

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Fourth Sunday of Advent - Christmas 2023
December 24, 2023



AVE MARIA

Hail Mary is Gabriel's greeting to Our Lady at the Annunciation.
The second part of the prayer were said at the Visitation by Elizabeth
when Mary went to see her kinswoman.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

Weekend Masses: Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm

Holyday Mass Schedule: afternoon prior at 4:00pm

Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm

Confessions: First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm

Department Telephone: 508.363.6246

Chapel Website: www.ourladyofprovidence.net

MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 23 *Vigil of the 4th Sunday of Advent*

4:00pm +For Rita & Charles Badzmierowski

Sunday, December 24 *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

7:30am +Mary Gray by her daughter

Christmas Eve—The Nativity of the Lord

4:00pm +Edward Manahan —14th anniversary by his wife

Monday, December 25 *Christmas Day: Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord*

7:30am +John & Mary Murray by their family

12:00nn +Stephen L'Esperance by his parents

Tuesday, December 26 *Feast of Saint Stephen, proto-martyr*

12:00nn +Jan & Maria Piaseck

Wednesday, December 27 *Feast of Saint John, apostle & evangelist*

12:00nn +Eugene Camosse by his wife

Thursday, December 28 *Feast of the Holy Innocents*

12:00nn For the health of Joseph Walsh

Friday, December 29 *5th Day of Christmas Octave—St. Thomas Beckett, bishop & martyr*

12:00nn +Janet Howard by her cousin

Saturday, December 30 *Vigil of the Feast of the Holy Family*

4:00pm +Carroll Gray by his daughter

Sunday, December 31 *Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth—Jesus, Mary & Joseph*

7:30am In thanksgiving for OLP chapel-friends by Janet

New Year's Eve: Vigil of the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God

4:00pm +Deceased members of the Sheeran, White and Foley families

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: *Sunday is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. Solemnities honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. Feasts must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. Memorials are of two types: Either the observance is an obligatory memorial¹ or an optional memorial².*

Toward a Better Understanding of the End of Advent & Christmas

As Advent draws to a close, with Christmas on the horizon, the selection of Gospels for this weekend and, then, for the three Masses of Christmas can be taken together. For the Fourth Sunday of Advent, the Gospel is the opening chapter of Saint Luke's account of the announcement of the birth of Jesus. Earlier, in salvation history, Nathan's prophecy (2 Samuel 7:3-17) that David's successor would build the Lord's dwelling place is fulfilled when Gabriel appeared before Mary in Nazareth. Then, in a divinely-inspired account, the exchange between her and "the angel Gabriel...sent from God" is replete with Old Testament allusions. Moreover, the revelation of the mystery of the Word-made-flesh or the Incarnation is deftly developed in those details. The divine messenger was sent by God "to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David..." The exchange begins with Gabriel greeting Mary in this manner: "Hail, full of grace" or the favored one. Saint Luke uses *chaire* (Gk. Χαῖρε), a greeting that literally means "to experience God's favor." Mary is also highly favored (Gk. *κεχαριτωμένη*) implying that she is the object of God's singular favor or, as is stated in the Gospel, full of grace. Thus, Mary's being grace-filled was not something that was about to happen to her, but something that had already been accomplished in her sinless life. The Greek word *kecharitomene* was also used as a title. Therefore, the expression is not simply an action but constitutes an identity. After the greeting, the angel said to her, "The Lord is with you" which easily calls to mind the prophecy of Isaiah of the coming of Emmanuel or God-with-us (Is 7:14). Astounded by what the angel had said, Mary became deeply troubled, not in a psychological sense, but by what the angel had declared to her—unsure of its real meaning. So, Gabriel tells Mary not to be afraid since she was highly favored in God's sight. Due to the fact that she was highly favored and full of grace, the Lord is decisively with her. Finally, the reason for this heavenly visit is revealed, "...you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus." Mary tells the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" The question prompts Gabriel to offer the following explanation in two statements: first, the Holy Spirit will come upon her which can be found in

