

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Third Sunday of Advent - Gaudete Sunday
December 15, 2024



One mightier than I is coming...He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

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

Holiday 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 14 *Vigil of the 3rd Sunday of Advent*

4:00pm Asking for an increase in joy as Christmas draws near

Sunday, December 15 *Third Sunday of Advent*

7:30am In gratitude to God for a favor requested and granted

4:00pm For graduates embarking on a new vocation, a beloved son

Monday, December 16

12:00nn For diocesan and religious order priests

Tuesday, December 17 *Late Advent Begins*

12:00nn For the noble intentions of Paul

Wednesday, December 18

12:00nn +Janet & James Howard

Thursday, December 19

12:00nn For a special intention

Friday, December 20

12:00nn In gratitude for a favor requested and granted

Saturday, December 21 *Vigil of the 4th Sunday of Advent*

4:00pm +Virginia Barrette

Sunday, December 22 *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

7:30am +Beverly Adua — 7th anniversary

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 Gospels during Advent

While Saint Luke portrays the public activity of John the Baptist in a way that is akin to the portrait that Saint John described the Lord's Precursor, Luke also offers a unique perspective on the Baptist that is illustrated by today's Gospel. The opening description sets the scene—crowds had come out to see John. Typically, in the Third Gospel, the crowds have a more-than-descriptive role because, as they press around Jesus, their presence exhibits good will toward both the Lord and the Baptist that is made palpable in their eagerness to listen. So, the crowd asks John this performative question, "What should we do?" It is conceivable that the eager crowd instinctively knew that it was not sufficient to merely listen to John, but that they had to know how to put what the Baptist said into concrete action. John repeated this same sermon, again and again, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 3:2). It was conversion of hearts and minds that he sought. Yet, how would that inner transformation take place? His response to their question is simple, "Whoever has two cloaks should share with the person who has none. And whoever has food should do likewise." So, nothing extraordinary is required except what you would classify as *simple charity* and that's what becomes transformative. While Jesus will set the bar higher ["...from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic...Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back" (Lk 6:29-30)]. Yet, even simple charity is a visible sign of inner conversion. Next, the tax collectors question the Baptist. Though routinely scorned, these social outcasts are prime examples of the kind of people for whom Jesus came to earth and befriended them as their merciful Savior. They address John with the respectful title of Teacher (Gk. διδάσκαλος) or as an instructor acknowledged for mastery in their field. Contrary to what would have been expected, John did not demand they abandon their despised professions; instead, he told those tax collectors to only collect the amount of tax required and nothing more. A third group of soldiers came forward, more than likely they were mercenaries of Herod Antipas (d. after 39 AD), the tetrarch of Galilee. They ask John, "And what is it that we should do?" Quickly, he tells those mercenaries to avoid extortion, forsake false accusations, and to be satisfied with the pay they receive; hence, avoid looting and plunder. The advice John gave to these

Jean Cardinal Daniélou, SJ — *The Advent of Salvation*

John the Baptist had the great joy of knowing that his testimony was heard, as those who had been his disciples recognized Christ. He had prepared the way and now John, Peter, James, the disciples he had prepared, recognized Christ when He came. John showed Him to them as the Lamb of God. And there lay John's great joy — the joy of the bride meeting the Bridegroom. That was all he wanted. His one wish was to lead souls to Christ, take them to meet Him. At that moment of meeting his joy was complete. When his disciples left him to follow Christ, it was perfect. He wanted nothing else. It was he who had come to prepare the way of the Lord. He had no wish to keep any souls for himself. In this he is the perfect model of self-denial. He never wanted anyone to grow attached to him—his one wish was to attach everyone to Christ. Having once prepared the way, he then faded out himself to leave them with the Bridegroom, with Christ.

