

**OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL**  
**SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL**  
**WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER**  
**Fourth Sunday of Advent**  
**December 22, 2024**



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Elizabeth is aware of Mary's presence, yet the Baptist is aware of the Savior's presence:  
One woman aware of another woman's child in the womb  
While, as the Forerunner, John the Baptist is aware of the presence of the Son of God

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**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](http://www.ourladyofprovidence.net)

## **MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE**

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

Monday, December 23

12:00nn +Eugene Camosse

Tuesday, December 24

12:00nn +Mary and Carroll Gray

*Christmas Eve—Vigil of the Lord's Nativity*

4:00pm +Edward Manahan — 15th anniversary

Wednesday, December 25 *Christmas Day - Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord*

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

12:00nn +Piera Ceste

Thursday, December 26 *Feast of St. Stephen, protomartyr*

12:00nn +Jan and Maria Piasek

Friday, December 27 *Feast of Saint John the Evangelist*

12:00nn +Joseph Intrieri

Saturday, December 28 *Vigil of the Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth*

4:00pm +Repose of the soul of Most Rev. Daniel Reilly

Sunday, December 29 *Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph*

7:30am Asking God to grant the noble intentions of Nancy Boyd

4:00pm +Pat Mesite - recalling the day of his birth

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 memorial<sup>1</sup> or an optional memorial<sup>2</sup>.*

### **Toward a Better Understanding of the Gospels during Advent**

After an introductory literary prologue, the first two chapters of Saint Luke's Gospel can be visualized as a diptych with a depiction of the birth of the Baptist on one side and the birth of Jesus on the other. The symmetry underscores the continuity of the two Testaments and the subordination of the first covenant to the new and eternal covenant. This continuity and subordination is made concrete in the meeting between Mary and Elizabeth. Such a dual-track development is symbolized in the Visitation. The opening verse of the Gospel notes that "[During those days], Mary...traveled to the hill country in haste..." The implication that the reference to during those days suggests is that this incident occurred after the angel's Annunciation to Mary that she was to be the mother of God's Son. The promised sign was not meant to verify what Gabriel had said, but as an implicit invitation to go into the hill country of Judea and witness the astonishing event that was destined to occur. Going in haste (Gk. σπουδῆς), though, is not a reference to encouraging Mary to double her pace in getting to her kinswoman. No, the Greek word *spoudēs* implies an interior disposition that those who act in haste, in fact, do so with fervor and zeal. The Virgin Mary is compelled by the intense emotions that have been unleashed within her that burst forth in her immense joy and unbridled enthusiasm. No mention is made as to whether or not Mary greeted Elizabeth with the customary Hebrew greeting *shalom* or rejoice. The mere sound of Mary's voice, however, conveyed something extraordinary to Elizabeth. From their first moment together, Elizabeth sensed that she was involved in a monumental mystery. As the Ark of the new Covenant, Mary carried the future Savior within her womb and, so, Elizabeth's greeting enshrined the following revealed truth, "...how does this happen to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" The grace and peace that enveloped both women has an immediate result, "the moment the sound of our greeting reached my ears, the infant in my womb leaped (Gk. ἐσκήρτησεν) for joy." All pregnant women, when the child in their womb moves for the first time become imme-

## Pope Benedict XVI — Address at the Conclusion of the Marian Month of *May*

Mary, living Tabernacle of God made flesh, is the Ark of the Covenant in whom the Lord visited and redeemed his people. Jesus' presence filled her with the Holy Spirit. When she entered Elizabeth's house, her greeting was overflowing with grace: John leapt in his mother's womb, as if he were aware of the coming of the One whom he would one day proclaim to Israel. The children exulted, the mothers exulted.

This meeting, imbued with the joy of the Holy Spirit, is expressed in the Cantic of the Magnificat. Is this not also the joy of the Church, which ceaselessly welcomes Christ in the holy Eucharist and brings him into the world with the testimony of active charity, steeped in faith and hope? Yes, welcoming Jesus and bringing him to others is the true joy of Christians!"

