

St. James the Greater

Where All Are Welcome

Second Sunday of Advent ✚ December 6, 2020



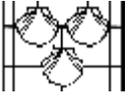
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Message from Fr. Tom

Hello, and continued greetings for a **Happy Advent**. It was good to see the stand that **Gary McMahon** crafted back in place to hold our noble Advent wreath. During the week I decorated the wreath area a bit more with **two pieces of art: an olive wood carving of the “Lion and the Lamb” and a print of “Pregnant Mary.”** The Lion and the Lamb piece was here when I arrived, and it is a favorite subject of mine. I thought to put it out in church this week on Tuesday when the first reading at mass was Isaiah’s vision of the “Peaceable Kingdom” where the lion and the lamb will lie down together and the cow and the bear will also dine together. Actually, Isaiah writes that the “Wolf and the lamb” will lie down together, but for some reason artists have more commonly portrayed a lion with the lamb. Isaiah does mention a lion, but only to say that it will eat hay like an ox.

One of my favorite short jokes is from Woody Allen who wrote, “The wolf and the lamb will lie down together, but the lamb won’t get much sleep.” So it is in our world, so hard to trust that our enemies with a history of hurting us will not do so. **It takes a lot of courage and risk-taking to be a peacemaker, and yet that is clearly what Jesus asks us to do.** Indeed, being a peacemaker is sharing in Jesus’ own ministry. **By his Incarnation, Death and Resurrection, he reconciled the world to God. When we reconcile with family members or another from whom we are estranged, we share in that divine mission.**

The “Pregnant Mary” print that I placed by the wreath was given to me by **Sr. Kathy Wiesneski**, a Holy Cross sister from Merrill, WI with whom I shared campus ministry at UW-Stout for several years. She was called away by her order to help with vocation recruitment and to help care for the aging sisters in her community. Speaking of which, **you might see an envelope that could hold a donation to support the lives of “Retired Religious.”** Perhaps the Holy Spirit will move you to be generous about this. “Religious” in this sense basically means “Nuns and brothers/priests who belong to a religious order such as the Franciscans, the Benedictines, or the Carmelites,” though there are many others. I was taught by several Dominicans at my grade school in Wausau. They were all kind and gentle. **Sr. Barbara, Sr. Gracita, Sr. Carmella, Sr. Carolyn, and Sr. Marie Donald.**

People have also been asking about **opportunities for confession during Advent**. You are of course welcome to do so, though I have always focused more on Lent than Advent as the best time to experience the sacrament. I have been hearing confessions and offering absolution every Saturday at 3:30 outside at the Last Supper Sculpture. Next week, I will add some times. Let’s just say **Thursday, December 10 at 9:30-10:00 AM and again Friday, December 11 from 11:00-12:00.** Or by appointment.

We have a Holy Day this coming week with the Feast of the **Immaculate Conception on Tuesday**. If you want to come that day, **I encourage you to come to the 9:00 AM mass.** Two more masses are scheduled that day, but those are for the school community and so seating is very limited due to our virus precautions.

We had **another death in the parish due to COVID** and another just around the corner, it seems. While news of coming vaccines is encouraging, please continue to love your neighbor by the safe practices of mask wearing in public, washing your hands often, and keeping the six-foot distance. I know that many describe the virus as a “bad cold” because that has been a very common experience, but we must know that when it takes hold of vulnerable people it becomes lethal, and can be lethal for even the healthiest among us. Plus, there are those side effects that are unpredictable and lasting for so many after they survive the major experience of the sickness. As with all of life, the Lord calls us to love one another in the midst of the fear and suffering, and all the divisiveness in our society.

29 November 2020, Fr. Tom's Homily

First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 63:16-19; I Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-39

Again we begin the season of Advent with the Prophet Isaiah offering us the first words. Today's reading is full of passion and condenses a long process in one relationship with God into a few verses. There is a flow that is familiar to us, I bet. It all begins with things that are not good; things aren't the way they want. **They are living in exile**, defeating in war and forced to live in another land, Babylon. They are hundreds of miles from Jerusalem where they had felt close to God. **They want things to be back like they were!!** Sound familiar?