three groups illustrates what Saint Luke often stresses, which is endorsing deeds more than mere words—summarized in the term *effective charity*. The Third Gospel rarely provides precepts or rules governing behavior because the evangelist favors concrete principles of action that must be tailored to a believer's individual situation. Nonetheless, there is always the clear demand to engage in constant conversion of heart, even for those who already believe in Jesus as the Christ. All four Gospels attest to the fact that John the Baptist understood his mission in a single-minded manner – John had to prepare the way for Someone who would come after him and that Other was destined to be much greater than the Baptist ever would be. John also said that the baptism with water that he engaged in was only a rite of penance and conversion. His mightier Successor would “baptize...with the Holy Spirit and fire.” This Other, greater than John, would act like a farmer gathering in a great harvest, but would winnow that harvest, so that the wheat would be separated from “the chaff [that] he will burn with unquenchable fire.” As universal Judge and King of Glory, Christ will return at the end of time and, as Judge, He will separate the sheep from the goats. This ultimate Day of the Lord or the final judgment remains an unknown time out in the future, yet it is the one, fateful day that no one can escape. Due to its unknown character, we must be forever ready and watchful for that day of reckoning. Ongoing, continual conversion is the path to follow and, by doing so, not only will the disciples be ready for that day, but the hearts that love the Lord and live by His commands will be overflowing with joy and heavenly gladness, even now. Fear is a total stranger when you realize that God is with us. Serenity is unassailable if you believe that God hears our pleas and grants us His peace. While Advent is a distinct liturgical season, because the Lord is continuously coming into our lives, only rejoicing and gladness can accompany us all the days of those lives.

A Time of Devout & Expectant Delight (Lat. *tempus devotae ac incundae expectationis*)

The true nature of Advent has become debatable and the evidence itself is contradictory. In the *General Norms on the Liturgical & Calendar* Advent is described as “a time of devout and expectant delight,” yet, in the Code of Canon Law it is not listed in the canon describing penitential seasons (can. 1250). In support of the penitential nature of Advent, many point to a prohibition on instrumental music, muted sanctuary decorations that are mandated during that time in the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*. Its statement, in regard to those instructions, along with the further statement that the season's character does not anticipate the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord (*GIRM*, nn. 305, 313). Despite the ambiguity, in order to *wait in joyful hope* or in *devout and expectant delight*, when coupled with the fact that “redemption is at hand” (Lk 21:28), those spiritual dispositions require preparing hearts and souls for Christ's return. The sure way of doing that is through penance. There can be no true preparing for the coming of the Lord without repentance, a *metanoia*—a transformative change of the heart. Whether the season is directed at the fulfillment of God's plan in the final coming of Christ or at the beginning of that plan in the Incarnation, Advent points us to where God is absent – the places in our thoughts, words, and deeds not ruled by God. The dual nature of this sacred time, then, has elements of both penitential reflection in preparing ourselves to celebrate Christ's first coming, as well as the season for expectant hope and joyful expectation/anticipation of His return. Advent's gradual unfolding, reaching its culmination in the period between December 17-24, leads the Church progressively to Christmas joy. As those weeks progress, the joy for how close Christmas is implies being increasingly joy-filled. According to the *General Norms*, “The weekdays from 17 December up to and including 24 December are ordered in a more direct way to preparing for the Nativity of the Lord” (*UNLYC*, n. 42). In the final weekdays of Advent, the Church purposefully narrows the focus of preparation as Advent comes to its end — the feast of the Lord's Nativity.

Biblical Meaning of Delight

“Find your delight in the Lord who will give you your heart's desire” (Ps 37:4). The two most common Hebrew words for delight are *hepes* meaning *to bend towards* or *to be inclined to a person or object* and *rasa* meaning to delight or take pleasure in. In the New Testament, the Greek word most commonly used for delight is *eudokeo* (Gk. εὐδοκέω) that is a word usually used when God's purpose, resolve, and choice are in view

Advent & Eschatology - A Time of Waiting & Arrival

According to the *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year*, “Advent has a twofold character, for it is a time of preparation for the Solemnities of Christmas, in which the First Coming of the Son of God to humanity is remembered, and likewise a time when, by remembrance of this, minds and hearts are led to look to Christ’s Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, Advent is a period of devout and expectant delight” (*UNLYC*, n. 39). As such, Advent has a dual focus on Jesus’ coming, both in His first coming among us as a man and His coming at the end of time. Although this can, at times, lead to confusion, the twofold approach to the season allows Advent to teach us about God’s presence among us. In Advent, we learn that God is the basis of hope, and that such hope is the basis for increasing our love of this life.