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diately aware of the life within. Yet the verb *skirtaó* which Saint Luke used implies astonishing power or strength and, so, it connotes something more than merely stirring or moving and that is why many English translations render *skirtaó* as to leap or to bounce. The evangelist also noted that Elizabeth “cried out in a loud voice,” and those English words seem to underplay the intent of the original words—Elizabeth was not reflecting the natural joy that any two pregnant women would express to one another. In fact, the Visitation is suffused with the action of the Holy Spirit; hence, it is a charismatic moment during which the Spirit's presence produces a super-abundance of those Spirit-filled gifts of joy and peace. Impelled by the Spirit, Elizabeth was moved to prophetically declare that Mary was “blessed among women” and that the fruit of her womb was also blessed. These words, placed into Elizabeth's mouth by the evangelist, incorporate benediction and beatitude. The declaration *blessed are you* is a singularly religious statement. Yet, Mary is blessed in an incomparable way because, above all women, her blessedness towers above all of them. Gabriel had revealed that Mary was God's “highly favored (Gk. *κεχαριτωμένη*) daughter” (Lk 1:28) and, though privileged, it is because of her Son and her submission to doing the Father's will that Mary was elevated to the exalted position that was hers. Elizabeth's prophetic outburst reveals the title by which Mary would be forever known – the mother of my Lord. The Greek word *kyrios* (or Lord) designates the Messiah and Mary as the Mother of God (Gk. *Θεοτόκος* or Lat. *Dei Genetrix* or *Deipara*). As highly favored or endowed with great grace and, so free from all sin as Mary was, there is always a gulf beyond which God can be found. With the eternal Word taking flesh in the womb of Mary, God's only-begotten Son received His human body from Mary and His earthly life accorded with the dictates of the human heart. When willingly handing over His body on the Cross, Jesus consecrated His heart to the fulfillment of the Father's plan for the world's salvation – that Christ had come in order to do the Father's will. In the person of Christ, both His divine and human will are indissolubly united. By the eternal Word assuming human nature, all humanity was sanctified. In that one supreme sacrifice on Calvary, His death obtained for all people, for all time, the remission of sins and freedom from unending death

### **Nunc coepi—Now I Begin**

Amid late Advent or the seven days leading up to Christmas, the series of Gospel readings provides the full account of God's preparation for the birth of the Child Jesus. In the middle of those passages, there is the Gospel, arguably most connected to Advent. It is the Annunciation, the moment when the angel Gabriel tells Mary about her divine call to bear the Son of God to the world (Lk 1:26-38). Mary's fiat, her saying yes to God's plan, specifically opens the way to the Nativity at Bethlehem. It is the moment when Gabriel tells Mary that she has been chosen to be the Mother of Jesus. The angelic messenger declares that “nothing will be impossible for God.” And then Mary responds with, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Like Mary's response to her own life-changing moment, when and how can we say “Yes” to God remains pertinent? Too often, we let our own past get the upper hand. Shame for our sins, discouragement from having failed before, fear of making changes...these things often weigh us down and prevent us from making progress. We might tell ourselves that we will make a new beginning “when circumstances are different, or when the right time comes,” yet the right moment never seems to come, and in the meantime, life goes on without any real direction. The Lord doesn't want us to live in fear of the future or in shame over our past. He calls us to start again or *nunc coepi*. He desires to wash away the sins of our past, and to guide our future with His Providence. We must follow Him now, not later. Rather than giving in to discouragement, we must allow Him to complete the good work that He has begun in us (Philippians 1:6). Discerning God's will and striving to do it in the present moment is a key part of beginning again. The present moment is like an ambassador that declares the will of God. The heart must listen and answer, as Mary did, “Let it be done.” A personal fiat is a symbol of accepting God's will, giving birth to the Word Incarnate, and entering into Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. It is also a call for all followers of Jesus to say “yes” to God's plan for their lives. The latter part of Advent should be governed by the Latin phrase *nunc coepi* that means *now I begin*. Those simple words, all show us the way to Christ through a ready willingness to start over.

Excerpted from [www.catholiccompany.com](http://www.catholiccompany.com). Whitney Hetzel. “Nunc Coepi! Begin Again...Right Now” 3 February 2020

