

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

“THE DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD,
WHEN I WILL FULFILL THE PROMISE
I MADE TO THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH.”

—JEREMIAH 33:14

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD.

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Keep your lamps burning

Promise ~
Be aware of God's love



Message from Fr. Tom

Hello! Despite several reminders from Christine about changes in bulletin deadlines during the days leading up to Thanksgiving, I forgot, so I rather rushed in writing this, so please forgive me if I mess up. Last night, I joined lots of other folks at the Pablo Center to hear Mavis Staples. Despite the very high Covid infection rights, I felt safe there as masks were required as well as proof of vaccination. I'm being extra careful between now and February because I am responsible for leading a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and this is not so easily done these day, believe me! All pilgrims will have to show a negative PCR test taken within 72 hours of the flight into Israel, and we're getting close to the time where, if anyone does contract the virus, then that test may show up positive even after recovery and the person could not board the plane. At least that's the way it is now.

But back to Mavis Staples, it was really fun to be in the room with her joyful spirit. Honestly, I think I confused her with someone else, because she did not sing any Gospel songs, though what she did sing was spiritually uplifting. She was part of the Staples Family Singers, whose biggest hit from 1971 was "I'll Take You There." That was the last song she sang, and there was no encore, which surprised me. But as my friend said, "Well, she is 82 years old!"

Speaking of aging, I was able to be part of something beautiful last week after the Thursday morning mass. A couple from Chippewa Falls Notre Dame had called and asked to have their wedding rings blessed. They wanted the rings blessed here because it was at St. James that they were married in 1977. Sometime in the intervening years, they lost their original wedding rings and bought new ones, but the new rings had never been blessed. What made this blessing so special was that the husband felt some urgency because his wife has been suffering with Alzheimer's Disease and starting to rapidly decline in her mental abilities. It was so inspiring to see him guide her back up to the altar where they last stood on their wedding day 44 years ago. With great care and tenderness, he put her ring on her finger, repeating the vows, "...for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health...." Life brings us so many challenges. What an inspiration to see people who rely mightily on the Lord for strength.

Oh my heavens, I just realized this is the bulletin for the First Weekend of Advent! Hopefully you all received our Advent/Christmas newsletter by now. It reads like a menu at a fine restaurant, with lots of attractive offerings from which to choose. My favorite thing on the menu is our night of quiet meditation that I call "Word and Music for Days of Holy Darkness." This will take place at the time of solstice, Tuesday, December 21, at 7:00. It will also be live streamed for those who cannot come. It is a very unique liturgy, one of a kind for us. I select ten readings from various sources, including Scripture, the writings of the saints and some contemporary poets and authors, then we observe some silence before joining in song. It's a great way to bring some quiet to the days leading up to Christmas that can be frenetic. I very much encourage you to put this on your calendar.

Fr. Schultz, and perhaps Fr. Oudenoven, will be coming to St. James to help hear confessions and offer God's forgiveness to whoever comes to our Reconciliation service on Tuesday, December 7 at 7 pm. Again, with Covid in mind, I'm gearing this as a prayed experience of mercy, with opportunity for a brief confession for those who desire it. Longer confessions can be done via appointment, and I'm also available outside at the Last Supper Sculpture every Saturday from 3:30-4:00.

I really look forward to celebrating the season of Advent with you. As we have done, this year we will again have a musical setting for our Eucharistic Prayer. I am also eager to experience how our weekend masses begin and end, with a lantern procession to a beautifulcatching Spiritual song, "Keep your lamps, trimmed and burning...." If we have the servers show up, one of them will enter holding up an antique lantern with a burning candle in it. Then the other server, once we arrive at the wreath, will open the lantern door and light the wreath from it. On the way out, servers will relight the lantern and proceed out of church, as we take the Light of Christ out with us into the days of holy darkness. Peace to you.

GOSPEL MEDITATION - ENCOURAGE DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

November 28, 2021
1st Sunday of Advent

Staying awake can often be a challenge, especially when we are exhausted. Life's demands have a way of zapping every last bit of energy out of us. When we are tired it affects us not only physically, but psychologically and spiritually as well. All of our senses are dulled and diminished. We can overlook details, become disinterested, lethargic and apathetic, and detached. Getting sufficient physical rest only helps so much. We need to be rejuvenated, refreshed, and reenergized in other ways. If we are psychologically exhausted, we need to understand what is draining our emotions and taxing our relationships. If we are spiritually tired, we need to find the necessary "shot in the arm" to put us back in touch with God. Unfortunately, exhaustion is seldom limited to just one part of who we are. When we lack energy and zeal it is usually the case that everything suffers. We not only are affected physically, but psychologically and spiritually as well. In short, when we run out of gas the engine stops.