Not just a future

Eternity is often thought of as a future goal alone. Thoughts like “when I enter eternal life” or “I look forward to eternity” can reveal attitudes that indicate that we might believe God only to be in our future. What this implies, however, is a loss of the presence of God in the here and now, creating a sense of distance between us and God. With this view, God is no longer close to us and our experience. But Advent exists to retool or restore our vision. By focusing on the two comings of Christ, the Advent season reminds us that one cannot exist without the other. Eternity is a goal, yes, but it is also present now — albeit seen dimly as though through a mirror (see 1 Cor 13:12). Eternity enters our time and creation in Jesus, elevating all creation into eternity. The liturgy, the sacraments and the Church itself have become the means by which Christ makes himself present to us today — and therefore eternity is also in our midst, though not in its fullness due to the continued fallenness of the world. Where Jesus is, there is eternity, and we know he is not restrained to heaven alone. Advent helps us to see with fresh eyes that our eternal goal is already in progress because Christ is here with us. Because of his coming among us as man, eternity is within our grasp.

The foundation of hope

So often we reduce hope to wishful thinking: “I hope I win the lottery” or “I hope this job situation works out,” and so forth. This unfortunate reduction of hope has removed the virtue’s central character from Christian consciousness. Hope without a guarantee is just wishful thinking. Hope needs some guarantee if it is to be truly hope. If eternity is pre-

sent already in Christ, then hope finds its guarantee in him. We have hope because we already see the effects of Jesus in our lives and in the life of the Church. Hope gives us the ability to see Christ in all, to encounter him in prayer and sacrament, and to hear him in the Scriptures. All this gives our lives an enduring character. Christian hope says life is not fleeting, but rather is enduring because it is united to Jesus’s own life. Advent is the training ground of hope — of recognizing God’s presence as saving — in the face of whatever is fleeting and passing. Advent is the season of hope.

Increasing our desire

Advent, as a season of hope, helps increase our desire for God. This is done not only by seeing Him as a future goal, but also by seeing him as someone whom we can encounter today. We meet him and attain our unity with him through the state of life to which he calls us, and through the circumstances of life. God’s presence among us becomes clearer to us as we advance in the Christian journey. It is the unfolding of a mystery. And Advent is a time for us to focus on that especially. This mystery will be revealed when we see God face to face. Heaven is in our midst today through Jesus’s presence among us. So if Jesus isn’t present to us today — meaning our heavenly goal is unattainable — then Christianity is just a fairy tale, a myth or wishful thinking. But if we look at life not as something to be avoided, but something to be embraced, we find that God is running toward us in Christ’s Incarnation, meeting us in our lives in such a way that he draws us into God’s own life. And this coming of Christ is what Advent is all about. In the encounter of God we meet the One who loves us first, we experience his love as something life-giving. When we experience love like this, we cannot help but desire the One who seeks us. Seeing Advent as a time to increase our desire for God, then, we learn to experience Christ as the One who is always coming to meet us, always drawing us to himself. By embracing our vocation, our state of life and the situations of our lives, we also embrace opportunities of encounter with God. Advent, then, is our opportunity to recommit ourselves to encountering him through these things. By turning toward the Lord in this way, we will experience his love for us, which will increase our desire for Him, thereby increasing our hope.

Excerpted from www.simplycatholic.com. Father Harrison Ayre. “Advent: A Season of Hope.”