Saint Irenaeus - Adversus Haereses

For the whole plan of salvation, which concerns man, was made according to the will of the Father, so that God might not be conquered, nor His art injured. But God would have been defeated by the serpent's guile had the man, injured by the serpent, been cast altogether to death. But since God is invincible and merciful, He displayed His mercy even in the reproof of one and the probation of all. And through the second man he bound the strong man and seized his vessels (Matt. Xii.29), and emptied death of its power, giving life to that man who had been given over to death (cf. Luke xi. 22). [He palliates the disobedience of Adam, urging that there were extenuating circumstances in his case as he was deceived by the devil, and that God took pity on him and saved him who showed his penitence by making aprons of prickly fig leaves. 'But he checked his transgression by the interposition of death, causing sin to cease and putting an end to it by the dissolution of flesh in the earth, so that man dying to sin should begin to live to God....']

the Old Testament though Saint Luke uses the expression in the sequel to his Gospel, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you" (Acts 1:8). The second statement that "the power of the Most High will overshadow" her invokes the cloud that covered the tabernacle and the divine glory which filled the meeting tent (Ex 40:34-35). For Mary, this is more than simple protection because it is because of the Spirit and the creative power of the Most High that new life will take root within her womb. What the Spirit has done from the beginning, the Spirit will do in the Virgin's womb and cause her to conceive and bear the world's Savior. Thus, before and after, as well as when she will give birth, Mary remains ever-Virgin: a virgin *ante partum, in partu, et post partum*—before, during and after the birth of Christ. The mystery of the Incarnation, then, was made known through the angelic messenger Gabriel. The Child named Jesus and Son of the Most High eventually "will be called holy, the Son of God." Though Son of Mary, Jesus will also be the Son of God in the strongest possible sense – as the Word-made-flesh because, though taking His human nature from Mary, He is the only-begotten Son of the Father.

The Three Masses of Christmas

For centuries, it has been customary for a priest to celebrate three Masses on Christmas (All Souls Day is another day when the same privilege is given). Each of the three focuses on a different aspect of the Lord's Nativity. The Vigil Mass on December 24th does not count as the first of the three Masses. The first of the three Masses is celebrated at night, the second at dawn and the third some time during the day. This ancient custom highlights the three-fold Nativity of Jesus. The first is His *eternal birth*, which is hidden in our regard. The second is His Nativity in time, and the *spiritual birth*, whereby Christ rises "as the day-star in our hearts" (2 Pet. 1, 19), and on that account the Mass is offered at dawn. The third Mass is takes place in broad daylight, in the Entrance Antiphon, we say, "A child is born to us." On the other hand, it can be said that the Lord's eternal generation, of itself, is in the full light, and for that reason, in the Gospel of the third Mass mention is made of His eternal birth. The three antiphons are: *Mass at night*: "The Lord said to me: You are my Son. It is I who have begotten you this day *OR* Let us rejoice in the Lord, for our Savior has been born in the world. Today true peace has come down to us from heaven. *Mass at Dawn*: "Today a light will shine upon us, for the Lord is born for us; and he will be called Wondrous God, Prince of peace, Father of future ages: and his reign will be without end. *Mass during the day*: "A child is born for us, and a son is given to us; his scepter of power rests upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Messenger of great counsel. The Mass at night or Midnight Mass primarily celebrates Christ's eternal birth from the Father, the Dawn Mass Christ's spiritual birth in our hearts, and the Daytime Mass Christ's historic birth in Bethlehem.

BETH - LEHEM: House of Bread

Bethlehem, the "house of bread!" In Hebrew, Beth-lehem is two words which mean "house" (*Beth* as in Beth-el, "house of God") and "bread" (*lehem*). The Hebrew language is read from right to left, and so Bethlehem is written like this: **להם בית**. In Hebrew, a language of consonants, those consonants are vocalized by a little dots below that are vowels and the large letters are the consonants. Bethlehem means *house of bread*. During these years of Eucharistic Renewal, let us pray that people will always feed on Christ the living Bread whenever they think of Bethlehem! May all the faithful increase their belief in Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist and, so not only be nourished by natural bread, but "by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Dt 8:3). And, yes by the breaking of the bread, as in the early church: "They devoted themselves to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).



