

St. James the Greater

Where All Are Welcome

Third Sunday of Advent ✚ December 13, 2020



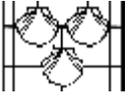
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Message from Fr. Tom

Rejoice! When I'm feeling sad, there's nothing worse than someone coming around telling me to be happy. Yet, that's sort of what is going on here on the Third Sunday of Advent when we fire up the pink candle. There's that famous refrain from the quintessential Advent hymn: "Rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel." I remember as a kid being confused that we were telling Emmanuel to rejoice when he was the one supposed to make us rejoice. My mind couldn't quite take in the complicated sentence structure, I guess. But a light went on when I figured out that the people were being told to rejoice because Emmanuel would be coming to them.

What's a bit mysterious about Advent joy is that it's not a good thing that's happened which is supposed to bring joy to our hearts; rather, it is the promise of a good thing to come. That really does get at the heart of Advent. Can we, this season asks, be confident enough in our future with God to rejoice even when our current situations are not so great? Or, to put in in Lent/Easter terms, how confident are we that rising will follow dying? That really is the heart of Christian faith, isn't it?

The Parish Pastoral Council met on Tuesday. Unfortunately, they did not have the results of the recent parish survey, but Jacky sent them out right after the meeting, so we can discuss at the next meeting. We spent some time dreaming about what St. James could be in our fantasy. Many envisioned a robust community outreach ministry with wide involvement, or having a much greater percentage of our membership actively involved in one way or another, or the establishment of several small faith sharing groups so people can have both the experience of large group worship and more personal time with other people of faith. All the members showed a real passion for wanting to meet people's needs.

It was noted that the PCCW has been doing an outstanding job reaching out via phone calls and post cards to so many of our parishioners. That had been targeting people over 70, but rumor has it that they are extending their reach to people over 50, basically anyone eligible for AARP.

Mike Kolstad reported that the "Stream Team," which is a group of volunteers from St. James who will work our new video system to livestream the Saturday mass indefinitely into the future. The "masters," Don Byrne and Landon Cerny, plan on taking on several "apprentices" so we have a good contingent of folks to provide this service. By the way, I stole this phrase, "Stream Team," from St. Anne's in Wausau because it sounded better than "Tech Team," and because I love the reference to the "Dream Team" at the Summer Olympics of 1992 when the US men's basketball team was the greatest assembly of athletic talent EVER. Michael Jordan, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, Charles Barkley, Patrick Ewing... and lots more.

Also look for our Socially Distant Choir concert that Mary Kolstad, Landon, Don and our singers have spent hours putting together. We'll get the video out when we can, and the plan is to play this music as prelude before our Christmas masses so that it will sound like our choir is in church even though they won't be.

Speaking of Christmas masses, I'm told that the 3:00 Christmas Eve mass is pretty much full, so we're hoping those wanting to go will go to the 1:00 Mass, or another. Every year, that's the sticky wicket, such demand on the mass closest to 3:00 or so. Maybe we should have offered 2:00 and 4:00 instead, or maybe we still can try a plan B. Stay tuned! Like a lot of people, we're groping our way through these strange times and we truly rely on the kindness and good-will of everyone as we do so.

I'm excited about our upcoming "Word and Music for Days of Holy Darkness," on Thursday, December 17 @ 7:00PM, both in-person and livestreamed. We've been doing this for seven years now, and it really is my favorite night of prayer—maybe because I'm not leading it! This year, I chose nine readings, each followed by nine songs. The readings are a mix of Scripture and reflective words by both historical and contemporary faithful people. It's about an hour and offers participants the opportunity to rest in the beauty of words, silence, music, and silence as we live through these days of Holy Darkness. Peace.

