open. Prefer not to shop? Gift cards or checks can be made out to Saint Luke Food Pantry anytime. Your generosity and support are greatly appreciated!

**KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS  
HAPPENINGS**

**Thank you:** Thank you to Knight Jim Edwards who donated a 12 foot Christmas Tree to Mary Mother of the Church in memory of his special friend, Suzanne Busch, who recently passed away.

**Pasta for a Purpose:** The Knights had a goal to raise \$1,400 to buy a new freezer for our food pantry. The event on November 18<sup>th</sup> was a huge success and we beat the goal by a wide margin. Thank you to Chef Rudi for a great meal and to all the volunteers, those who attended, and those that made donations. Vivat Jesus! (Jesus Lives)

**THE KNIGHTS OF  
COLUMBUS  
ST. JUDE COUNCIL  
#6617**



**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS**

A Men's AA Step Meeting is held on Sunday mornings from 7:00 to 8:00 AM at the St. Luke the Evangelist Parish Hall (Holy Angels.) Masks are required. Bring your own coffee. For more information, call Joe at 617-921-9899.

**CURSILLO**

If you have a desire to know Jesus more closely, a Cursillo is for you. The Cursillo weekend is a short course in Christianity. The purpose of the weekend is to facilitate a meaningful personal encounter with Christ and his body, the Church. Cursillo weekends are being offered at the Sarto Center in Hookset, NH. To find out more, contact Mark Collopy at 603-833-7341 or explore [www.nhcursillo.org](http://www.nhcursillo.org).



**GIVE BACK REUSABLE BAG PROGRAM**

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul, St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, has been chosen by **Shaw's**, 4 Plaistow Road, Plaistow, NH to participate in the *Give Back Where It Counts Reusable Bag Program*. For the entire month of December, for every \$3.00 bag purchased at **Shaw's in Plaistow**, they will donate \$1.00 to St. Vincent de Paul. The bags will be displayed near the self-checkout or ask a customer service representative for help.

**St. Vincent  
de Paul  
Society**



**Your "Dropped Dollar" Hard At Work**

Thank you for your continued support of the St. Vincent de Paul Society! Please know that your "dropped dollars" are being used wisely to help the poor in our area. Your generosity does not go unnoticed.

Drop-a-Dollar in the St. Vincent de Paul box on your way out of church. Remember ~ 100% of your donation is used to help those who need a hand up, not a handout.

Our next meeting on **Wednesday, December 20 at 7:00 PM**. We meet downstairs in the Church Hall in Plaistow. **New members are always welcome!**

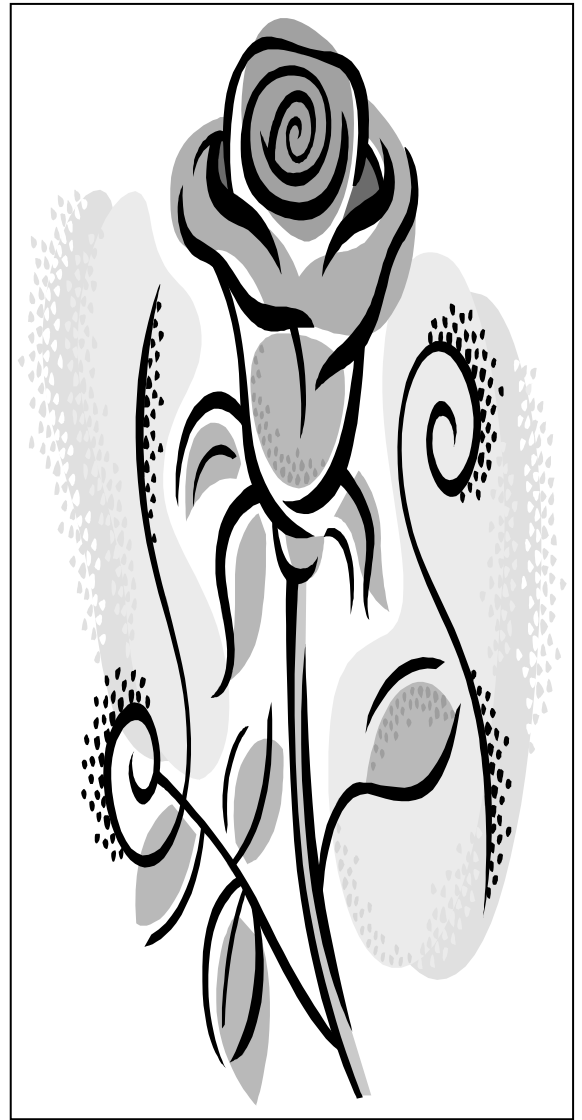
If you seek assistance or need information about the St. Vincent de Paul Society, call 603-382-8324 x315.