In the reading we hear first, **the people blaming God in their frustration**. "Why did you let this happen, God? Why don't you come down and fix this?" **Then they realize that maybe they've let God down also**. They have been living like a people who no longer call on the name of their God.

In the parish we have a book club that is reading the prison letters of Fr. **Alfred Delp**, imprisoned during the last months of World War II in Berlin for conspiring against Hitler and executed by hanging two months before the German surrender. He found in the season of Advent, a fine companion for his days in prison. He said that Advent is meant to shake us up. It is meant to make us realize that all of the **things we typically lean on for security—our health, our wealth, a stable society—all hang by a thread**. Advent makes us look to God as the only sure and solid source of security.

And so does Isaiah come to this realization. After asking God to come and make things like they were again, and after wallowing in his own unworthiness, he has the grace to say, "But you are our Father. You love us. **We are the clay and you are the potter**. Form us according to your will, not ours." (I quote but I'm paraphrasing.) There's a word for that blessed attitude: **Surrender**.

Getting to that place of blessed surrender is not easy. **It seems like we hit a decision point, either conscious or not**, when we have to decide whether to keep scrambling to shape life the way we want it or let go of a good deal of control and deal with life as it is and enter its flow with faith and love, vigilant and watchful for the way God wants it. **We become either a WILLING people or a WILLFUL people**.

Scrambling for the way we want it leads to a cycle of elations and frustrations, happy when things go the way we want and irritated when they don't. **Surrendering leads to a much more peaceful life**, as we see ourselves only here to serve God, clay in his hands.

So, in our recent parish survey, among the most common things you wrote were "I just want things to be like they were—no masks, full choirs and singing, **sitting wherever we want**. Of course we want that. The question for this Advent, however, is what do we do in the meantime? What is the faithful response, the loving response? **When you come to church and can't sit where you want, what's the loving response?** When you judge that for your family it's best to stay at home and worship online, how can you maximize that experience to keep the fire burning? **How do you surrender to God when things are not going the way you want them to?**

You know the best answer for yourself. I'll offer one guideline: be gentle. So often I remember Sr. Michaela and here loving ways, and they she most often would say good-bye to someone: Take gentle care. One of our parishioners put up a new profile photo on FB this week, a sign that reads: "Go easy on yourself. You're doing great. This is just really hard." I think it's true, and not only important to go easy on ourselves but to go easy on each other.

I had **an embarrassing thing happen last week**. While talking to my mother, I just got really upset and it's like all the tensions of the times channel into my reaction. I used my voice, said angry things, and was basically out of control. My mom's nice 90-year-old woman. You might wonder what she said after my rant. She said, "**Who is this who'd talking to me now?**" It was a lovely response. No offense, no drama, just a gentle reminder that I was not talking like the son she knows.

There's a lot of stress in our time right now. This Advent, let's be watchful that we don't lose our better selves. That's one reason we gather to hear the Word of God and share from the one loaf. It reminds us to be gentle and good to each other.



St. James Blood Drive!

St. James got an Outstanding Service Award from the Red Cross for our blood drives! Let's keep it up. Blood Drive Dec. 14 from noon to 6. Sign ups are open. Go to RedCross.org or call Anne at the Parish Office.

Help the Homeless

Chippewa Valley Street Ministry is a ministry that goes out in the streets multiple times a week, to provide conversation, food, clothing, bedding, or whatever they can to our homeless brothers and sisters. Since Covid started, the number of people forced out in to the streets has grown. The Street Ministry is in need of funds to provide meals and other supplies. You can donate by writing a check to Chippewa Valley Street Ministry, and sending to Chippewa Valley Street Ministry, P.O. Box 51; Eau Claire, WI 54702 or by going on their website <https://www.chippewavalleystreetministry.org>

Advent "Carry-Out" Dinner Dec. 6, 11:00 AM - 1:30 PM at Immaculate Conception

There will be NO Dine-In service, however our carry-out/drive through service will include a delicious meal of Roasted Pork Loin with gravy, a wild rice blend along with roasted vegetables, dinner roll and a cookie to top it off for \$10.00. A side of mac and cheese and carrots can be added for an upcharge of \$2.00. CARRY-OUT will start after the 10:30 AM mass ends and DRIVE-UP will start at 11:00 AM and go until 1:30 PM or until all meals are gone. A special Advent "gift" will also be included with each meal. Details can also be found on the IC & Regis Facebook pages!