6 December 2020, Fr. Tom's Homily

Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Mark 1:1-8

Can you imagine being at crowded dance where everyone is standing in front of the stage, and someone is apparently sick, and EMT's are trying to get through the dense crowd. "Make way! Make way! Clear a path!" Both in and out of the venue. Then even outside if an ambulance is needed to get someone to the hospital fast, the siren goes on, announcing: "Stop what you're doing and pull over! Make way! Clear the street!" Or if you can imagine yourself as an NFL running back—I think Walter Payton was the best I ever saw—trying to get to the end zone but needing his O-Line to clear a path. There's someone who has to reach a goal—the sick person, the hospital, the end zone—and needs others to clear the path. You in church, want to hear the Word of God and receive the Eucharist today. You need others to make that possible. We need our sign-up crew, our ushers, our sanitizers. Without them you couldn't be here. People at home praying with us remotely need our video crew to make that happen. These people are the blockers that make it possible for you to get to your goal.

Each of these stories has an actor with a goal and others who prepare the way. In our readings it is God who is the actor. God wants to comfort his people who are suffering. God wants to rescue people who live in despair, rescue us from our selfishness and hate, free us from our sins, and save us even from death.

And we, the readings tells, **we can either get in the way, or we can Prepare the Way.** We can either help God or block God. So **how do we Prepare the Way?**

I think it works on two levels. First we have to **Prepare the Way for God to love each of us, and then we have to prepare the way for God to love others.**

We are made by God to be in tender loving relationship with God. Most often, though, things get in the way. There are a lot of things that are not of God that maybe we love more than God. We prefer our things or personal comfort to a relationship with the living God. We prefer our small world that we think we can control to the wide sea of surrender to God's will. Part of Preparing the Way for God to be a greater part of our lives is taking away the things that are not of God. The more we rid ourselves of things and activities that are not of God, the more room there is for God to move in. We clear a path for God when we don't fill ourselves up with any manner of addictions so God can find room in us.

I don't mean to put anyone down because I think I'd be doing the same thing. But every day after school cars line up to pick up their children. There's an elaborate and efficient system that involves cell phone apps, and cars have to wait in line maybe 5-10 minutes. I like to walk among the cars and chat with parents from time to time. Last week I did this, and all but one mother had their eyes trained on their cell phones, and so didn't notice me. Poor me! As I said, I'd surely be among that crowd. I don't like empty time. But, can you see the analogy there? What if God is walking around trying to get our attention but we are not paying attention. **Because of all the things we pay attention to that are not of God, we are IN the way, not Preparing the Way.**

What do you that gets in God's way from being closer to you? Can you change that and Prepare the Way?

And, second, once we get that we are loved and God wants to use us to love others, how do we Prepare the Way. I had a thought this week praying with staff that I really enjoyed. It was that when I, for example, make a child smile, it really wasn't me who did that—it was the power of love, which is God. When we use our freedom to love each other, to listen to one another, care for one another, sometimes challenge one another, we are Preparing the Way for God because those people feel loved and God is love.

Mostly, probably like you, I just try to do what I think I'm supposed to do and feel about myself or bad depending on what I did or didn't do. The Word of God today makes me evaluate things differently, however. When I do the right things, when I make a child smile, or shared money with a poor person, I've allowed God to touch that child with love. When I have been stingy with my time...well, I've blocked God, cluttered the way instead of Preparing the way.

How we act makes a difference to God! Keep preparing the way of the Lord, in your heart and in your loving action, and, in the words of Isaiah, all people will see it together for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it. And you have heard it, and it will make a difference.

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>

Thank you for all the prayers and cards that offered our family support and comfort through Dick's illness and death. --Sue Crisp

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.

Available for donation:

2--2' X 6 1/2' sliding closet doors
 55-- 10 1/2" X 4'10" cupboard doors (would make great shelves)
 Contact Lou Hein (715-514-1148) or Anne (715-835-5887)

Church open for prayer

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

Patron Saints for a pandemic

St. Roch (also the patron saint of dogs and invalids among other things)
 St. Edmund (also the patron saint of kings among other things)
 Possibly St. Corona although there seems to be some uncertainty about both her existence and her patronage.

Survey Results!!

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

The majority of people who responded that they have not yet returned to public mass said they did so as they were in a high risk group or didn't feel comfortable in large groups.

Many indicated in comments the difficulty of bringing kids to mass with mask wearing and distancing. Most indicated they would return when there is a vaccine.

30% said they prefer watching mass online. Slightly over 5% felt the precautions were too much.