And yet, our Lord's directive is clear, "Be vigilant at all times." Even Jesus knew what "the anxieties of daily life" can do to us. One day pours into another and time quickly flies by. Any one of us can take a moment and reflect on how many wonderful, creative opportunities we miss because there is always so much "stuff" to do and so little time to do it. Usually these are missed moments of love, and if we are missing love encounters we are also missing God. Sleepwalking through life, we check the boxes next to our list of "must and have to dos" and justify it all by convincing ourselves that tomorrow is another day and there'll be more time. It may surprise us, but tomorrow is here, and time is running out. While we may like to believe that we have an "eternity" of time to do all those things that require the focus, energy, and desire we do not currently have, we don't. We're on a limited ride and time is short.

Jesus is also clear on another point. "That day [will] catch you by surprise like a trap." If we are going to be judged on love and so easily justify not having all that much time to do so, then it seems we must shift focus a bit. St. Teresa of Calcutta tells us, "We desire to be able to welcome Jesus at Christmas-time, not in a cold manger of our heart, but in a heart full of love and humility, a heart so pure, so immaculate, so warm with love for one another." Getting to this place doesn't "just happen." It requires vigilance and discipline both with a knowledge of what is really of importance and what really needs to be the focus of our energy and time. Pray, starting now and not tomorrow, that we can stay alert, be strengthened in our faith, and prepared for whatever will come. Don't miss another opportunity to love. ©LPI

Ruby's Pantry

Volunteers are welcome and needed at Ruby's Pantry the first Thursday of each month between 2-6 PM. Volunteers are outside until we cannot be, so dress warm, have closed toe shoes, and join us for whatever time you can.

Retreat Information for Women of all ages!

Dec 9-12, 2021. The Jesuit Retreat House, Oshkosh, offers a place of rest and spiritual nourishment for women at the Women's Advent Retreat, beginning the evening of Dec 9 to NOON on Dec 12. Our retreat director, Fr. Jack Treloar, SJ, will help us understand the work of God and our place in His work during these turbulent times. Come and join us. Welcome to a time and place of peace and rest.

Retreat House registration www.jesuitretreathouse.org or 920-231-9060 or 1-800-962-7330. For information: Coordinators: Marcie 920.923.2446, Pam 414.708.4253

The Men of Spirit invite you to a Christmas Concert to benefit the Salvation Army of the Chippewa Valley. The concert will feature local musician Warren Petryk, performing inspirational holiday music.

Join us at Spirit Lutheran Church, 1310 Main Street, Eau Claire, Thursday Dec. 2, 6:30 PM. Minimum \$ 10.00 donation with all proceeds going to the Salvation Army of the Chippewa Valley.

The Eau Claire Male Chorus presents its 75th Annual Christmas Concert, SING NOEL, on Saturday, Dec. 4, at 2 PM and 7 PM. Lake Street United Methodist Church. Tickets are \$12 in Advance, and \$15 at the door. Purchase tickets from chorus members, Festival Foods, and volumeone.org. Information and tickets also at 715 720-9092.

Strategic Planning

St. James the Greater began a 2022-2025 Strategic Planning process in March 2021. Paula Winter, Pastoral Council chair, gathered information from an all parish survey, individual and group meetings with parish staff, individual meetings with Father Tom, and completing a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threats) process with the Social Concerns Committee, Parish Council, Music Ministry Team, Religious Education personnel, the PCCW (Parish Council of Catholic Women), and Parish Finance Council.

To see the results of the strategic plan, join Paula for her presentations after all of the masses Dec. 11/12.

Women's Bible Study

Will be meeting on Dec. 2. Please prepare by reading Chapter 4. Thanks.

Master Singers Perform at St. Charles

The Master Singers, Gary R. Schwartzhoff, conductor, will present their 29th Season of Lessons and Carols Series, Saturday, Dec. 11 at 1:00 PM at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Chippewa Falls.

The seasonal program features fourteen traditional carols with poetic readings, a collaboration with Lauren Ische, oboe, and Charles Deck, cello, from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. Nancy Schwartzhoff and Megan Sorenson are the featured pianists.

Tickets available at the St. Charles Parish office, 810 Pearl St., and online at www.themastersingers.net and at the door. Tickets are \$25.00 for adults and \$10.00 for students. Facial masks are required for each performance at all locations. Concerning availability, patrons are encouraged to purchase their tickets in advance by Dec. 6 for each performance. The Lessons and Carols program will conclude with *Silent Night* by Franz Gruber.

The women's spirituality group is reading Matthew Kelly's *Life is Messy*; they began in November so it's not too late to join them! They meet on the first Sunday of each month during the school year at 6:30 PM in the gathering space. All women are invited, particularly women who cannot attend the Thursday morning bible study. The book can be purchased through Dynamic Catholic. contact Cindy Sarazen with any questions: sarazen5@yahoo.com.