Parish Directories are in

If your photo is in there, you can pick your copy up at the parish office Monday-Thursday 9-5, or after mass on the weekends.

Mass Intentions & Schedule

Weekday masses are at 9:00 AM Tuesday-Friday.

Saturday 4:30 PM, Sunday 8:00 and 10:00 AM.

Masks & social distancing are required.

Sat.	Dec. 5	4:30 George Hanson
Sun.	Dec. 6	8:00 People of St. James 10:00 Jane Norrish
Tue.	Dec. 8	Jack Flynn
Wed.	Dec. 9	Edward "Bud" Rubesch
Thu.	Dec. 10	Frank Maenner
Fri.	Dec. 11	Lyle & Arlee Berg
Sat.	Dec. 12	4:30 Ralph Danzinger
Sun.	Dec. 13	8:00 People of St. James 10:00 Bud & Lolly Gilboy

Free drive-up COVID-19 Testing at Memorial High School

In partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, Memorial High School in Eau Claire is hosting a **free drive-up rapid testing site** for community members who aren't experiencing COVID-19 symptoms.

WHEN: NOON to 8 PM on Saturdays, Sundays, and Wednesdays

WHERE: in the parking lot at Memorial High School, 2225 Keith St. The entrance for the testing site is on Keith Street where UW-Eau Claire staff and signs will direct people to the testing location.

You need to pre-register for the test: <https://www.doineedacovid19test.com>.

WHY: The testing is intended to identify asymptomatic individuals who are positive for COVID-19 and are at risk of spreading the virus unknowingly.

WHAT: antigen testing is a rapid way to screen for Covid. A positive result may mean you need to take a PCS test to confirm the result.

The community testing is available through a partnership between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the UW System, including UW-Eau Claire, because of a surge of COVID-19 cases in Wisconsin. UW-Eau Claire has expanded its antigen testing to off-campus students, faculty, staff and their dependents. The university has tested students living in on-campus dormitories since September.

The Eau Claire City-County Health Department said the antigen testing site is a good option for people who live or work in a group setting, interact with vulnerable populations, travel frequently for work or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19.

Church open for prayer

Just a reminder that the church is open for private prayer Monday-Thursday 9-5. Enter through parish office.

Sermon on the Amount

November 22, 2020

Sunday Adult Envelopes (124)	\$9,481.00
2019 same week (158)	\$7,339.00
Students	\$2.00
Plate	<u>\$7.00</u>
Total	\$9,490.00

Year to date Adult Env./CPL Income through Oct. 31, 2020:

Actual (July 1-Oct. 31)	\$200,794.00
Budgeted (July 1-Oct. 31)	\$202,500.00

Long term maintenance & facilities improvement fund and *Past*Present*Future Campaign* income for Nov. 22 was \$210.00 for a total since July 1, 2020 of \$27,294.68.

Advent Drives:

- Socks for Sojourner (warm new winter socks)
- Snow Gloves for school kids (waterproof only)
- Winter Coats (drive organized by Regis National Honor Society Student)
- Food for the St. Francis Food Pantry. Bins are at the entrances.

Advent Virtual Mission with the Diocese

“Preparing for the Birth of the Christ Child through the Eyes of St. Joseph”

There will be four presentations, one for each week of Advent. The length of the talks will be roughly 30-40 minutes with discussion questions available at the end of each presentation and available to print from the diocesan website.

The purpose of this mission is to bring people together to prepare for Christmas and strengthen the community in light of so much isolation. Parishioners participate by watching at home.