# Advent & Eschatology - Octave of Christmas & the Eighth Day

The Church's Year of Grace hinges on two solemnities of the liturgical year: Easter and Christmas. Solemnities are festive and exceptional days in the life of Christ, the highest ranked feasts of the liturgical calendar marked with special characteristics. In the *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and Calendar*, those most solemn of all days are described this way, "Solemnities are counted among the most important days, whose celebration begins with First Vespers (Evening Prayer I) on the preceding day... The celebration of the two greatest Solemnities, Easter and the Nativity, is extended over eight days. Each Octave is governed by its own rules" (*UNLYC*, nn. 11-12). An octave is the eight-day period during which Easter or Christmas is repeatedly celebrated, and includes the actual feast. The eighth day is also called the octave or octave day, and the days in between are said to be within the octave. Octave means an eight-day celebration, that is, the prolongation of a feast to the eighth day (Lat. *dies octava*) inclusive. The number eight is supposed to represent perfection or rest. Some have traced the novena practice back to Jewish festival customs, such as the circumcision of the male child which was meant to occur on the eighth day, the feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days and concluded with a solemnity, thereby forming an octave or the feast of the Dedication of the Temple by Solomon and its purification that lasted eight days. It is also said that Jesus rose from the dead on the eighth day (which is why Sundays are considered on a par with solemnities). The development of the octaves within the liturgy was gradual, and it was not until the 8th century that Rome celebrated octaves for certain feasts. The term octave (Lat. *octo octava dies*) applies both to the period of eight days and the eighth or final day. January 1 is the octave or the eighth day after the feast of Christmas. In the spirit of the Church the great feasts of redemption should not be restricted to a single celebration but should continue on through a full week. The Church understands human nature perfectly. So, when a feast day comes, the soul is amazed and not quite prepared to think profoundly about its mystery; but on the following days the mind finds it easier to consider the mystery from all sides, sympathetically and deeply. An eighth day affords a wonderful opportunity to make a synthesis of all the points covered. The octave of Christmas is not the best example because other feasts distract from the Christmas theme; so, the octave day of Christmas takes on greater importance. On that eighth day, for the last time the Church leads the faithful to the crib at Bethlehem (*The Church's Year of Grace*, Volume I, pp. 244-245). The octave gives us time to impress upon our souls the mysteries, joys and graces of the principal feasts of the year.

## Octave of Christmas

The eight days of Christmas begins on Christmas Day and extends until January 1st, the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God or the octave day of Christmas. The liturgy gives the clues that every day within the octave is treated the same as the original feast day of the Lord's Nativity. Saint Pope Paul VI, in the apostolic exhortation *Marialis cultus* sought to deepen the Church's understanding of this octave day: "The Christmas season is a prolonged commemoration of the divine, virginal and salvific motherhood of her whose 'inviolable virginity brought the Savior into the world.' In fact, on the Solemnity of the Birth of Christ the Church

both adores the Savior and venerates His glorious Mother. On the Epiphany, when she celebrates the universal call to salvation, the Church contemplates the Blessed Virgin, the true Seat of Wisdom and true Mother of the King, who presents to the Wise Men, for their adoration, the Redeemer of all peoples (cf. Mt. 2:11). On the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph (the Sunday within the octave of Christmas) the Church meditates with profound reverence upon the holy life led in the house at Nazareth by Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Man, Mary His Mother, and Joseph the just man (cf. Mt. 1:19). In the revised ordering of the Christmas period it seems to us that the attention of all should be directed towards the restored Solemnity of Mary the holy Mother of God. This celebration, placed on January 1 in conformity with the ancient indication of the liturgy of the City of Rome, is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in this mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the 'holy Mother...through whom we were found worthy to receive the Author of life.'" It is likewise a fitting occasion for renewing adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, for listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels (cf. Lk. 2:14), and for imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace. It is for this reason that, in the happy concurrence of the Octave of Christmas and the first day of the year, we have instituted the World Day of Peace, an occasion that is gaining increasing support and already bringing forth fruits of peace...." (*MC*, n. 5).

## Comites Christi – Companions of Christ

Among several of those eight days of the Octave of Christmas, though each day is a solemnity, the saints that are honored were often envisioned to be a cortège of honor accompanying the Christ Child. On the day after Christmas, it is the Feast of Saint Stephen, the proto-martyr. In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the gruesome account of his being stoned by an infuriated crowd constitutes the voluntary and executed form of martyrdom. On December 27th the Church traditionally celebrates the Feast of Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist. This apostle's name is associated with the wonderful tradition and writings that bear his name. His natural death represents martyrdom that is voluntary but not executed. On December 28th, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Innocents. This celebration takes us back into the infancy narrative of Matthew. The account of how Jesus begins his journey to become one with us is powerfully told as a journey of Jesus' entering into the travails of his people, with the flight into Egypt and the horrible slaughter of the innocent children. December 29th is the day that the 12th century martyr Saint Thomas a Becket is usually honored. The sixth day of the octave highlights the prophetess Anna, while the last day of the year is often elsewhere known as Saint Sylvester Day (d. 335), who was the first Pope whose pontificate was totally marked by the liberty of the Church. He was publicly honored as a confessor of the faith or one who, though not suffering martyrdom, lived a life completely given over to Christ. The Octave or Eighth Day (January 1) is known by its complete title as The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord - the Solemnity of Mary the Holy Mother of God. Since 1986, the first day of the New Year is also the World Day of Prayer for Peace.