**Hear, O LORD, and answer me  
for I am poor and needy.**

## THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Why roses and joyful music on the third Sunday of Advent? It all starts with a golden rose. Long ago, the third Sunday of Advent was sort of a “break” in the fasting that was taking place before the celebration of Christmas. The third Sunday of Advent’s chants and songs talked about “looking up,” being “joy-filled and full of hope” at the nearness of the Savior. In church, the story of the Annunciation was common as the Gospel of the third Sunday of Advent.

The German name for the third Sunday of Advent was *Rosen Sonntag*, or the “Sunday of the Roses.” That name came as a result of 15<sup>th</sup> century German pilgrim’s witnessing Mass in Rome, where the Pope, after Mass on the third Sunday of Advent, would carry a golden rose in procession out of the church. The rose itself would be sent to an exemplary Christian after Mass that day as a gift.



This custom was in use at Rome as far back as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, where the Pope would present bouquets of roses to people in the church on the third Sunday of Advent. Over the years, the real roses were replaced by golden roses, often encrusted with jewels. In churches all over Christendom in the West, the custom of presenting roses to exemplary Christians of a particular place caught on. From there, the liturgical color for the day was changed to reflect the joy of the liturgy and the custom of presenting roses – the Church wore “old rose” as a way to signal the nearness of the Christmas festival.

Today, we sing joyful songs and meditate on the image of the rose – whose purity and beauty are reflected in the person of the Blessed Mother Mary, and whose fragrance and loveliness are reflected in the coming “rose of the winter night” – Jesus, Immanuel.

**SAINT LUKE THE EVANGELIST PARISH  
LITURGICAL CALENDAR     ADVENT-CHRISTMAS, 2023- 24**

**GIVING TREE GIFTS DUE DECEMBER 9/10 – Advent 2**

**ADVENT 1**  
Sunday, December 3     Regular weekend schedule  
6:00 PM Advent Evening Prayer (Newton)  
6:30 PM Sacrament of Reconciliation (Newton)

Thursday, December 7     Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM  
Patronal Feast of the USA  
Holy Day Vigil Liturgy 6:30 PM (Plaistow)  
No 8 am Liturgy or Eucharistic Adoration at Newton

Friday, December 8     Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM  
Patronal Feast of the USA  
Holy Day Liturgy 8:00 AM (Newton)

**ADVENT 2**  
Sunday, December 10     Regular weekend schedule  
Advent Penance Service St. Michael Exeter 3 PM  
6:00 PM Advent Evening Prayer (Newton)  
6:30 PM Sacrament of Reconciliation (Newton)

Wednesday, December 13     **LAST DAY TO RETURN GIVING TREE GIFTS AT PARISH OFFICE**

**ADVENT 3**  
Sunday, December 17     Regular weekend schedule  
6:00 PM Advent Evening Prayer (Newton)  
6:30 PM Sacrament of Reconciliation (Newton)

**ADVENT 4**  
Sunday, December 24     Regular weekend schedule

Giving Tree gifts due today!

**PARISH OFFICES CLOSED: DEC. 22 & 26  
PARISH OFFICE RESUMES REGULAR HOURS AS OF JAN 2**

<b>CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE</b> <i>(A Holy Day of Obligation)</i>	
<b>Sunday, December 24</b>	<b>VIGIL OF THE NATIVITY</b> <b>4:00 PM     Liturgy (Plaistow)</b> <b>6:30 PM     Liturgy (Newton)</b>
<b>Monday, December 25</b>	<b>SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD</b> <b>9:00 am     Liturgy (Newton)</b>

Monday, December 26     NO MASS at Newton

Thursday, December 28     No Adoration at Newton

**FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY**  
Sunday, December 31     Regular weekend schedule

Christmas Octave January 1 is NOT a Holy Day of Obligation this year.