Chapel Mass Schedule for Christmas

Sunday, December 24 Christmas Eve Mass at 4pm

Monday, December 25: Masses at 7:30am & 12nn

Schedule for New Year's Day

Not a mandatory holy day of obligation

Sunday, December 31 at 4:00pm

Monday, January 1, 2024 at 12nn & 4pm

ADVENT - A JOURNEY TOWARDS BETHLEHEM & THE PAROUSIA OR SECOND COMING

The Entrance Antiphon, on this Fourth Sunday of Advent, comes from the prophet Isaiah: "... let the clouds rain down the Just One, and the earth bring forth a Savior (Is 45:8). As Advent begins its brief fourth week, remember that this is a time of contemplative silence or wonder intermingled with expectant joy. Added to the antiphon, in the prophecy is this expression, "let righteousness spring up with them." God in His sovereign power showers His people with the righteousness from on high. Usually, heaven is associated with the afterlife, a wonderful and beautiful place where those judged worthy live forever after our earthly life is done. However, Isaiah 45:8 declares that the showers of heaven rain down its righteousness on earth. Righteousness in Hebrew (Heb. tzedakah) means the religious obligation (natural, moral or legal) to do what is right. God commands the earth to open, so that the heavenly gifts of salvation and righteousness may bear fruit. "Earth" in Hebrew (Heb. erez) means land or country and, by extension: field, ground, nations, wilderness, or world. In order for a gift exchange to take place, there must be a giver and a receiver. If there is not a willing receiver, the gift has no place to bear fruit. When the earth opens up to receive the gift of righteousness from God, there must be a place for the gift to go and bear fruit. Like a seed planted in fertile soil, the seed is the gift whereas the soil is the receiver. Both are necessary for the seed to sprout. In the passage from Isaiah, God declares the earth will open up to receive and, by doing so, it will make salvation and righteousness sprout or grow. Salvation in Hebrew means: liberty, deliverance, prosperity, or safety. God declares not only what He is giving, but also where the gift is going and why. During Advent, a holy season of looking back to Bethlehem and ahead to Christ's return in glory, these sacred days have been dedicated to opening up our hearts and to make every human heart ready to receive the gift of the Word-made-flesh. The Birth of the Messiah constitutes God the Father's gift of salvation and righteousness. The world is the soil that God's grace prepares and since God is the Giver, when taken together,

God alone is the cause of those heavenly gifts to sprout and fill the earth with the sweet aroma of liberty, prosperity and safety. When the Spirit of Jesus pulsates through the lives of His people, salvation and righteousness never stop growing and, eventually, those gifts will fill the whole earth and all its peoples. God finishes that Isaiah verse with this, "I the Lord have created this." It is God's sovereign power that makes it so, not man or the wealth and power of nations, but God alone who is righteous and salvation. Advent is a time of contemplative silence, wonder intermingled with expectant joy. Such expectant Advent joy is filled with the longing for the Child Jesus who is our Peace, our Joy and our Beauty! The human heart lacks strength to quiet and comfort itself. It takes quiet time to wonder at the beautiful mystery of this season as we wait with hope and expectation the *magnum mysterium*, the great mystery of the Lord's coming again in our midst.

The King shall come when morning dawns
And light triumphant breaks,
When beauty gilds the eastern hills
And life to joy awakes.

The aforementioned excerpt from the hymn *The King Shall Come* by John Brownlie is infused with the imagery of morning light that is typical of early Orthodox hymnody. This Advent text stirs hope in the hearts of all who look forward to the return of Christ. Taken in its entirety, the lyrics of that hymn are a confession of faith in the sure return of the Lord. His coming again will occur in a blaze of glory, which will far surpass His earthly death and resurrection. The text of the hymn concludes with a paraphrase of the ancient prayer of the church or Maranatha, "Lord, come quickly" (Rev. 22:20). Isaiah predicts the coming of the advent of the Messiah in soaring poetry, captured so beautifully in George Friedrich Händel's oratorio, "Messiah." Isaiah expresses the profound longings of the human heart. This prophecy anticipates what scholars consider as part two of his writing or deuteronomy-Isaiah (Ch. 40-55). He is often called the fifth evangelist, boldly cries out: "Here is your God...he comes to save you" (Is 35:4).