Fr. Tom's midweek chat got the win for the most votes for favorite method of communication from the parish.

We got a lot of great ideas and feedback from you on how to stay connected as a parish, among other things. The comments on what the parish could be doing to help people feel more connected were mostly positive (thanks!). As mentioned last week—some volunteered to reach out to others, while others mentioned being lonely. Because the survey was anonymous, we can't track back who was who. PLEASE let us know if you fall in either camp!! Call Christine at 715-579-1523.

We have implemented a few ideas: there is a prayer group for Advent, where people are matched to pray for another person. You can always jump in with that by contacting Beth Cerny.

Religious Ed has started a weekly kids Advent zoom (see back page for details).

And again, if you aren't getting the wonderful Faith Enrichment emails, let us know!

More next week....

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. 12	4:30	Ralph Danzinger
Sun.	Dec. 13	8:00	People of St. James
		10:00	Bud & Lolly Gilboy
Tue.	Dec. 15		Julie Zurich
Wed.	Dec. 16		Tom BaDour
Thu.	Dec. 17		Bruno Kuster
Fri.	Dec. 18		Mary Ann Fathers
Sat.	Dec. 19	4:30	Elliott Campbell
Sun.	Dec. 20	8:00	People of St. James
		10:00	Adeline Maguire

Sermon on the Amount

November 29, 2020

Sunday Adult Envelopes (91)	\$7,430.00
2019 same week (148)	\$10,663.50
Students	\$2.00
Plate	<u>\$105.00</u>
Total	\$7,537.00

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. 29 was \$5,600.00 for a total since July 1, 2020 of \$327,894.68.

Advent Drives! One more week!

We are collecting:

Warm winter socks (new) for Sojourner House.

Snow gloves (new) for Eau Claire School District.

Coats (used and new) for a coat drive run by a Regis

Honors student.

Bins are at the entrances.

NATIVITY CHALLENGE:

Many of our families put up a Nativity scene during the Advent season. We thought it would be fun to put together a slide show of our own Nativities or ones that we see around town. Email or text Kelly Beaudrie a picture and we'll put it together to share at the end of the month. beaudrie.kelly@gmail.com or 715-828-8313

**Retirement Fund for the Religious**

This weekend there are envelopes in the pews for the Retirement Fund for the Religious. Rising healthcare costs and the additional challenges from Covid have compounded an already difficult situation. Please help if you can. The elderly religious hold this world together with their prayers.

Thanks to all who purchased and enjoyed the **144 dozen** Ethnic Holiday Treats of Rosettes, Sandbakkels, Pizzelles, and Krumkake. Our Parish Council of Catholic Women was pleased to offer this opportunity.

**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 from our song book 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 beaudrie.kelly@gmail.com or text 715-828-8313 if you want to be added to the email with the Zoom link.

Christmas Mass Times:

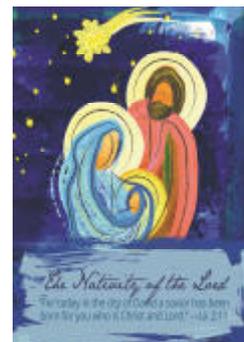
Christmas Eve: 1:00 PM,
3:00 PM (this mass is full, sorry),
9:00 PM,
Midnight
Christmas Day: 9:00 AM

Please sign up for the mass you will attend (signup is available on our website stjameseauclaire.org or by calling Christine at 715-579-1523).

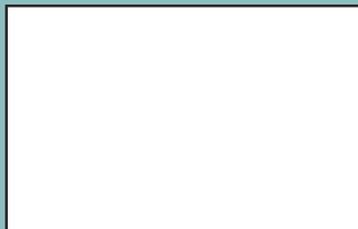
Accommodating walk ins with Covid precautions will be very difficult.

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.



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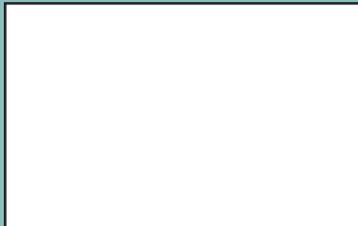

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