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Mass Intentions & Schedule

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

Wednesdays are school masses.

Rosary and Adoration are available after the Tuesday Mass until 10:30 AM.

Sat.	Nov. 27	4:30 PM Carl Robelia
Sun.	Nov. 28	8:00 AM People of St. James 10:00 AM Charles Martenson
Tue.	Nov. 30	Kathy Kunferman
Wed.	Dec. 01	Harry and Mary Bechel family
Thu.	Dec. 02	Joe Reigel
Fri.	Dec. 03	Julie Zurich
Sat.	Dec. 04	4:30 PM Ron Hunter
Sun.	Dec. 05	8:00 AM People of St. James 10:00 AM Jane Norrish

Habitat for Humanity Donations

Any donation can be made directly on the www.cvh4h.org/donate website and goes directly to the local chapter. Check or cash donations that are addressed to Chippewa Valley Habitat for Humanity/ CVH4H goes directly to them as well. Checks/cash mailed would go to 145 N. Clairemont Avenue in Eau Claire, WI. Questions? kolstadmary@gmail.com or call Mary Kolstad 715-577-6678 OR go to: Chippewa Valley Habitat for Humanity (cvh4h.org)

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Sermon on the Amount

November 14, 2021

Sunday Adult Envelopes (159)

\$17,816.90

2020 same week (170) \$17,591.50

Students

\$20.00

Plate

\$170.00

Total

\$18,006.90

Year to date Adult Env./CPL Income through Oct. 31, 2021:

Actual (July 1-Oct. 31) \$229,022.33

Budgeted (July 1-Oct. 31) \$226,983.29

Long term maintenance & facilities improvement fund and *Past*Present*Future Campaign* income for Nov. 14 was \$3,155.00 for a total since July 1, 2021 of \$13,775.00.

St. James School

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linda1735@gmail.com

Bulletin deadlines: end of day Mondays.



Our second graders celebrated Veteran's Day with a nifty art project. -tk

Congratulations, Jim, on your worthy recognition, and thank you and all veterans on Veterans Day, which is also the Feast of St. Martin, patron saint of soldiers. -tk



Prayer Exchange

We are exchanging names for Christmas!! Receive the name of a person or family to pray for over the Advent season. At the end of Advent share with that person or family who was praying for them! Its a Secret Santa with Prayer instead of Presents! Presence instead of Presents. If you would like to be part of this prayer exchange, please contact Beth Cerny at elizabethcerny@hotmail.com



Christmas Sale in Gathering Space

Christmas Items from L'Arche, a community including people with intellectual disabilities, and a gift shop in Bethlehem. Items include: olive oil, wool, ceramics and olive wood items. All proceeds go to support them. Items will be available in the Gathering Space after weekend Masses from November 14, and in the parish office during the week, until sold out.

Scandinavian Bake Sale

The PCCW is again offering Scandinavian treats for pre-order: rosettes, krumkake, sandbakkels, and pizzelles. Prices are \$11 a dozen or \$1 for individual cookies. The dozen can be a mixture of the 4 choices or just one kind. All orders must be placed by Friday, Dec. 3. Pick up after all of the masses December 11-12, until 1 PM, under the canopy by the Gathering Space. Order forms are available online, at the parish office, and in the back of church. Payment should be made at the time of ordering. Make checks out to St. James PCCW. Orders can be returned to the parish office. Any questions, please call Connie Bushman, co-chair of the bake sale. 715.429.0703



Mass for Immaculate Conception

The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is Wednesday Dec. 8. We will have mass on Wednesday at 9 AM (school mass) and 6:15 PM (Religious Education mass with plenty of space for parishioners).

Advent Communal Reconciliation!

Tuesday Dec. 7 at 7 PM, , at St. James
Communal prayer with opportunity for individual confession.

Advent Drive:

Snow Gloves for school kids (waterproof only) and homeless adults.
Bins will be at the entrances.

Word and Music for Days of Holy Darkness

Our annual Advent service with readings, songs, and periods of silence to relax into the days of holy darkness. The service will be live streamed and in person.
Dec. 21 at 7 PM.



Music Musings: The choirs are being formed and anxious for the Christmas Masses. Rehearsals will be starting soon with safety precautions in place. If you are interested in singing or you play an instrument we would LOVE to have you. PLEASE contact: kolstadmary@gmail.com or call Mary Kolstad 715-577-6678. Submitted by Mary Kolstad

Baptism Classes

Classes are starting up again at regular times. Classes are currently scheduled for:
Jan. 9, Jan. 30, Feb. 13.

Please let Ruth, the instructor, know if you plan to attend, at ruthebert78@ymail.com or 715-225-4959.

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