**CHRISTMAS OCTAVE**  
Sunday, December 31     **SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS**  
4:00 PM Vigil Liturgy (Plaistow)

Monday, January 1     **SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS**  
9:00 am Liturgy (Newton)

Saturday, January 6     3:00 PM Sacrament of Reconciliation (Plaistow)  
4:00 PM Vigil Liturgy- THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (Plaistow)

Sunday, January 7     8:00 am Liturgy, THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (Newton)  
10:00 am Liturgy, THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (Plaistow)  
6:00 PM Christmas Evening Prayer (Newton)

Monday, January 8     8:00 am Liturgy, BAPTISM OF THE LORD (Newton)  
6:00 PM Christmas Evening Prayer (Newton)

## A reflection for the Third Sunday in Advent Year B



### Third Sunday of Advent

who we are not. This kind of self-knowledge narrows down how we might act if we are to be consistent with who we are.

Knowing who he is not (the Christ, Elijah, or the Prophet), John can be clear about who he is: one sent from God to announce the presence of Christ and call others to recognize Christ. Like John, before we can be heralds of Christ, we must answer the question, “Who are you?” Today’s Gospel challenges us to understand that what we do must flow from who we are. Further and even more importantly, the Gospel helps us understand that who we are must flow from our personal relationship to Jesus.

John fulfilled his mission as the one sent by God who would “testify to the light.” John’s identity and mission are clearly set forth in this Gospel. Who is he? Not the Christ, but he is one sent by God. What does John do? He testifies to the light, cries out, makes straight the way of the Lord. This Gospel does not answer the question for us about who we are. But it does show us a pattern of behavior that helps us answer the identity question: be clear about our relationship to Christ (who we are) and then testify to the presence of Christ among us (what we are to do). The entry into this pattern is found in Baptism.

“Why then do [we] baptize?” This question put forth by the Gospel captures in a few words our own identity and mission. Our Baptism plunges us into Christ’s saving mystery. Our Baptism transforms us into the body of Christ and initiates a lifelong and unique relationship to Christ and each other. As the Baptized, we share in John’s mission to announce the presence of Christ among us and within us and we share in Christ’s mission to announce what God has already accomplished: “a year of favor from the Lord” (first reading). Baptism sharpens our salvific longings so that we, hopefully, do not settle for intermediate goals, or place our belief in someone other than Christ.

The challenge of the Third Sunday of Advent is to be as clear about who we are and who we are not as was John the Baptist. This clarity can only come from developing an intimate relationship with the One “whose sandal strap [we are] not worthy to untie.” Yet, because Jesus calls us in Baptism to be one with him in the body of Christ, we are worthy because God has made us “perfectly holy” (second reading). For this, we “rejoice always.”

The work of John the Baptist continues in us, the body of Christ. And, like John, this is what we do: testify, cry out, make straight the way to the Lord. Through our Baptismal anointing and identity as body of Christ we, too, are heralds of Christ, sent by God who, through us, makes “justice and praise spring up before all the nations.” United in and through Christ Jesus, the Promise One, we as disciples can bring about a “year of favor from the Lord.”



# BAPTISM

Baptism is the first of seven sacraments and the way in which a person becomes a member of the Catholic Church.

## WHO CAN RECEIVE A CATHOLIC BAPTISM?

Anyone who has not already been baptized can receive the sacrament of Baptism in the Catholic Church. Baptism leaves an *indelible* (permanent) mark on the soul and there is no way nor any reason that one could be or should be re-baptized. There are no age restrictions for baptism; one can be baptized as an infant, or as an adult. In other words, nobody is ever too old or too young to be baptized.



In the Catholic Church today, people are usually baptized as infants by a priest or deacon. There are extreme cases, however, when even an unbaptized person can baptize someone. All that is required is the will to do what the Church does, and to apply the Trinitarian Baptismal formula which is “I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Catholic Church recognizes any baptism that uses water and in which the person baptized was baptized with the Trinitarian formula. Some churches do not use the Trinitarian formula for baptism and thus their baptisms are not valid.

## THE GIFT OF BAPTISM

When it comes down to it, baptism is a gift from God to humanity. Baptism initiates us into the family of God and cleanses us of sin. We do not need to earn this gift. God gives it freely to all who are open to it. For someone who is baptized as an infant, the personal response of faith comes as the child grows to respond to the graces given in baptism.