St. James will have regular Zoom discussions on the retreat, on Sundays at 6:30 PM. Please contact Patrice Taft at patricet@charter.net or 715-577-3335 to join.

The title and presenter for each of the four weeks of Advent.

Week 1 St. Joseph: The Man Selected by God to be Closest to Mary and to Jesus. – Msgr. Joseph Diermeier

Week 2 Joseph and Mary: A Holy Love Story – Msgr. Joseph Hirsch

Week 3 That Holy Night, through Joseph’s Eyes – Fr. Woodrow Pace

Week 4 “Joseph, Son of David...You are to Give Him the Name Jesus” – Bishop William Patrick Callahan

Videos can be found on the diocesan website: <https://diolc.org/year-of-st-joseph/>

Feast of the Immaculate Conception—Dec. 8

There will be one Mass open to the public on Dec. 8 to celebrate the Holy Day at 9:00 AM.

Christmas Mass Times:

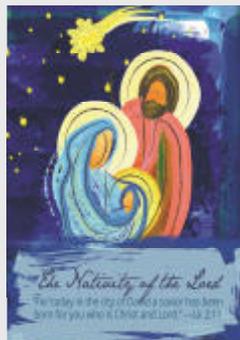
Christmas Eve: 1, 3, 9 PM, Midnight
Christmas Day: 9 AM

Please **sign up** for the mass you will attend (signup is not yet available on our website stjameseauclaire.org, but will be soon).

Accommodating walk ins with Covid precautions will be very difficult.

If mass times fill up, we may add another mass or two as needed so stay tuned to the bulletin and website.

We will have two streamed masses: one for children and one for adults.

**Word and Music for Days of Holy Darkness.**

Looking for an hour of quiet reflection in the midst of a busy season?

Mark on your calendar Thursday, Dec. 17, 7:00 PM and join the true spirit of the Advent Season.



Readings of sacred texts with Advent themes will be matched with hymns and a good amount of silence. Done by 8:00. We will be live-streaming this year.

Children join us for Advent Storytime on Sunday evenings during Advent at 6:30. A short gathering over Zoom where we learn about the week of Advent and hear a Christmas story. Email beaudric.kelly@gmail.com or text 715-828-8313 if you want to be added to the email with the Zoom link.

Survey Results!!

Over the next few weeks we will be posting results from the parish life survey.

We had 212 people respond, which is a great response rate! Thank you to all who responded.

Of those who responded, 80% normally attend mass every week.

36% have returned to public masses, while 64% have not. Of those who have returned, it’s pretty evenly split between weekly, 2 or 3 times a month, occasionally, and mass on the grass only.

Of those who are staying home, 42% watch the online mass every week, 21% 2 or 3 times a month, and 29% occasionally.

We got a lot of great ideas and feedback from you on how to stay connected as a parish, among other things.

Quite a few requested zoom meetings, just for coffee, or to play games, or socialize.

If you are interested in facilitating such a zoom group, let Christine know—or just do it!

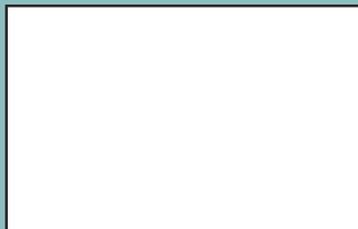
We also got requests for children’s activities—the Faith Enrichment emails always contain activities for children. If you aren’t getting those emails, let Kelly or Christine know.

We got some offers to volunteer, and some requests for phone calls or contact. Unfortunately as the survey was anonymous we can’t connect those people!

If you are interested in helping to reach out to people in the parish, let Christine or Jan Legge know.

If you are interested in being reached out to, let us know!
More next week....

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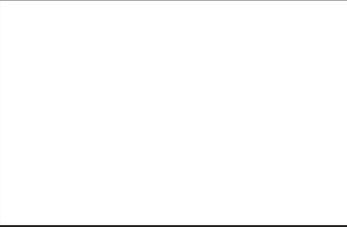

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