Baptism is connected to faith, and this connection is not lost when an infant is baptized. The *Apostolic Tradition* (usually attributed to St. Hippolytus) was written in the early third century. It states: “Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them.” Today, the Church still recognizes the connection between faith and baptism. When a child is baptized, the parents’ faith speaks for the child who is too young to have explicit faith on his or her own. This is why the Church requires a reasonable hope that the parents will raise the child in the Catholic faith before a child is baptized.

## WHAT DOES THE GRACE OF BAPTISM ACCOMPLISH?

Baptism forgives all sins that may have been committed prior to a person’s baptism including original sin, mortal sins, and venial sins, and it relieves the punishment for those sins. It makes the newly baptized person “a new creature,” transforming the person into an adopted child of God and a member of Christ. Baptism incorporates a person into the Church, which is the body of Christ. It brings someone into the flock of the faithful and brings them to share in the royal priesthood of Christ (1 Pet. 2:9-10). Catholic baptism gives a share in the common priesthood of all believers, and it also brings about the sacramental bond of the unity of Christians. Last, but certainly not least, baptism leaves an indelible spiritual mark (character) of belonging to Christ on the soul. Nothing anyone can do in terms of sin can erase this mark. Sin may prevent one from being open to the salvation God offers through baptism, but a baptized person will always carry the mark of a Christian on their soul.



## COME, O COME....

Yes, you read the title right. That's "O" - the letter of the alphabet that most reminds us of breakfast cereal, inner tubes, doughnuts, hula hoops, no hitters... and Advent. In many parishes, "O" is the first word said in the new church year. We sing it in Advent's most popular song, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." It announces the season which anticipates the coming of Christ at Christmas.

This hymn, which is almost synonymous with the whole season of Advent was first composed and sung to announce that Advent was ending. **The last eight days of Advent (beginning on December 17 and ending on December 24) form a little season all by themselves.** As the church prepares to celebrate the nativity of Christ, the Liturgy gets more intense. At daily Mass, the Gospels relate the events leading up to the first Christmas. At evening prayer, the Church prays a special series of antiphons that beckon the Messiah to come. Each night gives him a new name, drawn from the Old Testament tradition. "O Wisdom," "O Sacred Lord," "O Flower of Jesse's Stem," "O Key of David," "O Radiant Dawn," "O King of All Nations," and, on Christmas eve, the greatest of them all, "O Emmanuel," a name that means "God is with us."

For the reasons which will be immediately obvious, we call that group of refrains the "O Antiphons." They are a hallmark of late Advent, and a collection of music our church has treasured for centuries. The Mass now includes a version of them as the alleluia verses for the same eight days before Christmas.



In the Middle Ages, those seven antiphons got strung together into a popular hymn. The last one became verse one and “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” was born. Thus, the antiphon originally established for the last evening before Christmas Eve is now often sung to begin Advent. That “O” of course, simply tells us that we’re talking to someone. It is like saying, “Hey, you,” only more politely. But “O” reminds us of much more. It makes us think of something having no beginning and no end, like God’s love or an Advent wreath. It resembles the shape of our mouth and the sound we make when we face a mystery we cannot fully comprehend.

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O come, Thou **Wisdom** from on high,  
Who orders all things mightily;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
And teach us in her ways to go.

O come, great **Lord of might**,  
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height  
In ancient times once gave the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.

O come, Thou **Rod of Jesse**, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory over the grave.

O come, Thou **Root of Jesse's tree**,  
An ensign of Thy people be;  
Before Thee rulers silent fall;  
All peoples on Thy mercy call.

O come, Thou **Day-spring**, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
O Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

O come, **Desire of nations**, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.

O come, Thou **Key of David**, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.

O come, O come, **Emmanuel**,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.





# Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday of Advent (B)  
December 17, 2023

## Who Are You?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

So far, the readings for Sundays in Advent have shown God leading the people into a new way of life—a way of righteousness and loyalty, of honesty and responsibility. Today the readings show the people beginning to see that the accomplishment of this transformation would come through the leadership of one individual. Who might that person be?

The passage from Isaiah describes a prophet, one anointed by God and bringing good news to the poor. When the Baptist appears on the scene in John's Gospel, people wonder if it might be him. He insists he is not the one, nor is he a prophet. Then, as we read in John 1:19, "Who are you?" Recalling the passage from Isaiah read on the First Sunday of

Advent, John tells them he is the one repairing the road, getting it ready for the long-awaited one to arrive. He adds that his baptism is a baptism of repentance. He is readying them to be what Paul describes as "perfectly holy...blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

We now see that these readings are preparing us for salvation. We are now told that such divine graciousness will be inaugurated by an individual, one who has not yet been identified. Will it be a powerful king? A mighty warrior? A spectacular prophet? Those in the time before Christ didn't know. We now know that it will be someone powerful enough to initiate a revolutionary change in the lives of the entire people. Now waiting gets exciting! †

## A Word from Pope Francis

Jesus has come to bring joy to all people for all time. It is not just a hopeful joy or a joy postponed until paradise: as if here on earth we are sad but in paradise we will be filled with joy. No! It is not that, but a joy already real and tangible now, because *Jesus himself is our joy*.

ANGELUS, ROME, DECEMBER 14, 2014



## Sunday Readings

**Isaiah 61:1-2a, 10-11**

I will rejoice heartily in the LORD,  
my being exults in my God.

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing.

**John 1:6-8, 19-28**

[John the Baptist said,] "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert,  
'Make straight the way of the Lord.'"

*John is the one preparing the road, getting it ready for the long-awaited one to arrive.*



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Can you imagine how surprising Jesus was to those who were waiting for the Messiah?
- What messages from the Gospel are surprising even today?

# The Loneliest Children

*Editor's note: This article appeared in Liguorian in December 1955. Today there are similar efforts, including Prison Fellowship Angel Tree.*

Several years ago, a salesman named Dan Vinson decided that the loneliest people at Christmas must be children whose fathers are in prison.

Since 1943, Mr. Vinson and some volunteer workers have sent out millions of Christmas toys each year which have been donated by businessmen everywhere. The children have never heard of Mr. Vinson, and that is the way he wants it to be. He believes that children want presents from someone they love, so wardens and convicts are contacted, and the imprisoned father is sent a list of toys. He checks the ones he wants, and volunteers package the selections and mail them to the prison, where the father



readdresses the package to his children. Dan Vinson often says, "A man never stands so straight as when he stoops to help a child." †

# Better than a Sermon

When Frederick Ozanam, the founder of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, was eighteen, he endured many temptations. One day, in great agony of soul, he entered a church in Paris where he saw an old man devoutly reciting his rosary [and]...knelt behind him. The old man was the scientist André-Marie Ampere, [a founder of the science of classical electromagnetism]. The sight of such faith touched Ozanam deeply. Suddenly prayers and tears welled up in his heart. It was a complete victory over his temptations. "The rosary of Ampere," said Ozanam afterward, "did more for me than all books and sermons put together." †

From *Liguorian*, December 1956

## Signs of the Season—Part III: Christmas Cards

Paige Byrne Shortal

Christmas cards are something of a ritual in our home, both the sending and the receiving. Somehow it became a "sin" to open a Christmas card alone. When the mail comes, the cards are set aside, to remain unopened until the next family meal. After dinner, the cards are gathered, and we take turns reading them aloud.

We send a lot of cards. Each year I wonder if we should keep sending a card to a woman who was in my choir twenty years ago, or the high school

classmate, or the teacher who made such a difference. But it's so easy to lose people and I don't want to be the first to let go.

Good news isn't complete until we've shared it with someone. Christmas cards are a cozy, civilized way of telling the story again. We need to tell it. We need to hear it. That God is. That God loves us. That God cares. That God is involved in our world. That the Incarnation Story is really true. And in the midst of the loss and sin and pettiness and fear and all the things that distract us from our one most important task of creating on this earth small colonies of heaven—that nothing is

powerful enough to make the story less true. I need to hear it again. And I need to share it. †



*Lord Jesus, so that believers everywhere may embrace the truth you came to reveal, we pray—Be born in us, be born in our world.*

The Redemptorists

## WEEKDAY READINGS

December 18–23

**Monday**, Advent Weekday:

Jer 23:5–8 / Mt 1:18–25

**Tuesday**, Advent Weekday:

Jgs 13:2–7, 24–25a / Lk 1:5–25

**Wednesday**, Advent Weekday:

Is 7:10–14 / Lk 1:26–38

**Thursday**, Advent Weekday:


Sg 2:8–14 or Zep 3:14–18a / Lk 1:39–45

**Friday**, Advent Weekday:

1 Sm 1:24–28 / Lk 1:46–56

**Saturday**, Advent Weekday:

Mal 3:1–4, 23–24 / Lk 1:57–66

Bringing Home  
the **Word** 

December 17, 2023

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